

Gauging the Value of Education for Disenfranchised Youth

Flexible Learning Options

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Disengagement of youth from schooling is an issue of significant national and international concern, and is a key driver of educational policy and reform that look to maximise school retention for the benefit of both students and the wider community. In Australia, Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) have arisen as a response to the premature disengagement from schooling of a sizeable number of Australian youth. FLOs attend to the educational, social and well-being needs of young people experiencing complex life circumstances, yet empirical evidence of their value to date has been largely anecdotal. The significance of this book lies in its innovative approach to gauging the value of FLOs—to young people themselves, as well as the wider Australian community. Drawing on past research and new findings from a national investigation, the authors provide novel insight into the pressures pushing young people out of schools and the mechanisms at work in FLOs to re-engage them in education. The varied contributions of this book elucidate many of the measurable impacts of FLOs on the life trajectories of disenfranchised youth, including improved economic integration, mental and emotional wellbeing, and myriad other outcomes. The significance of this project lies in its exploration of how young people and staff understand the transformative nature of the FLO experience, with an analysis that brings to light the wider value of this type of educational intervention in terms of long term community benefit.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword
Dale Murray

Preface
Sue McGinty

1. The Context of Flexible Learning Options
Kitty te Riele

2. Flexible Learning Options in the Neoliberal Educational Landscape
Joseph Thomas

3. Identifying the Defining Features of Flexible Learning Options
George Myconos

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People and Staff 'Talk Up' the Value of Flexible Learning Options
Valda Wallace

5. I Just Want an Education! Young People's Perspectives
Sue McGinty, Sue Bursey and Hurriyet Babacan

6. Practitioner Perspectives
Kimberley Wilson

7. The Importance of Belonging: The Impact of Young People's Sense of Belonging at School on Their Quality of Life as Young Adults
Joseph Thomas and Riccardo Welters

8. Overview, Conclusions and Implications
Brian Lewthwaite, Hurriyet Babacan, Kitty te Riele, Dale Murray and Joseph Thomas

Index

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