Improving the Career Literacy of Australian Students

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**TAFE Directors Australia and Career Industry Council of Australia
Transitions Roundtable**

Key issues
- Improving quality
- Increasing access particularly to SES target groups
- Utilising the Australian Blueprint for Career Development as a framework for delivering career literacies
- A whole of life approach to development strengthens demand driven education systems and to support human capital development

Introduction

This roundtable is a joint initiative of TAFE Directors Australia and the Career Industry Council of Australia with sponsorship support from education.au

Career development is both a public and private good and the quality of career services can impact on national education, employment and social inclusion priorities[1] and impact on . Globally and nationally there is a heightened interest by policy makers, educators, industry and the community in career development as a catalyst to support human capital development and to address some of the challenges arising out of the global financial crisis.

Clearly, the choices individuals make in relation to learning and work will have a direct impact on the quality and growth of Australia's human capital. Career development services contribute to improvements in retention and completion rates; increase knowledge and understanding of education and employment opportunities; increase self-awareness and confidence in career decision making; and improve opportunity awareness and job-search skills.

Poor career choices do not serve the interests of the individual or the nation. For the individual the career choices made often determine "which aspects of their potentialities people cultivate and which they leave undeveloped"[2]

The Federal Government has accepted recommendations in the Bradley Report and adopted a demand driven student entitlement system for universities from 2012. The Victorian Government has already introduced a demand driven system into vocational education and training. The efficiency and effectiveness of a demand driven system will be directly related to the quality of information available to students about careers, course offerings and

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[1] OECD (2004) Career guidance and Public Policy Bridging the Gap:
[2] See Bandura A.,Babaranelli C.etal (2001) Self Efficacy Beliefs As Shapers of Children's Aspirations and Career Trajectories. Child Development, February 2001

pathways. The quality of career decisions being made by participants will be underpinned by the career management skills they have learnt to explore and inform their decisions.

Importantly, the timing of the roundtable coincides with agreement having been reached for States and Territories to progressively assume primary responsibility for the provision of youth career and transitions programs in a way which engages all school sectors and for the Commonwealth to retain responsibility for national career development[3].

The stakes are high because of the impact of effective career development services on enrolments in post-compulsory education, retention and as a key strategy for addressing the issues arising from and mismatch between persistent unemployment and difficulties in recruiting in certain sectors.

Background

The OECD has recognised that career services are necessary for effective transition systems[4]. In particular, it notes that career management skills are an essential literacy alongside other literacies for successful transitions into and from education, training and work[5]. Globally, some 55 countries have now completed reviews of their career services with the aim of improving quality of career programs and delivery systems.

An increasing number of countries have opted to make career development available throughout lifespan in recognition of a lengthening of active employment, skills adaptation and managing change; recognition that citizens' lives are increasingly characterised by multiple transitions; recognition that career development plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In 2008 Europe s committed to:
1. encouraging the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
2. Facilitating access by all citizens to career services;
3. Improving quality assurance of career service provision;
4. Encouraging coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders[6]

Career development is a key response to the mismatch between persistent unemployment and difficulties in recruiting in certain sectors. And career development is the centrepoint of Europe's new skills for new jobs program.

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[33] See national Partnership agreement on youth transitions and attainment at http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/index.cfm?CFID=16040&CFTOKEN=29245127&jsessionid=043021bbaeca5e0fc6ce605e4a456e35c254

[4] See OECD Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life at the http://www.oecd.org/document/5/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_2465989_1_1_1_1,00.html

[5] M.Jackson (2006) Are Success Learning Experiences and Self-Efficacy Beliefs Associated With Occupational Interests and Aspirations of At-Risk Urban Youth? Journal of Career Assessment, Vol. 14, No. 3, 333-353; D Mayston (2002) Evaluating the benefits of career guidance; Grubb, W. N. (2002). *Who am I: The inadequacy of career information in the information age.* Paper prepared for the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review. Retrieved June 23, 2009, from http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/35/1954678.pdf

[6] Council of The European Union (2008). *Press Release: Council Resolution on Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies,* accessed 13 January 2009 from http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&q=Council+Resolution+on+better+integrating+lifelong+guidance+into&btnG=Search&meta=.

