



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND YOUNG PEOPLE: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Wednesday 4 July 2012

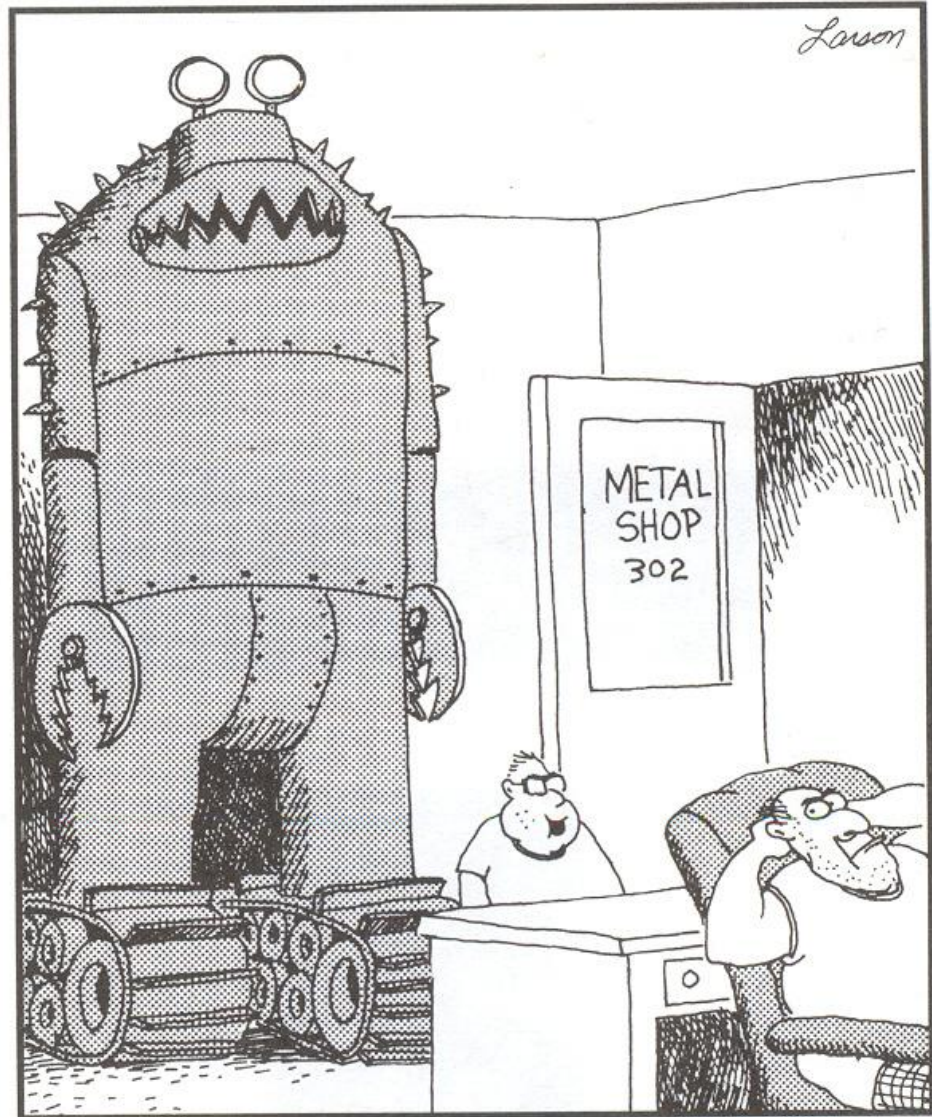
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# General and vocational education

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- General (academic) tradition – church & state sanctioned, for inculturation of the ruling classes for positions in the church and government, ancient tradition
- Vocational tradition – locally sanctioned, for inculturation of the children of the poor to work in unskilled and skilled jobs, more recent origins

VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION?



“My project’s ready for grading, Mr. Big Nose. ...  
Hey! I’m talkin’ to YOU, squidbrain!”

ACADEMIC  
(GENERAL)  
EDUCATION





# BOND BETWEEN SECONDARY SCHOOLING AND UNIVERSITIES

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- Typically, school teachers established the universities
- Secondary schooling was often part of the university degree – basic studies in humanities
- There was no great difference between teaching in secondary school or university – still the case in some European systems
- In England called Masters/Schoolmasters – as were usually MAs from Oxford or Cambridge
- By 1500s most secondary teachers were MAs or BAs with teaching experience
- Link between school and university cemented

# VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

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- Began to appear in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Usually run by guilds or municipalities (not state or church run)
- Usually confined to primary schooling at first
- Designed to foster good work habits (and skills) in working class children
- Not part of state secondary school systems until early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (1910s – 1940s)

# Melbourne 1901



# Melbourne Grammar School

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# Melbourne Continuation School

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# Sunshine Technical School – c.1915

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# HISTORY OF VETiS – VICTORIA

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- 1905 – FIRST STATE HIGH SCHOOL
- 1912 – FIRST TECHNICAL SCHOOL (SCHOOL CULTURE)
- 1929 – UNIFICATION PROPOSAL DEFEATED
- 1986 – TECHNICAL SCHOOLS ABOLISHED. HSC AND DIVERSITY OF YEAR 12 PROGRAMS.
- 1991 – VCE (SINGLE CERTIFICATE, DIVERSITY?)
- 1994 – VET IN SCHOOLS INTRODUCED (IN CONTEXT OF COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM)
- 2002 – VCAL introduced in pilot form

# Our two themes

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- 1. The fear that a divided curriculum can be socially selective is well-founded. Research shows that the social background of VET students is very different from the social background of students heading to university.
- 2. Vocational education and training has struggled to establish a role in secondary schooling. Many parents and students see it as a second class option. And many teachers don't believe that it's a legitimate part of secondary schooling.



