

# Inclusive Career Development: Literature Review



## PREFACE

This review of literature has been compiled as part of the ‘Supporting schools in transition to work for students with disability’ project, referred to as ‘Inclusive Career Development’ for the purpose of this review and project. It is supported by the Gandel Foundation in partnership with Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), Australian Centre for Career Education and the University of Newcastle.

The Inclusive Career Development project aims to address the current inequity experienced by people with disability in their transition from school to work. This project aims to support schools to implement evidence-based and effective, school to work transition and career development for students with disability. Within this project there is an aim to support schools to identify and address gaps in practice, and to develop the skills, knowledge and tools to improve post-school outcomes for students with disability. The project will work with students with significant disability in years 9 – 12.

## OVERVIEW

This literature review has been framed within a human rights model of disability, underpinned by a Capabilities Approach. Extensive work has been conducted to identify the indicators of the most relevant practice in the career development field and there has been significant steps taken nationally as well as internationally in the field in recent times. Therefore, it is pertinent to review the current literature to establish a clear picture of the current landscape with the intention of informing future career development inclusive of students with disability.

To achieve this end, a literature review was conducted to explore current literature and research findings that investigated good/proven practices of career development for students with disability. The term ‘good practice’ is the description of the best working standards or guidelines that provide the best course of action and outcomes based on the context (Bretschneider et al, 2004). These positive and desirable practices will be used to develop a benchmarking tool to enable schools to self-assess and address gaps in career and transition programs and support, and inform the development of learning resources for schools to implement, and address career development for all, including students with disability.

A number of search databases were investigated with appropriate keywords and/or a combination of keywords as the search syntax. Text relating to the terms ‘career education’, ‘high school’, ‘secondary school’, ‘disability’, ‘transition to work/planning’, ‘work studies’, ‘career support’, ‘career learning’, ‘employment pathways’, ‘good practice’, ‘paid work/employment’ were included. Research articles, reports and reviews published from 2017 to 2022 were prioritised, given recent changes in the education system that reflect the importance of 21st century relevant employment skills (Ledger et al., 2019) and the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market.

Seminal texts, however, were included. Additionally, the search word 'Australia' was used to focus the initial investigation within local research outputs and development.

A range of key themes were collated from the literature search in accordance with a human rights model of disability. These themes have also been informed by career development theory and disability focused career theory such as that by Kohler (1996) whose taxonomy references five dimensions relevant to people with disability. Kohler's five themes relating each student's 'transition' planning, are:

- At the centre, **Student-focused planning** (including transition plan development, student participation in the planning process, and planning strategies) has a strong relationship with;
- **Student development** (including life skills education, employment skills education, structured work experience, career and vocational education, and assessment).
- **Interagency collaboration** (including collaborative service delivery and inter-organisational frameworks) in relationship with;
- **Family involvement** (including family participation in transition planning, family education and empowerment); and
- Many aspects of localised **Programme structures** (including programme evaluation, resource allocation, and human resource development).
- Systems-focussed **Programme structures** (for example, policy, philosophy, strategic planning).

Building on these themes, we consider that career development occurs within the complex interconnections of the individual, family, social, community, and political influences. The term career development has also been used deliberately, in contrast to transition. Transition reflects the shift from one situation to another, whereas career development occurs across contexts and time. Often students with disability are given limited opportunities to engage with career development and the focus traditionally has been on transition (Lindstrom et al., 2020; Sefora & Ngubane, 2021).

While each dimension of Kohler's taxonomy is deemed important, it is also relevant to understand the nature of the relationship between these constructs. Therefore, we wish to add to the taxonomy and show a construction of career development for students with disability from a system perspective. This perspective recognises "the culture in which the person is embedded creates the meaning of disability, creates the identity of the individual, and in very real ways, directs what is possible in terms of adjustment and adaptation" (Millington, 2012, p. 82). People with disability live within the cultural context of Australia, affected by our own disability policies. Additionally, people with disability live within the cultural context of their family system and urban or regional contexts (Gao et al., 2022). From this systems perspective (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020) we can offer an understanding of how disability is perceived and responded to and provides an understanding of the afforded benefits and challenges that arise from the relationships between the parts. This perspective also assists us in planning for a student's future, both individually and collaboratively.