These four priorities are a useful framework to consider progress of national career development systems. A whole of life approach to career development strengthens capacity to support young Australians and facilitates a level of parental engagement not achievable by any other means.

Crucially, current government policies have begun to target initiatives at 19- 24 year olds. In addition the newly launched national careers hotline focuses on adults. The next step could be to broaden services across the lifespan. In terms of workforce preparation and development (Blustein, 2006; Smith et al., 2009) three dimensions are worth highlighting:
   a. *Workforce preparation* - supporting the career development of young people prior to entering the labour market.
   b. *Workforce adaptability and sustainability* - supporting the career development of employed workers.
   c. *Workforce reintegration* - supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and between jobs in different enterprises.

In relation to the VET sector, increasing access to career development programs across the lifespan would substantially address the needs of the adult student population. It would increase the capacity for informed learning choices and form a significant component of the infrastructure required to deliver COAG outcomes.

National partnership agreement on youth attainment and transitions

In relation to this roundtable discussion the new National partnership agreement is a critical element. It is a recognition that primary responsibility for delivery of career development and transition services for young people is with the states and territories.

Existing programs will be consolidated under four theme areas:
a. Maximising Engagement, Attainment and Successful Transitions
b. School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Community and Education Engagement)
c.Youth Connections
d. National Career Development
Indicative actions under the national partnership agreement include;
   • Offering universal high quality individualised career development and pathways planning
   • Involving business and industry and parents/families, in young people's career development
   • Improving the industry relevance of career advice and tailoring of appropriately

Indicative outcomes to be demonstrated include:

Participation
   • increased participation and engagement of young people aged 15 to 24 in education and training
   • improved access to a broad range of flexible and relevant learning options
Engagement
   • Improved student engagement in the learning
   • Improved access to quality career development and pathways planning

- Improved early identification and support for young people disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education
- Improvements in personal skills and well-being for young people at risk
- Well established, sustainable partnerships exist between the education sectors, between jurisdictions and with schools, industry, families and community
- Improved access to quality mentoring program

Attainment
- Increased attainment of core foundation and employability skills
- Increased qualification attainment of young people aged 15 to 24 including indigenous youth

Transitions
- Increased numbers of young people making smooth and efficient transitions from school to further education, training and employment

It is of critical importance to consolidate good practice and sustain momentum in this environment. How can we ensure that career programs on offer in states and territories are sufficient to meet the challenge of a simple premise of informed choice for individuals?

A commitment to quality

Who will deliver these services and how will compliance to national standards for career development practitioners be addressed by states and territories?

Too often career service delivery in schools and other education institutions is being carried out by well intentioned but unqualified staff. It is one of the few areas in education systems where a lack of professional qualification has been acceptable, and Australia has brought to account for this failure of policy and practice (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002). One outcome has been that many students have been given advice which is little more than personal opinion with all of the consequent biases. Students should not be subjected to inappropriate and inaccurate information and advice which impacts on the notion of informed choice.

As part of the challenge presented by the OECD, all member associations represented on the Career Industry Council of Australia have unanimously accepted that by 2012 all career development practitioners will have qualifications that meet the requirements of the Professional Standards for Career Development Practitioners (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2006). Furthermore, CICA has argued that these standards should be adopted by all states and territories. In addition guidelines have been developed for information and service delivery. How should state and territories monitor information and service provision? And importantly, what processes and assessment should be in place to accredit/endorse programs.

Career literacies - developing career management skills

Career literacies are essentially the career management skills needed by individuals to respond and adapt to change and to create, construct, design and identify paid employment opportunities, life and learning experiences that will enable them to create satisfying lives.[7]

Refocusing careers education to teach career management competences to citizens as skills to be reused over one's lifetime was noted as a key factor in wage differentials in OECD countries in the OECD's (2002) Education Policy Analysis[8].