# Secondary school – no home for VET?

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*We have observed a series of historical phenomena; let us see what ideas they may justify us in forming about what secondary education is.....*

*The preliminary and purely negative observation... is that secondary education has never had an essentially vocational goal.....*

Émile Durkheim, 1904

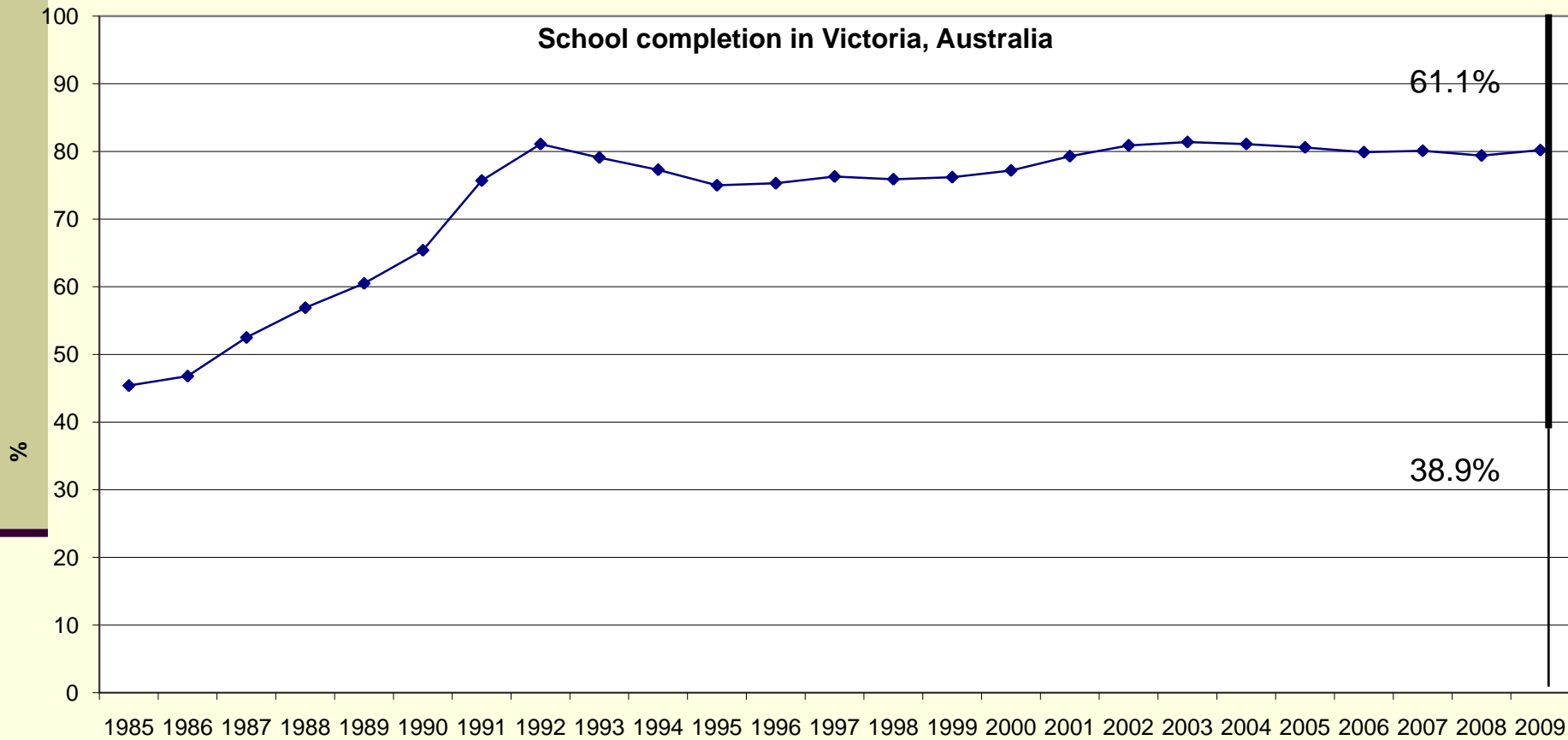
# The Research Evidence

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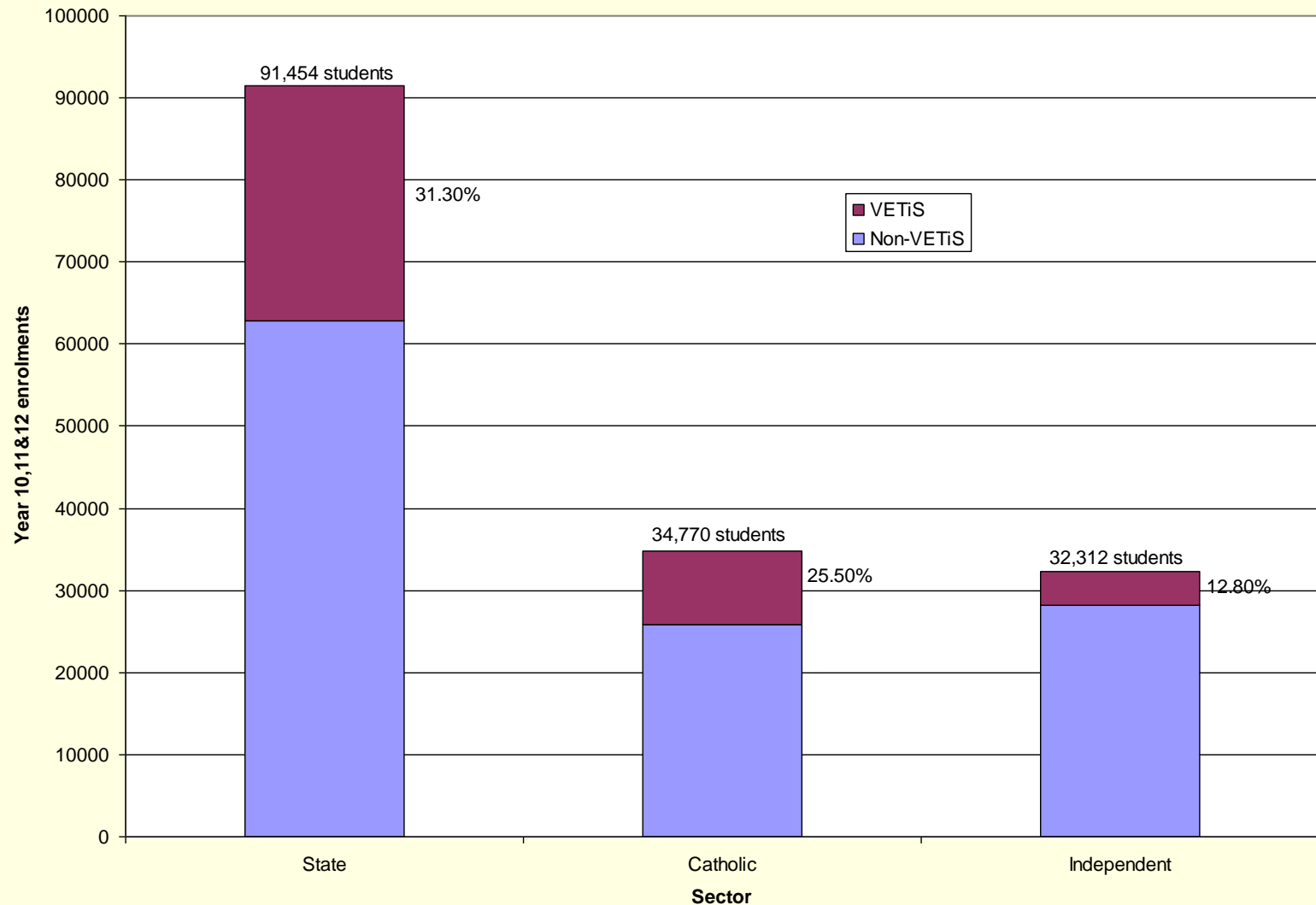