A capabilities approach to career development underpins the human rights model, articulating the right of people with disability to live independently and be included in the community. The capabilities approach contributes to the model by placing the student at the centre of their decision making, and their strengths, or capabilities. It does not 'place' people into areas according to their disability. Brown et al. (2017) report on the significance of a capabilities approach in career development, where:

*in regard to youth employment programs, this underlines the importance of context in building or consolidating capability; without effective access to opportunities and resources these young jobseekers are effectively denied the freedom to develop their capabilities for economic and social participation.*

*Implicit in the capabilities approach is the recognition that diverse effort across multiple sectors – not simply service providers and government – is critical to delivering on the necessary conditions and opportunities outlined above.*

*Access to quality training and education, real work experience opportunities, and specialised support necessitates contributions from education providers, employers and health providers respectively. (p.16)*

Thus both the human rights model of disability using a capabilities approach are used to frame this literature review with a focus on the research question: *What are the good and desirable practices that inform a successful and inclusive career development framework in Australian schools for students with disability?*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Disability inclusion is a fundamental and inalienable human right where students with disability are entitled to equal access to all educational opportunities with the expectation that disability-related access barriers are minimised or eliminated. Through this lens it is recognised that people with disability have the right to reach their full potential on an equal basis with others, in accordance with national and international commitments to disability rights such as the Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). This includes access to mainstream education and career development opportunities that seek to raise aspirations and expectations in order for people with disability to achieve their full potential.

Inclusion has its origins in a human rights philosophy and is based on the assumption that students with a disability have the right to all educational and career development opportunities in the same manner as students without disabilities. However, significant limitations remain for students with disabilities in their access to qualified career development, especially when in specialist education settings.

Current evidence demonstrates that young people with disability in Australia are less likely to transition well from secondary school into employment. Evidence shows that young people with disability are more likely to drop out of school early, are more likely to be excluded from the labour force, have fewer educational qualifications,

experience poverty, hardship and social isolation, have poorer health (including mental health) outcomes and are more likely to be targets of violence (Anderson et al., 2021; Shaeffer, 2019).

In some contexts, both segregated and mainstream, there exists a prevailing culture that school-based careers advisors risk limiting the exploration of mainstream education pathways and open employment opportunities for students with disability. In maintaining this approach, the schools are contributing to young people missing out on moderating and engaging in self-determination when it comes to career development and workplace exploration (Scheef et al., 2018; Wakeford & Waugh, 2010). This results in the limitations in choices for young people with disability, especially in Victorian specialist schools, which often have a staff member referred to as a 'transition coordinator', whereas a mainstream school will more likely have a 'careers coordinator' (Wakeford & Waugh, 2010). This distinction is relevant when considering equality of access to career development for people with and without disability. In response, through a human rights lens, all students should have equitable access to career development. While still a common term in regard to their conceptualisation and enactment of their role to support students with a disability to prepare for post-secondary goals, (Lillis & Kutscher, 2021; Scheef & Mahfouz, 2020) the notion of a 'transition coordinator' can present as limiting, with a focus on a dedicated and possibly even segregated suite of transition pathways such as non-vocational disability services as opposed to a broad array of career options.

In Australia, the differentiation between transition coordinators and career practitioners is reinforced by the fact that in 2011, only 5% of specialist schools for students with disability were members of the Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV), while over 90% of mainstream schools were members (National Disability Service, 2017). This highlights the evidence that specialist schools may not view their student cohort as needing career development and do not identify their students as possessing the potential for determining their own career pathways into open employment.

