

THE FIRST 100 YEARS

The development of technical education in Queensland

Technical Education against a
Social, Political and Commercial Background

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**Technical Education
in Queensland
to 1977**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the development of Technical Education in Queensland from the 1870s to the 1970s in relation to the contemporary social, political and commercial environment. It is not merely a chronological history.

In 1870 the first meaningful requests in Queensland for 'Technical Education' transpired. These were followed by attempts to establish technical classes which were not successful until 1881. Classes grew in number in an unstructured fashion until in 1889 at the opening of the first Technical College, technical education was formally recognised as part of the educational system.

The 1970s was a decade culminating in many changes for Technical Education. During this and the previous decade there were many reports with great impact on post-secondary education throughout Australia. One result was that, in 1977, Technical Education and Adult Education, both being branches of the Department of Education, amalgamated to become TAFE.

In the years between these two limits technical education suffered from considerable variation in prestige. Its development was notable for its inconsistency. There were periods of rapid change followed by much longer periods of neglect. Nevertheless, it fulfilled the critical role of supplying post-secondary education and training for large numbers of people.

It has often been said that 'to ignore history is to repeat it'. Of course, history does not repeat itself, but nonetheless an understanding of past experiences is necessary for informed judgements about future directions. Far too often technical education policy has ignored the past rather than develop an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of previous strategies.

While it may be argued that a 'clean slate' approach to the future would be more appropriate the past should be given due cognisance. Unless decision makers understand events of the past, they cannot make informed decisions about the future. Understanding events of the past is difficult at present as the formative years of TAFE have not been the focus of much research.

Current scholars studying the development of Technical Education in Queensland do not yet have a significant work on how it developed nor why it developed as it has. At the very least this thesis addresses that omission.

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Terminology

In November 1919 the Queensland Labour Party changed its name to the Australian Labor Party — Queensland Branch. For the sake of consistency the spelling 'Labor' has been used throughout this thesis.

As decimal currency (1966) and metric units of measures (1970) were introduced almost at the end of the period covered by this thesis, currency has been shown in pre-decimal form and measurements have been shown in pre-metric form.

As Parliamentary and Public Service terminology in Queensland altered considerably during the period discussed by this thesis, major titles have been changed to that used in the latter part of the period discussed. This has been done to aid both consistency and comprehension. The Chief Secretary is the Premier, and the Secretary for Public Instruction is the Minister for Education, and therefore the Department of Public Instruction is the Education Department. Within this department the Under-Secretary is the Director-General, the Supervisor for each branch is a Director, while those in charge of Technical Colleges are Principals. Other changes in titles are equally thematic.

Abbreviations used

RPQ	Minister for Education, ##th Report to the Parliament of Queensland, for 19##, Brisbane: Government Printer, 19## (a year later); shown as for example, '29 th RPQ for 1919'.
DSAC	Domestic Science Advisory Committee
EHU	Educational History Unit (Queensland Education Department)
JOL	John Oxley Library, Brisbane
QPD	Queensland Parliamentary Debates
QPP	Queensland Parliamentary Papers
QPS	Queensland Parliamentary Statutes
QSA	Queensland State Archives
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
QVP	Queensland Votes and Proceedings

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