- Low in status hierarchy (Goodson 1993)
- No parity of esteem (Green 1995)
- Weak knowledge base in VET (Young 2007)
- Merely a response to skills shortages (Jephcoate & Abbott 2005), co-opted to fix problems, serve economic needs, e.g. absorb unemployed “men” and returned soldiers from the World Wars
- Social selection (Ringer 2000, Baudelot & Establiet 1971, Polesel 2008)

# School completion and university



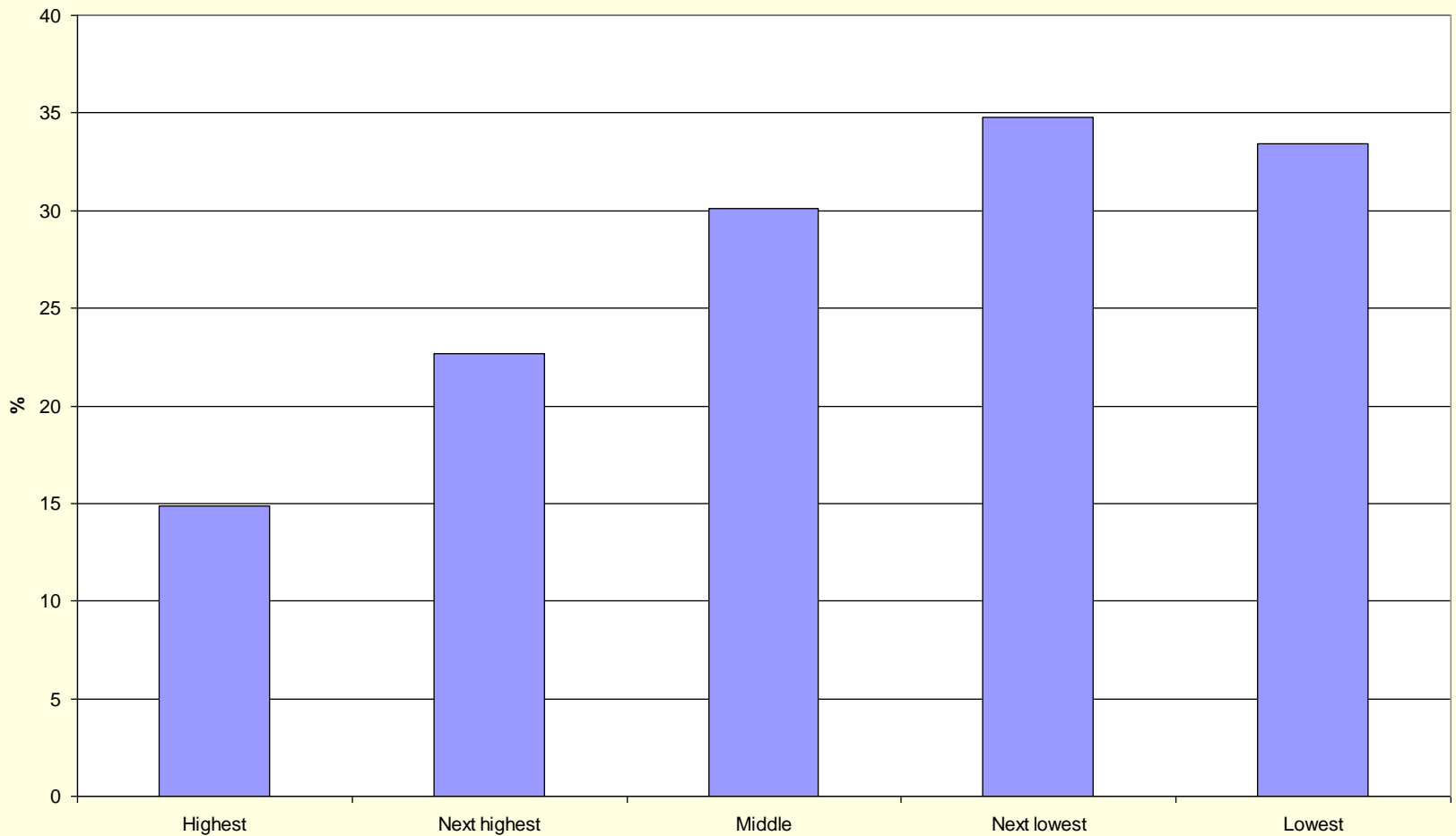
# VET participation by sector





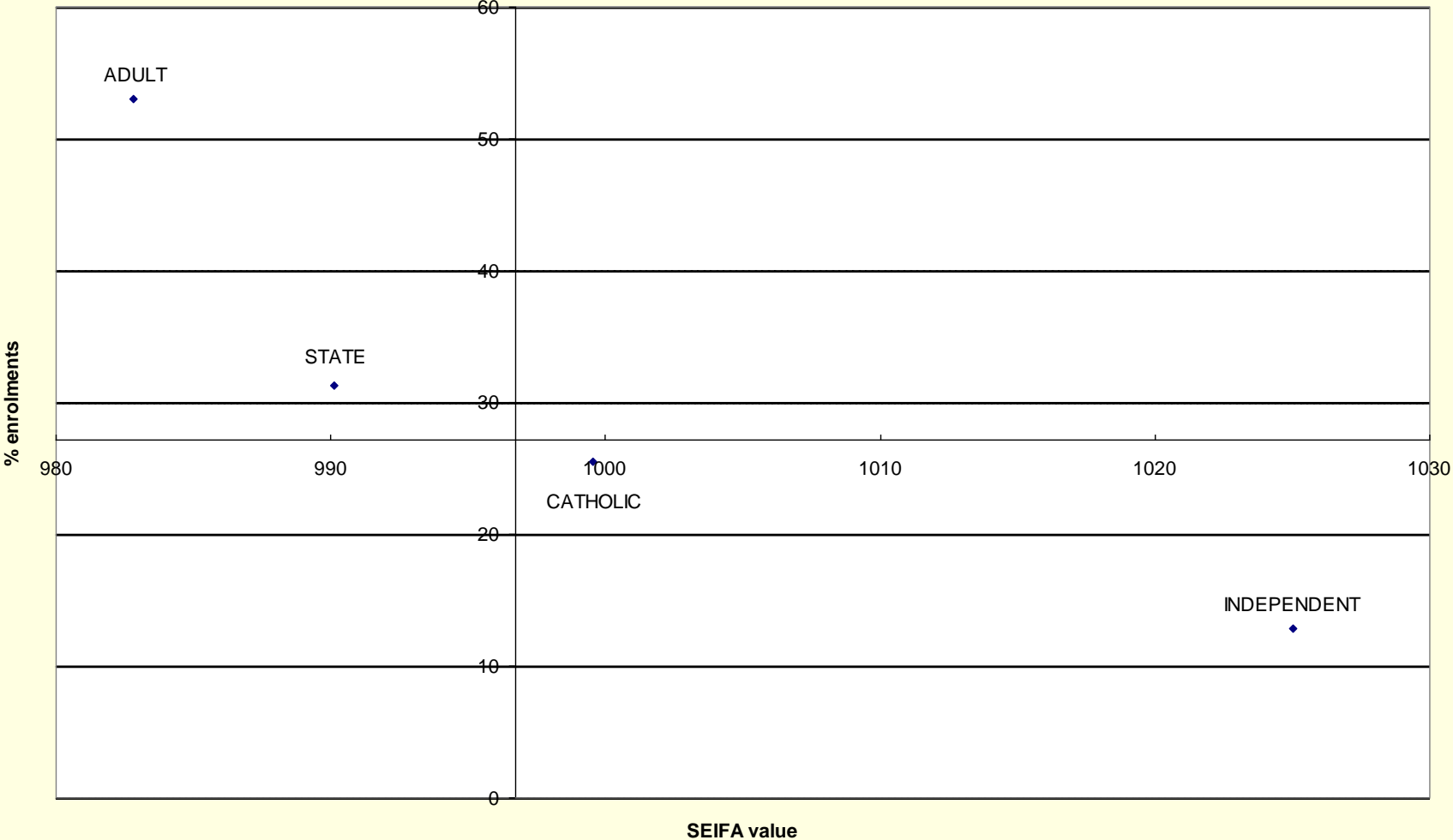
# VET participation by SES

VETiS enrolments by SES, Victoria 2010