## THE ROLE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career development is defined by Gigliotti, for the Australian Centre for Career Education (2022) as the process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan. It is the development of knowledge and skills through a planned programme of learning capabilities, training, and work-related experiences that assist students to make informed course and career decisions. Career development is a process that can be taught and acknowledges that:

- emotions and feelings are a critical part of the decision-making process
- there is a cycle to the decision-making process
- all people have skills and abilities that can be identified as work readiness
- career interventions happen across the lifespan
- specialist skills are needed to build environments where students, youth and adults can conceptualise a better future for themselves and then take positive steps to make that happen – through hope

Key pillars of career development, according to this definition, include career education (interventions), vocational assessment and careers counselling. High-quality career development can support students to develop their career decision-making and management abilities and increase their work readiness. It helps students to effectively transition to study, skills or work pathways and navigate career options throughout their lives.

The current employment landscape in Australia reflects social, economic and technological change that affects all young people. The challenge of meeting the demands calls for the engagement with employers, an awareness of what already works, and a consistency across the delivery of career development in schools (NSW Government, 2022).

The role of career development is to support students with access to quality career related learning that includes work education, study, authentic interaction with local industry and workplace learning (NSW Government, 2022). Within the national landscape, the Commonwealth of Australia Department of Education and Training Careers and Skills Pathways Report (2017) stated that in Australia, career development is however, poorly positioned to meet the needs of the current complexities of the school to work transition. Its report commented on career support that “tends to be fragmented, delivered at discrete junctures rather than consistently across a person’s life phases, and of variable quality across jurisdictions, industries, and types of education and training” (p. i). Given that career provision for all students is less than desirable, the importance of career development for students who are at risk of being marginalised, such as those with disability, becomes even more significant.

Through a human rights lens, the above definitions of career development are necessary if we are to view students with disability as equal, contributing members of society with goals, skills and interests and most importantly with the right to self-determination and access to further education and open employment. This definition challenges the current differentiation between transition or pathways coordinators in specialist schools and career coordinators in mainstream schools. Rather, we are encouraged to view all young people as having the right to access career development through high quality, skilled and qualified career practitioners, irrespective of their school setting.

## **SCHOOL BASED CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**

It is understood that young people with disability benefit from employment as much as young people across the board do, where employment yields the benefits of increased confidence, status, better standard of living, financial independence, and access to social networks. Yet, young people with disability in Australia are less likely to transition well from secondary school into employment (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021). Indeed, Meadow (2019) commented more recently that, “the vast majority of young people with disability in Australia continue to experience poor post-school labour force outcomes” (p. 2).

Further, researchers have shown that in Australia, the employment gap between those with and without disability is widening and that it is imperative that these trends are reversed: if young people with disability do not engage in mainstream employment by age 21, it is unlikely that they ever will. Wakeford and Waugh (2010;2014) have articulated that the gap is facilitated as a result of a pervasive culture of low expectation and lack of opportunity for students with disability in relation to meaningful and authentic employment. Alongside this finding is the encouraging result from the same research that participation at school in career development, work experience, work-related training opportunities and the completion of secondary education leads to post-school employment success. Additionally, the same authors found that young people with disability who leave school with employment are more likely to maintain that success than those who leave school without a job. One dimension to a possible solution is for improved locally based collaborations between service providers who may be able to create open employment and career opportunities that align with the skills, interests and goals of individuals with disability.

In keeping with this finding, Luecking (2009) reported the most consistent predictor of post school employment was work experience. Indeed, Australian statistics reveal that market studies have shown 54% of employers will not consider applicants without work experience, and 74% of roles are not advertised and are taken up through connections (National Skills Commission, 2021).

Notably, national statistics indicate that a person with disability is twice as likely to be unemployed with this figure being one of the lowest rates in the OECD (Disability Royal Commission, 2021). One approach to address this statistic is to provide students with disability the knowledge and skills to pursue work opportunities on an equal footing with those of their peers. This may be enabled through the provision of career development in schools that supports students through the engagement of real and relevant learning and work experience congruent with their career goals and aspirations.

