

Doing school differently

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Alternative schooling programs could deliver greater learning outcomes for young people who are struggling at school, according to University of South Australia researcher, Dr. Thomas Stehlik.

In a paper presented at the [Education and New Developments 2018](#)

[Conference](#) in Budapest in June, Dr. Stehlik says that the growing not-school movement is challenging the confines of traditional schooling because the one-size-fits-all solution for modern education is not working.

"Compulsory schooling is considered a basic responsibility of civil society, yet for many young people, school is a narrow experience that can restrict their potential," Dr. Stehlik says.

"We need to start looking at education from the perspective of the student.

"The not-school movement is all about encouraging different educational initiatives and practices that 'think outside the box' to provide young people with positive education experiences that they enjoy."

Including all educational programs that occur outside of the school environment, the not-school movement covers activities from art-based initiatives to home schooling. Often unstructured and informal, not-school learning can be delivered by adult educators, youth workers, community developers and parents.

Echoing the findings of Australia's [2018 Gonski Report](#), Dr. Stehlik says that today's mass approach to education is outdated and despite long-term calls for change, little change has occurred.

"Young people have different individual learning needs and talents, but when we try and fit everyone under the same standard schooling model, it doesn't work," Dr. Stehlik says.

"Different educational experiences can provide options for those who do not respond well in traditional school environments, including alternative career and post-school pathways; as well as contributing to an improved

sense of identity and wellbeing.

"Just think of the gap year. One in four young Australians take a gap year post-secondary schooling; it's essentially formal time out of study, yet is looked upon positively as a means to gaining real world experience."

Dr. Stehlik says that Australia needs to think more broadly about how we deliver education, particularly given the growing demand for innovation and creativity and other '21st Century skills' that by definition require unconventional teaching approaches.

"Given the increased use of flexible and online learning methodologies, it is surprising that more alternatives to face-to-face classroom teaching are not being considered," Dr. Stehlik says.

"Innovation is considered critical for the sustained success business, but this starts with education. If we're not being inclusive of those [young people](#) who do not fit the convention, we could be overlooking a whole sector of creative and alternative thinkers.

"We know that one educational size does not fit all. It's time to ask ourselves 'What else can we do?'"

The paper is based on a chapter of Dr. Stehlik's new book, [Educational Philosophy for 21st Century Teachers](#), published by Palgrave Macmillan, which provides an in-depth analysis and review of alternative [education](#) options and questions our current approach to schooling and the traditions upon which it is based.

Provided by University of South Australia

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