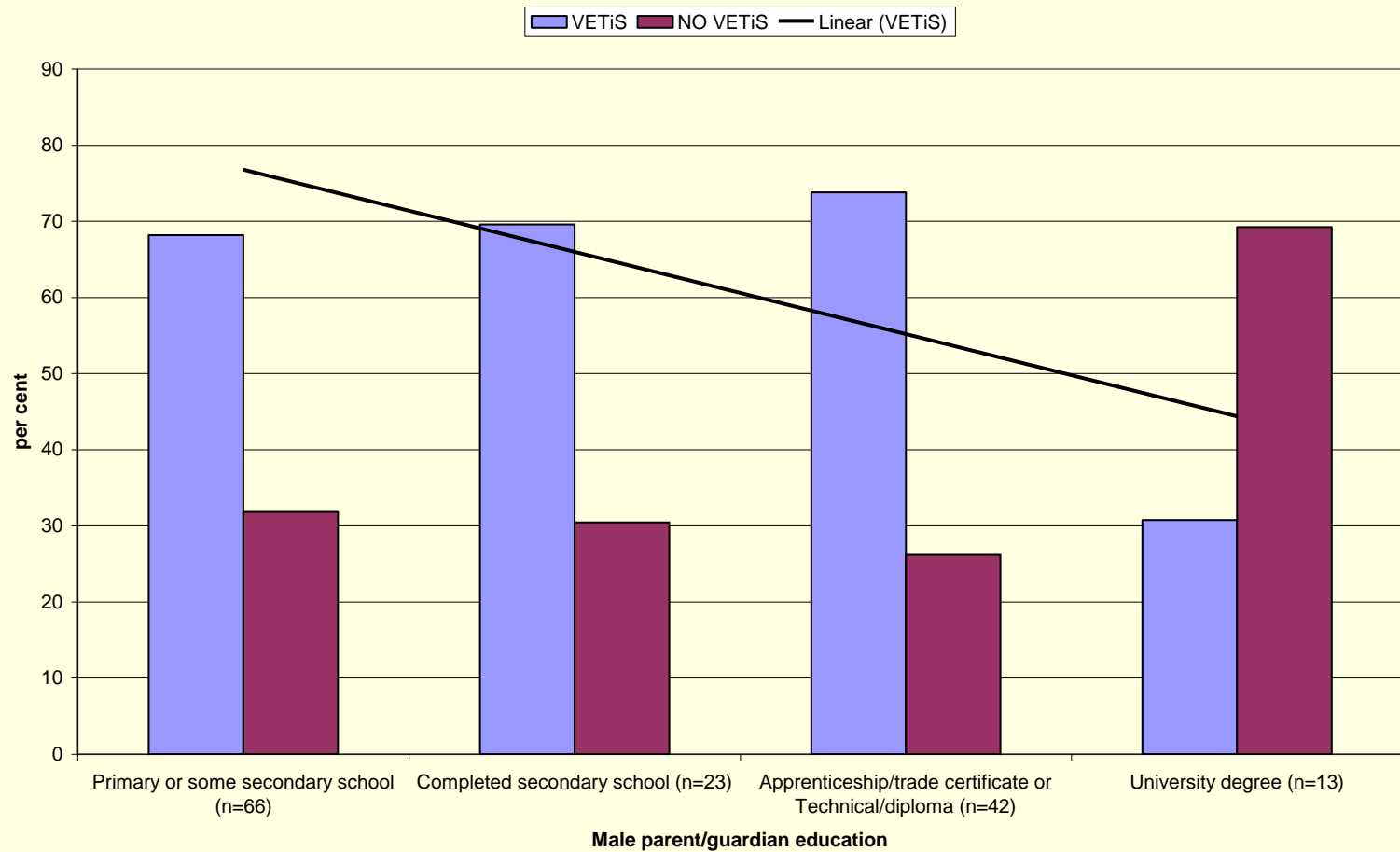
# VET by sector and SES

SECTOR VETIS ENROLMENTS BY SEIFA VALUE



# Rainforest High School, 2009

## VET Participation & Father's Education



## Rainforest High School, 2009 - Views of Teachers

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- “There is a recognition that with 70% of students not university-bound, they need VET. But there is a feeling that it would be easier to teach non-VET students (and less bureaucracy)”.

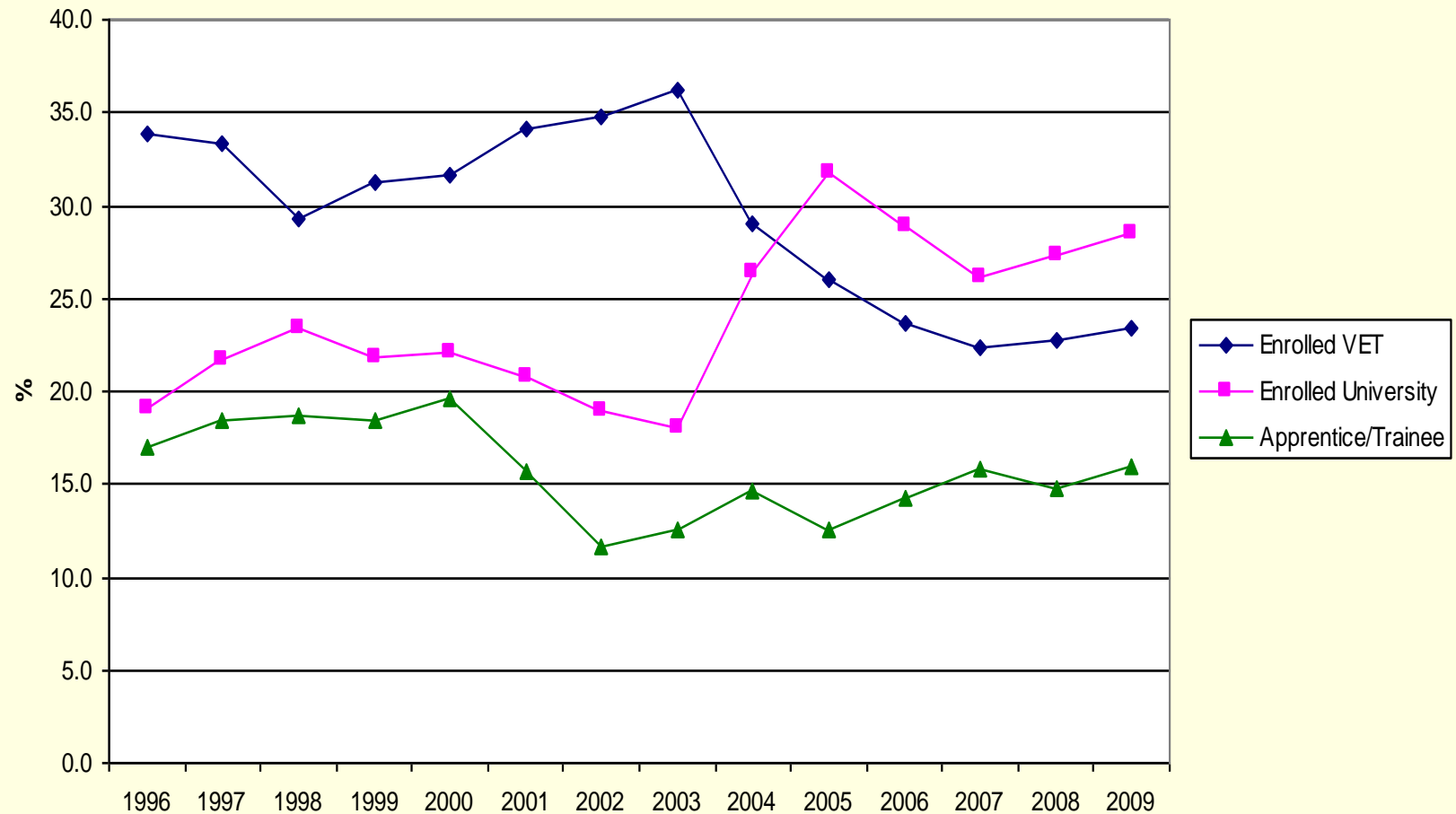


## Rainforest High School, 2009 - Views of Teachers

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- “Yes, the school culture supports VET, but staffing is the problem. The school is five teachers short. So, VET might miss out – academic teachers get priority...”
- “The problem is if a teacher can teach maths and VET, maths gets priority. The issue is competition for staff”.
- “It’s a struggle to put staff through... training – this allows them to assess VET in any area. But then we are told that if the teacher becomes permanent, they won’t be allowed to teach VET. They will teach a ‘proper’ subject”.