Career development programmes in schools within the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2022) encompasses the General Capabilities of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. They are addressed through the content of the learning areas and involve literacy; numeracy; ICT capability; intercultural understanding; ethical understanding; personal and social capability; and critical and creative thinking. By mapping careers education within the curriculum framework, the requirements for education providers to ensure that all students with disability can access education 'on the same basis' as their peers are also considered. These requirements are in accordance with relevant disability legislation.

The Australian Disability Services Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1986), Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992), Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government, 2015), National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013), Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) underpin Australia's commitment to the rights, inclusion and empowerment of people with a disability in Australia. Such legislation and agreements drive the provision of disability and mainstream services to foster a greater emphasis on developing social and work readiness skills for people with a disability.

The right to work is a fundamental right. It is essential for realising other human rights and forms an inseparable and inherent part of human dignity. Every individual has the right to be able to work, allowing him/her to live in dignity. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others. (United Nations, 2006).

Career development programmes for students with disability that effectively transition young people from school to a broad range of post-school options is paramount for enabling students to reach their full potential. Career development is understood within the broad definition of the term 'career' which can include paid and unpaid work, life, roles, and leisure activities (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). This reconceptualization of career development aligns well with the notion of inclusive career planning.

Clerke (2015) recommends a re-conceptualisation of what is considered as work for students with an intellectual disability as articulated here by a specialist school principal in her study "success for our students is when they are successfully placed in programs that will increase their potential to work, volunteer or participate in community life" (p. 63). This aligns with the broader definition of career being a process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan. The priority however, is an expectation that young people with disability should be engaged in paid employment in an open market (Meltzer et al., 2016 Sheppard et al., 2017).

## SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is a critical, rights based, element of career development for young people with disability. This aspect is consistent with constructivist career development theories and approaches (McMahon, 2017). Individual students bring a range of intrapersonal psychological, cognitive and biological traits that influence and impact on their interests, ability, skills, values. From this premise, knowing the social, emotional and academic needs of each student is a significant factor in effectively aligning teacher practices with successful student outcomes (Broadbent et al., 2012; Yates & Bruce, 2017). Therefore, any career development plan "is most effective when it is student-centred, and tailored to individual needs, interests and circumstances of school students" (Department of Education and Training, 2019, p.13).

Personalisation of the student's career development plan is of greater importance for students who are undecided and lack other sources of support as they will not necessarily make the most from their available choices or may miss the opportunity to access a range of choices (Fuller et al., 2014). This is more likely to be the case for students with disability, where the needs of students with intellectual disability in particular, results in their transition from school to work being more challenging than other students with disability (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). In the 2018 census for example, only 28.3% of people with an intellectual disability (ID) were employed (and mostly on a part-time basis) compared with 54.8% of people with another disability and 83% of the population without disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Despite these low figures, when young people with ID are asked about what constitutes a good life, they report the desire to be employed (Bouck & Joshi, 2016;

Pallisera, 2016). Thus, the aim of career development plans for all students must consider this goal as its end point, if this is the student's intention. A study conducted in Australia however, found that many students are not included in developing their own transition plan (Leonard et al., 2016), suggesting that they are not seen to have agency with respect to these important life decisions, and is a view that is likely to have a range of negative consequences. The self-determination of young people especially with ID is critical in the decision-making processes and to determine the young person's interests, capacities and wishes. A NDIS participation outcomes report, completed in 2019 supports the findings that students with disability are not involved in planning for their life after school years, where only 20% were included in the decision-making process (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, 2019).

Successful transition from school to work for all young people is predicted if the student possesses sufficient skills in three adaptive behaviour areas of conceptual skills (communication and language, literacy, numeracy), social skills (interpersonal skills, following social conventions), and practical skills (occupational skills such as using a cell phone) (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

In many schools, there is still a prevailing culture that these advisors 'know best' and therefore are best placed to determine post-school options for young people with disability. In maintaining this approach, the schools are contributing to young people missing out on moderating and engaging in self-determination when it comes to career development and workplace exploration (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014). Young people are not being given a choice in their own futures. This is evident in Victorian special schools, which often have a staff member referred to as a 'transition coordinator', whereas a mainstream school will more likely have a 'careers coordinator'. The distinction is telling and implies that students with disability will transition from school to a non-vocational disability service, rather than embark on a career. This is also supported by the fact that in 2011, only 5% of special schools for students with disability were members of the Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV), while over 90% of mainstream schools were members.

