Skill shortage must be solved with investment, not cutbacks

TALENT is not determined by demographics. But for too long the attributes that define where virtually everyone ends up in life—attitude, education and opportunity—have been

On Wednesday I presented a leadership and excellence award to Masad Alayyad, the dux of a school in Broadmeadows, who is expected to achieve some of the highest results when the VCE rankings are announced today.

Masad has displayed intelligence, commitment and excellence beyond his 15 years. As this newspaper reported yesterday, his family fled Saddam Hussein’s tyranny and the war in Iraq for the haven that is Australia. His late father and mentor, Jalal, was a surgeon at Frankston Hospital. “He loved

FRANK McGUIRE MP for Broadmeadows:

Australia,” Masad says. “He loved the order, the peace and sense of opportunity.”

Masad’s journey is one of the many remarkable stories behind today’s results. It echoes in Broadmeadows because it symbolizes the hope of wave upon wave of migrants who had the imagination to dream of a better future and the courage to cross the world to pursue it.

Broadmeadows matters because it symbolizes that diminishing Australian values—a fair go for all.

That’s why recent comments from the Coalition about its attitudes to education concern me. Tony Abbott wants to make sure the “right” people are staying at school when we should be encouraging everyone to fulfill their potential.

The Ballarat-Ryan Government has spent $50 million in funding of new schools, co-ordinators who provide vocational pathways, particularly to trades. This will directly target vulnerable people in vulnerable areas at their most
diminished time.

Resolving Australia’s skill shortages and increasing productivity are national objectives that can be achieved only through investment—not cuts.

Broadmeadows, in reinventing itself as a leader, has won the support of information and communications technology giants Intel, Microsoft and Cisco Systems through collaboration in its Veiltech, which brings each evolution of technology for teaching and learning. There are only two ideas left in the world—London and Broadmeadows.

Partnerships between the three tiers of government, business, the philanthropic sector and the academy have been brokered under the Global Learning Village to overcome the failures of the past and provide a model for other Australian communities, particularly those wrestling with the demise of manufacturing and trying to evolve from traditional muscle jobs to smart jobs.

Masad’s school, Ixlan College, has been operational for only 14 years. It teaches 15 classes in a wing cascading by another school when it was about to be

demolished. Ixlan has already secured the top results in Victoria for the percentage of students offered university places and course completions.

The Global Learning Village epitomizes the principle that the best resources should go to areas of greatest need and in an example of what can be achieved when people and communities refuse to give up on areas of disadvantage such as Broadmeadows.

Resilience is the attribute that plays a key role in destoying Masad’s father, Jalal, was killed in a car accident in country Victoria five years ago. “I don’t feel whole without my dad,” she says. Nevertheless, Masad remains optimistic about his future and hopes that his results will allow her to fulfill her potential and honor her father by becoming a surgeon.

Frank McGuire is the founder of the Global Learning Village in Melbourne.