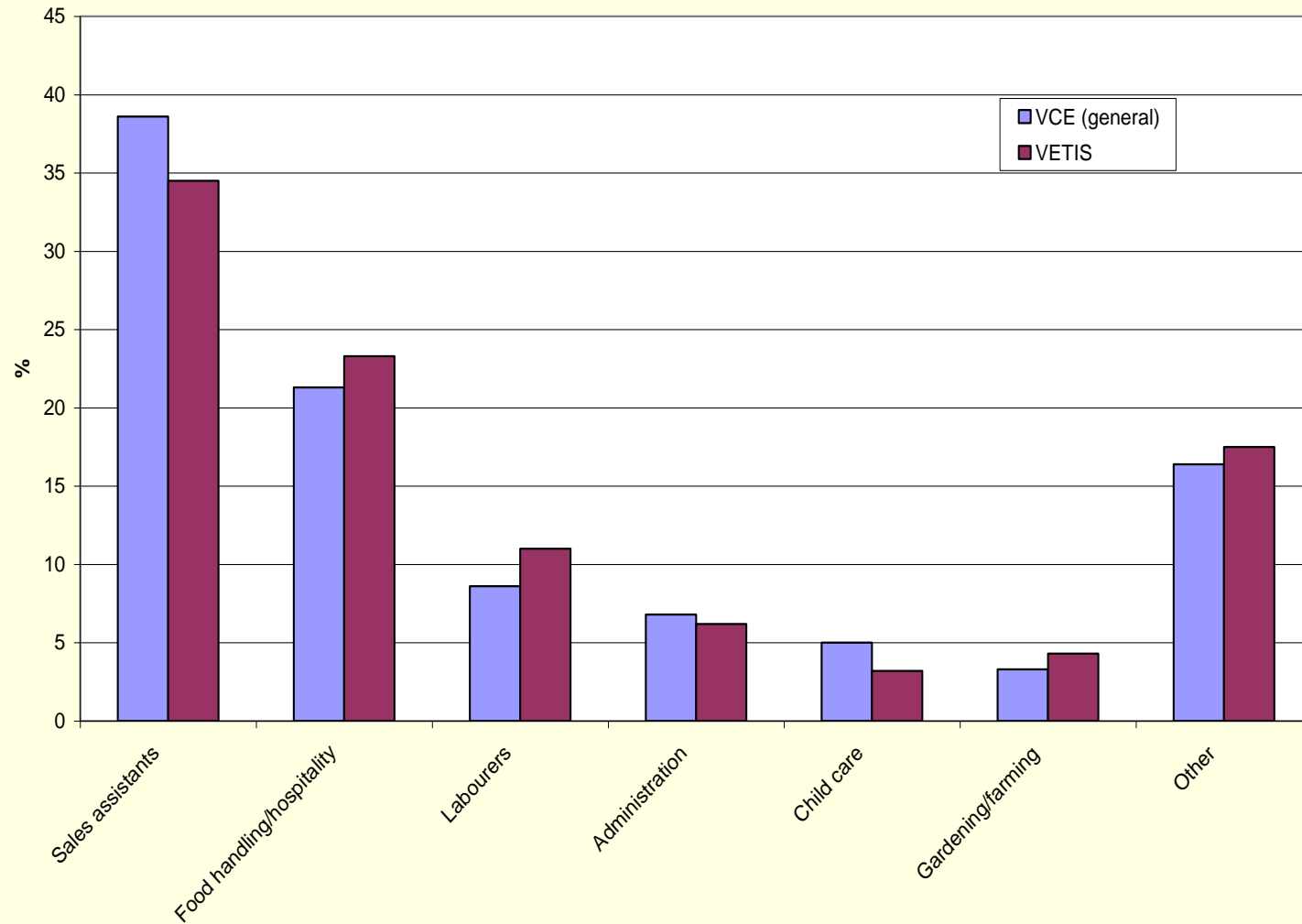
# VARIATION IN VETIS STUDY DESTINATIONS VICTORIA 1996-2009



# VARIATION IN VETIS WORK DESTINATIONS VICTORIA 1996-2009



# MAIN JOBS OF YEAR 12 COMPLETERS WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING, BY PROGRAM, VICTORIA, 2006



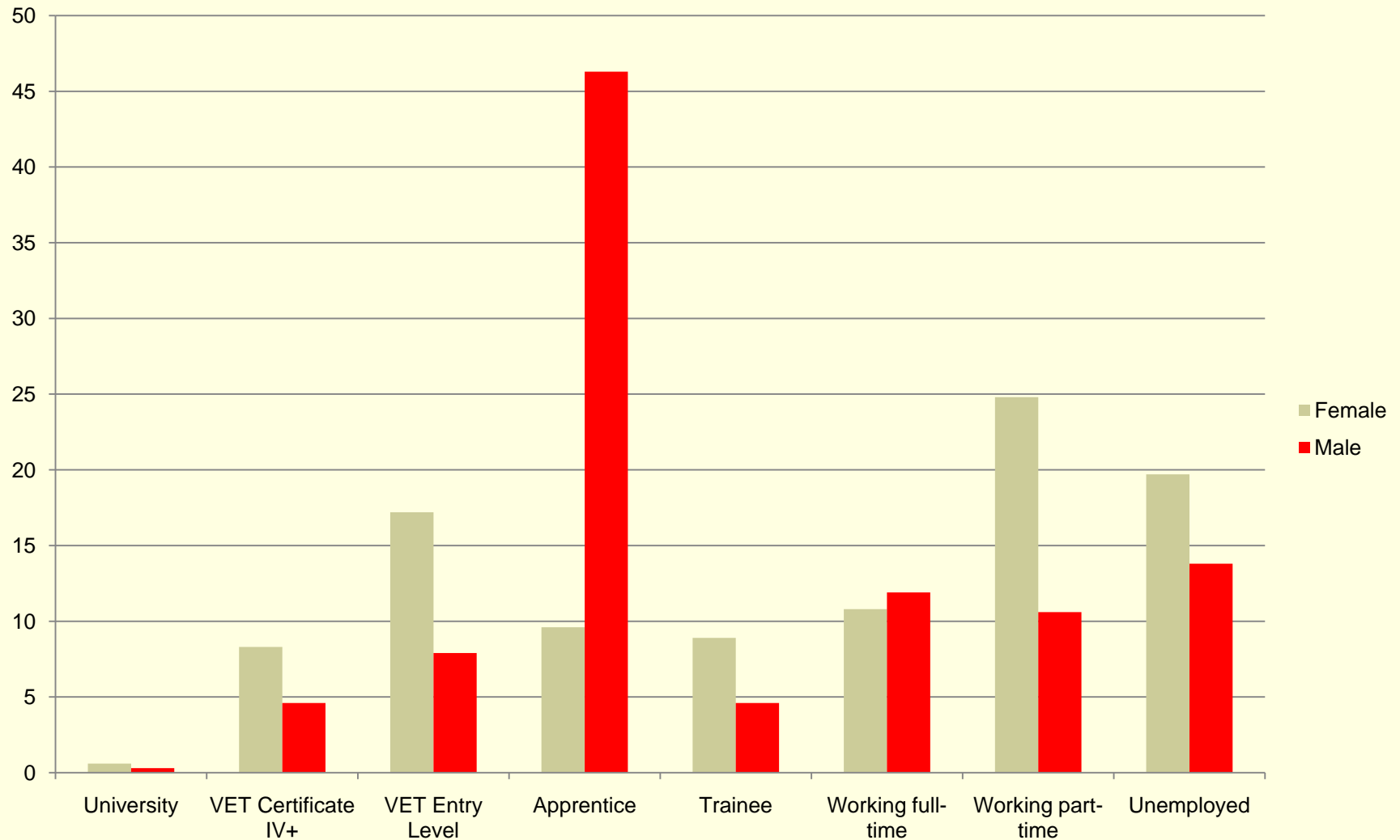


# VETIS AND GENDER

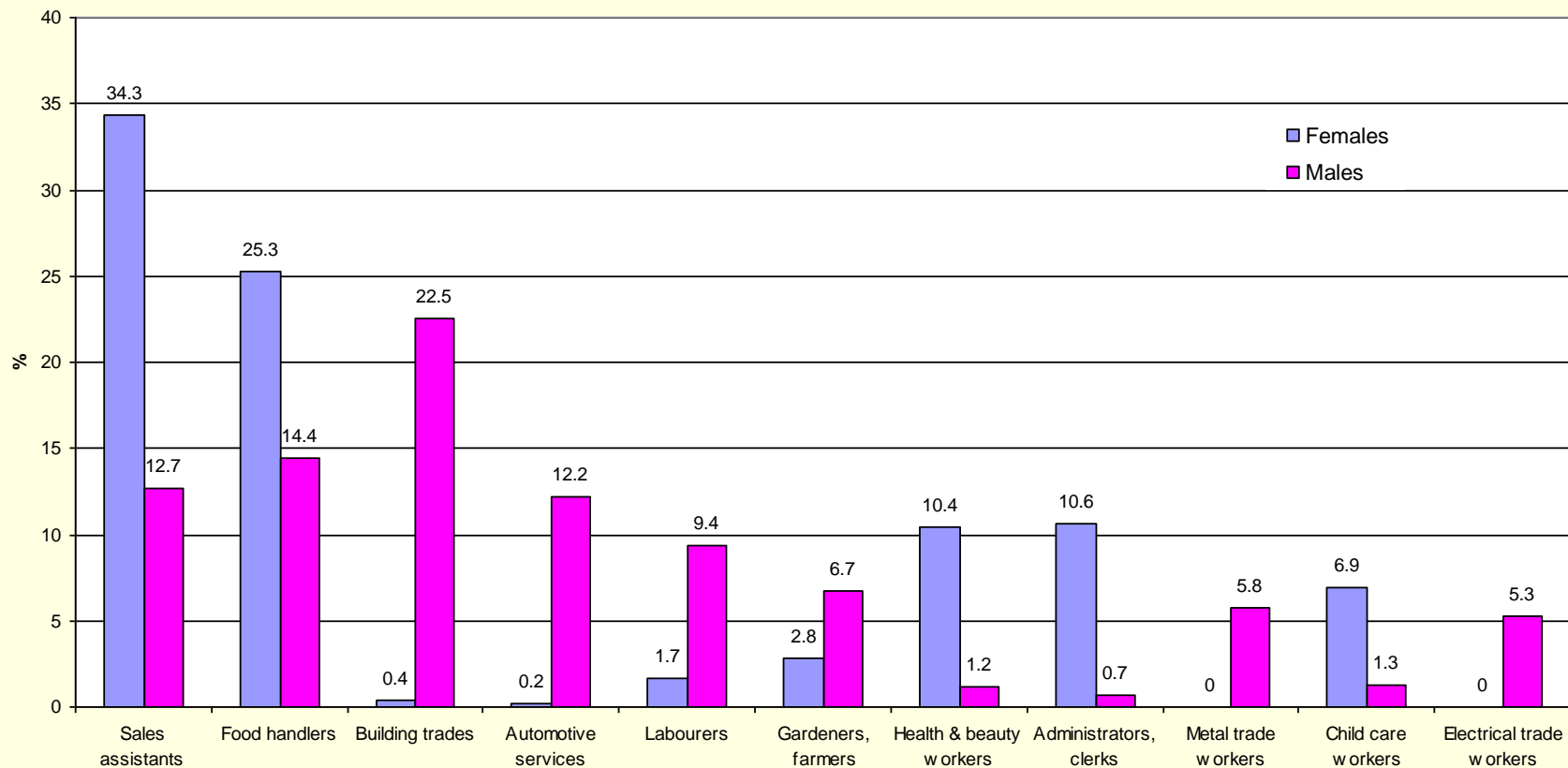
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- Patterns of gendered subject selection persist, e.g. in STEM (Warrington & Younger 2007)
- Patterns of selection prematurely affect the career options of young women (Dawkins & Holding 1987)
- In VET, “culture and practices... remain masculinised” (Butler & Ferrier 2000)
- Employment prospects at top levels much weaker (Weaver-Hightower 2003)