The inclusion of actions of self-determination ensures a rights-based focus on student development. Such a focus ensures that the person with a disability is central in decision making process. Clerke (2015) reports studies by Kohler (1996) in the US and Meadow (2006) in Australia highlights the evidence that including students in their own transition planning leads to an improved capacity to identify relevant post school goals. Ensuring self-determination through the encouragement of student choice and decision-making is one of the success factors for any transition program and helps with the smooth transition of students with disabilities into the adult community (Clerke, 2015).

The preference of young people for one-on-one counselling and the effectiveness of this approach have been highlighted in the literature. Individual pathways planning initiatives employ such a personalised approach and have been introduced in most states and territories to support young people's career development and transitions to further study and employment. Individualised support is also a means of providing support to students at risk of not making a successful transition (Austin et al, 2020).

All students live within the social system of influences that include family, peers and the education system and workplaces (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). The provision of successful career development therefore, requires consideration of the contextual background of students (Ali et al., 2012). Good practice programmes for example, respond to localised school and community environments (Gore et al., 2019). To achieve this aim, programmes need to demonstrate “a diversity of approaches is essential to ensure that career development services are available at the times and in the ways that best meet the needs of each individual” (Australian Government, 2013, p. 5). Furthermore, students living in the context of rural or remote areas have been found to have limited access to infrastructure as well as education and training opportunities and thus requires any programme to consider how students gain equitable access to services (Australian Government, 2019).

Students with disability benefit from the additional element of a career development plan addressing access barriers and accommodations specific to each individual. For career education to meet the individual needs of every student including those experiencing access barriers, career programmes must include the appropriate and adapted resources to allow full participation with each learner’s requirements (Austin et al., 2020; Australian Government, 2019, Sheppard et al., 2017). This includes the participation in life skills education programmes, defined to be the daily living skills that are deemed necessary to live and work independently and include self-care, literacy and numeracy skills, technology skills, and communication skills (Donnellan & Mathews, 2021). While life skills are essential for some students, it should not be regarded as a prerequisite for access to employment but rather valuing social and cultural contributions and participation in the world of work, whether paid or unpaid (Simmons & Watson, 2014).

## STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Schools have a responsibility to assist young people to transition to a successful post-school life and are the key to providing the necessary support required (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). A study conducted using data from the USA, Kaya (2018) found that it was the educational experience that was predictive of gaining competitive employment for those with intellectual disability after demographic variables including gender and race were controlled. In addition, those individuals who had work experience and then support within the workplace did better with respect to employment. Further, a study by Beyer et al. (2016) reported that a supported employment model, with job coach support available in the workplace, is key to people with intellectual disabilities gaining paid employment. The authors also suggested that experience of jobs while still at school is an important predictor of employment success as an adult, and that job coach support is important to delivering work experiences while in education. Their study, incorporating these aspects, demonstrated that multiple work experience placements were the most useful in achieving good outcomes. The model used individually designed placements with job coach support. The reactions of employers validated that young people with intellectual disabilities made effective workers, and that they would be hired if funding allowed. The performance of young people with intellectual disabilities in paid work was found to be rated as acceptable within this supported employment model.

Throughout this document the term ‘supported employment’ has been used to denote a job or job search that has elements of support provided to people with disability. This captures a wide range of practices and programs and is consistent with terminology in the United States and internationally. In Australia, however, readers may be familiar with the term ‘supported employment’ to mean employment within what were formerly known as ‘sheltered workshops’ and other forms of congregate disability-specific employment, now largely encompassed by Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). The Commonwealth government introduced the term in this way in 1987 as part of the then Commonwealth Disability Services Program. This is not the meaning of ‘supported employment’ adopted within this document (Wilson & Campain, 2020).

