Overview

- Academic vs vocational pathway programs – a false dichotomy?
- Diploma of Tertiary Studies (DoTS) – HE diploma designed to prepare students for Bachelor degree study
- DoTS is an academic pathway, but is intrinsically related to vocational structures
- Student perceptions, aspirations and choices are vocational
- Implications for program design.
**Context - policy**

- Bradley targets
  - Participation
  - SES
- Regional and outer urban provision
- LSES enrolments by field of study
- HE increasingly vocational

**Context - Monash**

- Floor of ATAR 70 for admission
- Multi-campus – urban, outer-urban, regional, international campuses
- Stratified
- Many programs with a professional focus, research components, double degrees
About DoTS

- Offered at Gippsland (regional) since 2000
- Offered at Berwick from 2008 and Peninsula from 2010 (outer urban campuses)
- Applicants must have ATAR 50+ or Cert IV, plus a personal statement
- 65% progress to degrees at Monash – 836 graduates have completed Monash degrees
- Main destination degrees – Education, Nursing, Arts

DoTS enrolments
DoTS students - demographics

- Over 70% first generation, 25% with parents who did not complete Year 10
- Young – 20% aged 17 at commencement
- Low and medium SES (31% LSES, 4.7% HSES)
- Regional and outer-metro – Latrobe, Casey
- Multiple commitments – family care, paid work (see Devlin – time poor)

First generation

- My mum wanted me to come to university. … So she was supportive but probably didn’t know how to support [me] … Doesn’t understand what university is like, doesn’t understand what we have to do. She’s lovely about it but just doesn’t know, doesn’t get it. When I’m frustrated about something she … doesn’t really help the situation at all and neither does my dad.
Aspirations and choices

- DoTS students are highly vocationally motivated
  - attain a professional career
- *To me uni has always been about the job that comes at the end.*
  - escape routine work (DoTS students engaged in paid work at a higher than average rate – 77% in work)

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Aspirations and choices

- *I had a white board, silly as it sounds, in the computer room of my house. I had a slogan up there for VCE that said ‘so I don’t have to work 48 weeks a year in retail’. Then when I came to university it said ‘I will finish uni so that I can have a professional career*. 
Adjusting and succeeding

- DoTS students are overcoming previous poor educational experiences
  
  - *I liked university better than I did high school. High school is very fixed and there’s not much flexibility, whereas at university you study for yourself… I work better in those kind of conditions.*

- Limited conception of what is required to succeed in university study

  - *It was a bit of a struggle and a bit scary … It was so full on and I wasn’t used to it. The workload, all the terminology, where to hand in your assignments, Blackboard and everything was just so overwhelming.*

Making the links

- Academic attainment and understanding what is required for success at university is required for students to progress to degree study

- DoTS emphasises graduate outcomes as the mechanism to link aspiration, attainment and outcomes
Monash Graduate Attributes

1. responsible and effective global citizens who:
   a) engage in an internationalised world
   b) exhibit cross-cultural competence
   c) demonstrate ethical values

2. critical and creative scholars who:
   a) produce innovative solutions to problems
   b) apply research skills to a range of challenges
   c) communicate perceptively and effectively

Graduate attributes as bridging concepts

- Reflection on the process of transition
- Critical thinking
- Construction of knowledge
- A bridge to the capabilities of graduate professionals.
Graduate Perspectives

- We are a society based on paper and you’ve got to have that piece of paper, whether you like it or not... And when you’ve got that degree, you’ve just got so much power.

- I’m actually interested in learning now... when I go and become a nurse I’ll come back and do more studies. I want to do Emergency Nursing...

- Definitely you have to be able to think critically... you’re constantly analysing thing, you know, reading between the lines and the bigger picture.
Graduate Perspectives

- It broadened my mental horizon. I was brought up in a very narrow existence. My background meant I had particular assertions built up in my mind. Just the idea that people could think differently was foreign to me at first. ... Coming to uni just broadened the scope of possibilities for me... It's discomforting when you recognise how little you know, but it's beneficial just because broader horizons, broader opportunities... out there you'll come across a massive variety of perspectives, in here they teach you how to deal with them... ... most of all occupations are going to involve interacting with people who haven't learnt what you've learnt, who don't have the knowledge that you do. To interact with them you need to be able to think, you need to be able to see it from their point, to recognise that they're different.

Summary

- Academic achievement mediates access to degree study and so to professions, but is under challenge from participation objectives
- DoTS is an institutional strategy to allow access on a conditional basis to academically ‘risky’ students
- DoTS students’ aspirations are vocational, but they have limited access to academic and professional literacies
Summary

- To realise these vocational aspirations, DoTS supports students to gain access to these literacies.
- This conceptual grounding in the nature of knowledge production allows students to begin forming a student and professional identity.
- Although formally an academic preparation pathway, DoTS is understood by students as (part of) a vocational pathway. In this context, the development of critical analysis skills in DoTS can be understood as both academic and vocational preparation.