Common elements of effective career programs include an exploration of self (particularly in relation to interests, skills, values and beliefs); opportunity awareness (learning and work options), and decision making and career management skills development.

These elements are central components of the Australian Blueprint for career development. This framework consists of three key areas and 11 competencies

Personal Management
Build and maintain a positive self image
Interact positively and effectively with others
Change and grow throughout life
Learning and Work Exploration
Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals
Locate and effectively use career information
Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy
Career Building
Secure/create and maintain work
Make career enhancing decisions
Maintain balanced life and work roles
Understand the changing nature of life and work roles
Understand, engage in and manage the career building process

States and Territories have signed off on this framework and the Career Industry Council supports its further implementation. It is possible to map all career programs against this framework and if this occurred we would move one step closer to greater national consistency while enabling jurisdictions to maintain a level of flexibility. These competencies also take into account notion of resilience, employability skills, enterprise skills and self efficacy. Already a large number of career programs within schools have begun mapping their programs against this framework but overall the progress of its implementation has stalled but it may be a useful framework to support a demand driven system.

In terms of training programs, gaining acknowledgement by the NQC of the importance of including career literacies in training package development is an illustration of integration of skill development in existing learning structures and a useful step forward .

Challenges for career development to meet he needs of a demand driven system of education?

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[7] McMahon, M., Patton, W., & Tatham, P. (2003). *Managing life learning and work in the 21st century: Issues informing the design of an Australian blueprint for career development*. Subiaco, Australia: Miles Morgan Australia.

[8] European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture 2004, p.6

"Career development learning puts students at the heart of the learning process"[9].

Most young Australians have access to some career services but the inconsistency of access and quality has meant that outcomes have been less than desirable. Education and training completion rates have hardly improved over the past decade and variations in enrolments in many universities have reached chronic levels.

Why are current career programs failing to address the most basic of outcomes for effective careers advice and will a new partnership agreement lead to quality improvement? For example, is it reasonable as the Smith Family reports[i] that a significant number of students surveyed expressed incompatible education and career intentions or that a large proportion of young people surveyed did not know how to get the job they would most like.

The answer may not be that complex. There is plenty of evidence of good practice across the country and the results are impacting positively on the lives of many Australians. What has not yet been achieved is to deliver high quality consistently. Shifting primary responsibility for career development to the states and territories provides added challenges for achievement of a consistent approach to delivery of career services.

Yet this shift is both recognition of existing activity in this area by states and territories and that more needs to be done so that better outcomes can be achieved.

And, although more than $600million dollars is being made available over the next five years for career and transition support, it is a relatively small investment when considered against key measures to support Australian youth in the 2009-10 Commonwealth budget of around $72billion[10]. This expenditure comprises jobs and skills funding, youth careers and transitions programs, education and training funding and employment services.

SES target groups and social inclusion

For young people with a disability or mental health issue the evidence is clear. Full participation in education and employment is yet to be achieved. The percentage of people with a disability accessing some form of vocational employment and training activity or a New Apprenticeship remains significantly below the broader community[ii].

And, within higher education the Bradley review provides a clear illustration that when career development services are not sufficiently developed in high schools and colleges there is a flow on to post compulsory education with regard to retention and attainment. The level of remedial support programs in higher education is increasing and in effect the Australian community risks paying twice for the learning that should have occurred in high school and at colleges.

High remediation rates represent a broken promise to students and their families. They also represent a colossal waste of national resources. For example the United States spends an estimated $1.4 billion on remedial courses at community colleges alone[iii].

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[9] Prof Tony Watts, ALTC symposium, Melbourne 2008
[10] See 2009 budget and CICA occasional paper Number2 at cica.org.au

Careers Scotland found that there is clear and systematic evidence that school pupils with career goals have higher attainment levels than those without[iv]. Another study found that a positive gain in academic achievement was produced when students were provided with career education interventions as compared to situations in which students were not provided with career education[v].