Successful good practices involved the school career practitioner providing assistance for students about their transition from school in terms of future learning and work opportunities (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). Irish research, however, has suggested that school practitioners are generally less informed about appropriate post-school options for students with disability and as a result, offer variable levels of quality of service (Scanlon & Doyle, 2018).

The alignment of teaching and student expectation in career development programme planning and delivery must therefore address the issue of school professional development regarding staff working with students from a diverse range of backgrounds as well as students being in a position where they have confidence in the staff’s ability to provide support. One significant finding from a 2014 Australian survey was that the majority of young people look to friends and family for career guidance. This may be problematic as, especially for disadvantaged young people, equipping parents to provide support in career planning is difficult from at times, the unequal position the families begin from (Polvere & Lim, 2015). A key policy recommendation from the survey was to increase the investment in programmes that enabled families, schools and communities to support young people to develop aspirations, deal with stress, and stay connected to school or training. This support included the suggestion that career counsellors could take on this mentoring role, and also recommended that early intervention programmes should also involve and connect with the family.

As part of the needs analysis that underpinned the National Career Development Strategy, Urbis (2012) conducted qualitative research with over 400 stakeholders across Australia, including young people aged 11–24 years in all sectors of education. The findings show that young people have different preferences about when and how they want career information and advice communicated to them. A choice of approaches included one-on-one discussions with people who have industry experience, university and TAFE representatives, family members, career practitioners, and classroom teachers; experiential learning opportunities; printed materials; and online resources. Further, Urbis reported that the availability of career information online was generally not seen as the most useful source but rather as complementary to other services for young people. It was also noted that young people in schools received less of the activities they found most useful, such as work experiences and visits to workplaces, and more of the activities they found less useful, such as interviews with a career practitioner.

The availability of services however, may be affected by economic or social conditions (McIlveen & Alchin, 2018). Good practice career development suggests the benefits of accessibility to all young people, regardless of any potential barriers. Access is enabled by allowing it to be available at no cost, accessible to student with disability, and able to be accessed even with limited access to a computer, or the internet.

Technology can be useful and is becoming more significant in today's schools. Attention must be given to both the teacher and the student's capability to operate technology must also be considered. Several websites are available to assist in student planning and the identification of skill development to match potential careers and these include the Pathways website (ACARA, 2019) and the Myfuture website (Australian Government, 2013) and the Australian Apprenticeships Pathway website (Industry Training Australia, 2022).

Professional competence and Professional Standards (CICA, 2009) of career staff need to be maintained in order to keep abreast of current career development, and to deliver the key skills necessary to prepare students for employment. These include understanding the labour market, understanding and application of labour market information, effective teamwork and communications skills, expected work behaviour and networking, and using technology.

These essential components should then align with programme delivery. Australian reports indicate three central instruments that should be used to inform career development learning and pedagogy in Australia's education systems: Core Skills for Work; Australian Blueprint for Career Development, and the Australian Curriculum. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) (DESE, 2020) Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework Core Skills for Work are "non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work" (p. 1). The framework is organized into three clusters that cover: navigate the world of work (manage career and work life; work with roles, rights and protocols); interact with others (communicate, connect and work with others, recognize and utilize diverse perspectives); and get the work done (plan and organize, make decisions, identify and solve problems, create and innovate, and work in a digital world). The framework also takes a developmental perspective. Urbis (2012) too describes the developmental stages across the lifespan and the corresponding career development service needs. During childhood and the primary education years, young people need to develop general life skills and competencies, discover their interests and aptitudes, and gain awareness and understanding of different occupations.