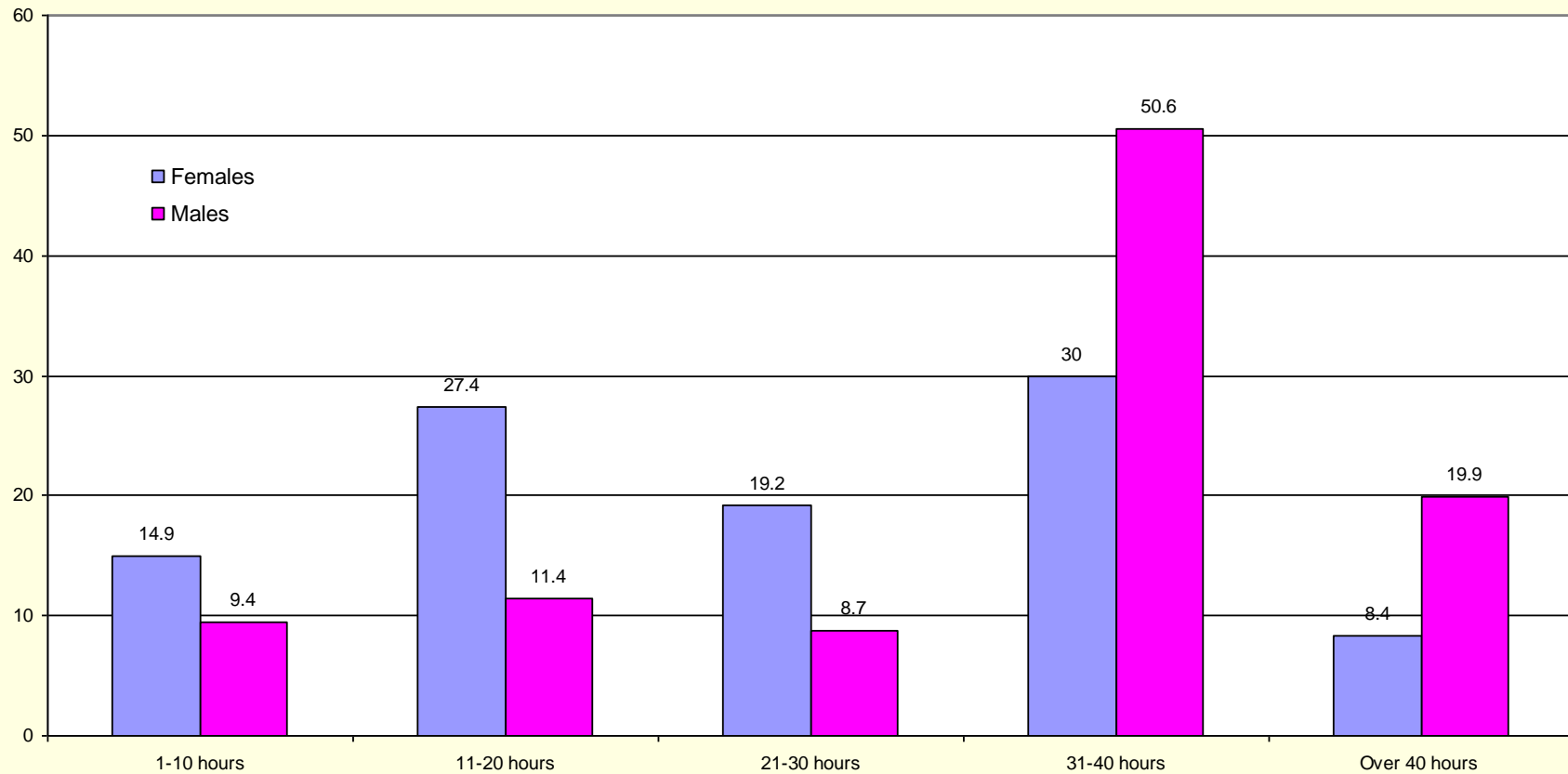
# Destinations of VET Students by Gender, 2007



# OCCUPATIONS OF VCAL GRADUATES BY GENDER, 2007



# HOURS WORKED PER WEEK BY VCAL GRADUATES BY GENDER, 2007



# Problems With VET?

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- Poor image
- Low level qualifications
- Neither specific nor broad generic competencies
- Diluted programs
- No specialist providers
- Continuing social selection
- Gender differences
- Weak transition to labour market – to part-time, casual low-paid jobs

# VET in SCHOOLS

## Democratisation or Social Selection?

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- Provides curriculum options for range of learners
- Engages reluctant learners
- Exposes young people to world of work & employers

BUT...

- Status should be raised and quality improved
- Need to change priorities in allocation of staff & physical resources in schools
- Need to provide coherent, structured programs of VET, not one or two subjects unrelated to the rest of their studies
- Need to ensure that social partners and industry contribute to the training of young people

# Cobden Technical School - 1930

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