A commitment to access and cost effectiveness

Research indicates that career services have positive impact upon individuals and in various domains of their life and work (Bimrose & Barnes, 2006; Kirschner, Hoffman, & Hill, 1994; Lewis, 2001; Maguire, 2004; Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Pickering & Vacc, 1984; Rochlen, Milburn, & Hill, 2004; Swanson, 1995; Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002; Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003; Whiston & Oliver, 2005; Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998). All Australians should have access to career services throughout their lives. Career services do not need to be expensive, but cost-effectiveness depends on the level of staff resources to meet but not exceed the needs of the individual.

Where individuals demonstrate a high level of capacity and readiness to make career decisions then self-help services may be adequate most of the times. Moderate readiness may involve brief individual interventions combined with access to other resources. However individuals demonstrating a lower level of readiness to make career decisions may well best be served by individual services including case managed support. The most recent LSAY report highlights the importance of effective careers advice for disadvantaged students[11].

In essence what the paper proposes is a cascade model of career services delivery in which all Australians have access to a reasonable level of career services while those most in need have access to a comprehensive range of career services. A widening of access would strengthen the capacity of parents to support the transitions of their children.

Career Information [12]

Accessing career information is the most common career activity undertaken by Australian youth [13]but is not enough on its own and needs to be part of a suite of programs and resources.

Australia has an award winning best practice career information site in myfuture (www.myfuture.edu.au). Yet governments and departments often compete against this and other sites. There is no need for this to occur. It would be far more efficient to enhance existing web sites through the addition and integration of Web2 technologies to support access through improved distribution processes.

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[11] Curtis, D., McMillan, J. (2008) Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth - Research Report54, School Non-completers: Profiles and Initial Destinations. Retrieved 12 January, 2009 from http://www.acer.edu.au/lsay/research.html

[12] Career information is any text (in any media) that seeks to assist in the career development process of individuals by providing general information about career as a developmental process that reflects the personal values and experiences of the individual, as well as specific information about education and training pathways, labour market trends and industry and occupational data.[12]

[13] Rothman, S., Hillman, K. (2008) Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth - Research Report 53, Career Advice in Australian Secondary Schools: Use and Usefulness. Retrieved 30 October, 2008 from http://www.acer.edu.au/lsay/research.html

Final comments

The global financial crisis and strengthening Australia's human capital are key drivers for the current change that is focused up skilling Australians. It is an important strategy for future economic development and participation. It is highly likely that Australia will again face skills shortages in a post GFC world.

It is also highly likely that very nature of work itself has changed and is continuing to change as a consequence of the GFC.

Individuals are now expected to be consummate managers of their future in an environment of further casualisation of the workforce. The entry pathways are becoming less obvious.

The students in grades 7-10 in high schools across the country are being groomed for an education and work environment that will have disappeared by the time they arrive. In this uncertainty they will need to have career management skills of the highest quality.

Appendix

What do we mean by a career and career development?

The language of career practitioners is a challenge for policymakers and for the public because there is a lack of consistency in usage and terminology is applied differently in different programs funded by governments.

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) has attempted to address this issue through the development of a range of frameworks for practitioners, information and service delivery

CICA defines a career as

"Career is the sequence and variety of work roles (paid and unpaid), which one undertakes throughout a lifetime".

CICA defines career development as the

"The process of managing life, learning, and work over the life span."

Put more broadly the EU recently confirmed the OECD definition;

> *" as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers*
> *a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills."* [14]

This broad definition takes into account a range of programs in practices currently in place in Australia and is representative of the key task of career development services to achieve the desired outcomes of COAG and the Bradley review.

How do career development services add value?