It has been argued that career development should begin as early as the pre-school years (Knight, 2015) and there has been a call to introduce a law in Victoria to mandate career education from Year 3 in primary school to extend the range of career options for students, particularly for students at risk of disengagement (Cook, 2018). As they move into adolescence, particularly around Year 7, and the secondary years of schooling, students' needs for career development begin the change and require support to begin linking their abilities to career options and to investigate and apply these in different ways, including through contact with

employers and the workplace (Lee et al., 2019). On moving into further education, the workplace or a combination of both, young people will benefit from advice and information about career options and the pathways to realise them.

This developmental perspective highlights another important consideration of good practice of career development in schools, and that is of the implementation of career education that begins in the early stages of a student's learning (Sheppard et al., 2017; Wakefield & Waugh, 2014). The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (DESE, 2014) is the Australian blueprint for career development and is considered a valuable resource that can be used in education and training settings and "at its core, the blueprint identifies the skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need to make sound choices and to effectively manage their careers" (p.1). Finally, although schools may implement their own career education programmes separately to the stipulated curricula, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (ACARA, 2022) provides a structure and national alignment with state and territory governments in the implementation and importantly, assessment of the national curriculum (general capabilities) within their schools.

In short however, any good practices that address relevant life skills education, employment skills education, structured work experiences, and career and vocational education for students with disability is deemed less effective if the expectations of students are low. Yoon (2021), states that for centuries people with ID in particular, have been perceived as being incapable of participating in equitable employment. There exists a real danger of marginalising potential based on this low perception, which Wakeford and Waugh (2014) point out are sometimes held by the young people themselves as well as parents, employers, educators and government. However, Yoon's research provides evidence that career-building through the professional development opportunities provided by supported work placements and environments can facilitate the achievement of goals by bridging the gap between what they are capable of and what they need. This outcome is evident in earlier work by Meadow and colleagues (2005) refer to a US community-based work internship program called "Bridges...from school to work", involving 1) vocational goal-setting, 2) job preparation and job seeking skills, and 3) internship placement and support including a 12 week paid employment with specific skills training, monitoring and on-the-job support provided by the employer. Findings revealed a high level of internship completion and post internship job offers (Meadow et al, 2005). Meadow and colleagues (2005) indicate that there is a strong evidence base for the provision of comprehensive vocational training involving work placements and on the job training for students with intellectual disabilities and specific learning disabilities. A strong relationship between student success and interagency collaboration in this case, is required to achieve this end.

*Students should be exposed to a range of work experience opportunities outside the classroom in authentic workplaces (Clerke, 2015).*

The following summarised extracts are from two in-depth case studies from a 2013-2015 study of transition programs in Victorian specialist and special development schools (Clerke, 2015).

## Case study 1: A specialist school

*Mary worked in a specialist school transition program for students with an intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder as a dedicated full time Futures for Young Adults coordinator focused on career planning and transition pathways. She reported that having someone in this position contributed to the success of the school's transition program. Within her role she organized and facilitated the school's work experience program, arranged work experience placements, liaised with external organisations and parents; organized information evenings and visits to Disability Service Day Centres, worked with teachers to develop student profiles, facilitated transition meetings with DHS, and provided information to parents and students about appropriate funding and placements post- school.*

*External work experience was recognized as a critical component of the school's transition program however Mary reported that "finding work placements was one of her most difficult tasks" noting "businesses in the community were not usually designed for employees with disabilities and employers were often reluctant to take on any of the students without supervision". As a result, Mary arranged external work experience in specialist and supported settings including Collingwood Children's Farm, Vatmi Industries and Kevin Heinze Garden Centre. These external work experience placements provided opportunities to learn work and social skills, independent travel skills, catching public transport, going to the local shops and interacting with other employees.*

*The school adapted the VELS framework (Victorian Essential Learning Standards) for literacy and numeracy with a focus in the final years on filling in forms, writing signatures, writing resumes and interview skills. At this school, students were assisted to identify their skills and abilities to support in career decision making including developing a Career Action Plan from year 7.*