Career develop services are recognised by the OECD as both a public and private good (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004a, 2004b). When delivered effectively services can:

- Improve retention and completion rates
- Improve the social inclusion processes
- Act as a catalyst to productivity improvement
- Act as a major connecting agent between industry and educators.
- Increase knowledge and understanding of education and employment opportunities
- Increase self-awareness

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[14] EU,2008

- Make people more confident in their career decision making
- Result in a wider range of career options being explored
- Improve job-search skills

Career development and workforce development

Career development is crucial to workforce preparation and development (Blustein, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Three dimensions are worth highlighting:

d. *Workforce preparation* - supporting the career development of young people prior to entering the labour market.
e. *Workforce adaptability and sustainability* - supporting the career development of employed workers.
f. *Workforce reintegration* - supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and between jobs in different enterprises.

What kinds of services are useful?

Services need to be available when and where individuals need them. In a sense, levels of need can be in terms of a cascade approach to service delivery. That is everyone has access to a minimum level of service and more intensive services are delivered on a needs basis...

Typical career services may include
- Career counselling
- Web based services
- Career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms)
- Assessment and self-assessment tools
- Career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills)
- Taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services
- Help lines
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Work integrated learning.

In a recent Warwick university report[15] clients describe career intervention s a being useful particularly when it:
- challenges ideas and understanding;
- inspires self-confidence and self-understanding;
- gives direction, focus or a plan for the future;
- provides access to information, knowledge and
- provides structured opportunities for discussion with a professional

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[15] Warwick Institute for Employment Research, Bulletin Number 90, 2009

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Appendix 2: Indicative Outcomes to be Demonstrated for Provision of Project Funding

REFORM AREA	INDICATIVE ACTIONS	INDICATIVE OUTCOMES
Multiple learning pathways	Improving access to a broader range of more flexible, relevant and engaging learning options Creating opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom Providing comprehensive program and subject choice, flexible timetabling and instruction methods Increasing engagement by Indigenous young people and young people with a disability Improving student progression and credit transfer to higher skill and qualification levels Improving access to structured workplace learning	Participation Increased participation and engagement of young people aged 15-24 in education and training Improved access to a broad range of flexible and relevant learning options Engagement Improved student engagement in their learning Improved access to quality career development and pathways planning Improved access to quality mentoring programs Improved early identification and support for young people disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education Improvements in personal skills and wellbeing for young people at risk
Career development	Offering universal high quality individualised career development and pathways planning Involving business and industry and parents/families, in young people's career development Improving the industry relevance of career advice and tailoring it appropriately	Well established, sustainable partnerships exist between the education sectors, between jurisdictions and with schools, industry, families and the community Attainment Increased attainment of core foundation and employability skills Increased qualification attainment of young people aged 15-24, including Indigenous youth
Mentoring	Increasing the provision of a variety of meaningful quality mentoring opportunities Improving mentor training programs and increasing the numbers of trained mentors Increasing the use of mentoring to support young people to develop resilience and provide direct assistance at important transition points in	Transitions Increased numbers of

	their lives Adopting national benchmarks relating to the design and implementation of mentoring programs	young people make smooth and efficient transitions from school to further education, training and employment.
School, Business and Community Partnerships	Aligning policies, programs and services to complement the new School Business Community Partnership brokers and remove duplication or overlap Working with the Commonwealth to maximise outcomes from the School Business Community Partnership which will be jointly established to improve partnerships between schools, the community and business	
Individualised, Personalised Support for Young People at Risk	Aligning policies, programs and services to complement the new Youth Connections Program and remove duplication or overlap Working with the Commonwealth to maximise outcomes from the Youth Connections Program which will be jointly established to provide and improve the early identification of young people at risk of disengaging and improve support available for at risk and disengaged young people	

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[i] Beavis, Curtis, Curtis, 2005, What Do Students Know About Work? Senior Secondary School Students' Perception of the World of Work

[ii] Macali, (2006) Contemporary disability employment policy in Australia: how can it best support transitions from welfare to work?

[iii] ACT –Making the dream a reality

[iv] Careers Scotland (2002), Career Goals and Educational Attainment: What Is the Link? Retrieved 10 January, 2009 from Careers Scotland, http://www.careers- scotland.org.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=9358&sID=1164

[v] Evans and Burck, (1992), The Effects of Career Education Interventions on Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.