## Case study 2: A Special Developmental School (SDS)

*Kate worked in a SDS as a work experience and transition coordinator supporting students from the time they moved from the junior school to the senior campus at around 15 years of age. The transition program was individualised according to the level of the ability of the students. Some students were reported to have high support needs including not being toilet trained, severe behavioural limitations or profound intellectual and physical disabilities.*

*Kate reported that the school placed a strong emphasis on transition- focused education and placement in a Day Centre was considered part of a student's career planning. Work experience was an important aspect of the school's transition program. Kate coordinated the school's work experience program over three years to align with student goals and development. Work placements included opportunities at McDonald's where students filled cups,*

*cleaned tables, learned how to speak to customers and other employees, emptied bins and learned work skills.*

*The students undertook this work experience in small groups under the supervision of a teacher for a few hours a day. Students were encouraged to do things that they would not normally do and learned how to handle situations that might be confronting or confusing.*

*'The students often surprise employers with what they are able to do. One student with multiple problems has ended up being a star. The work environment suited him.'* B14T

*The school used amended AusVELS, and in the senior years, literacy and numeracy were further adapted so that learning was made relevant and applied to real-life. The focus of learning was made more practical and students went to the canteen to work on maths, to measure weight and height and when they were engaged in travel training, buy a ticket and measure mileage and distance. The students were taught functional literacy and numeracy and were shown how to write a resume.*

*'Not all of our students are even able to write their names but all are given the opportunity to fill out the forms to the best of their ability.'* B14T

*Kate reported that student choice was at the core of each student's ILP and when they entered the senior school, it was the role of the teachers to ensure that students and parents were able to make informed choices and had realistic post-school expectations. Kate recognized that parents relied heavily on her guidance and she developed strategies to get parents to take responsibility for their children's futures including coordinating expos, information sessions and workshops. Kate maintained strong relationships with relevant disability services including the opportunity for senior students to undertake regular work experience in a local day centre gardening program.*

*Of note in the above two examples is the school provision of transition services and not career development, indicating a more select range of pathway options based on aligning a disability with a day program rather than a person with a career. Further to this, the pathways in Clerke's (2015) study were into segregated disability specialist services with little if any consideration of the individual's skills, interests and goals. Such pathways require further interrogation so as to challenge the current status quo of transition planning that results in students with disability being funneled into a limited range of specialist disability settings.*

## INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

The career development of young people is a shared responsibility; therefore all stakeholders including parents, students, teachers and employers should be involved in programmes to support them (Polvere and Lim, 2015; Australian Government, 2019; Gibbons et al., 2019). Of note, career practitioners' engagement with others should "respect local knowledge...collaborate with local communities and individuals, and empower local people" (Gibbons et al., 2019, p.3). By doing so, robust and meaningful partnerships are more likely to emerge between schools, industry, higher education and vocational education and training (VET) providers.

Employers have an important role to play in the career development of young people. Keale et al., (2020) reported on UK research from 2013 that indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between the number of employer contacts (such as careers talks or work experience) that a young person experiences in school (at age 14–19) and their confidence (at age 19–24) in progressing towards their ultimate career goals, the likelihood of whether (at age 19–24) they are not in education, employment or training, and their earnings if salaried. In summary, the research showed a strong relationship between interaction with occupational role models, mentors, employers and the workplace and the importance of engagement of parents, educators, social services, community and employers.

Further, Almalki et al., (2022) reiterate the importance of employers' perspectives for developing strong partnerships with schools to facilitate training and employment for students with disabilities, which helps schools focus on the skills needed in workplaces and to develop strategies to make such partnerships beneficial for both partners. These partnerships allow employers to understand the abilities of students with disability, and which may increase the likelihood that they will employ them. Luecking (2008) also found that employers' experiences in working with people with disabilities shaped the likelihood that they would employ additional individuals with disabilities in the future. Employers might also contribute by sharing their resources and helping schools establish job development as a course of study and so should be involved in the planning of career development programmes at school.

Opportunities to engage with industry partners are particularly important for young people with disability who may have more limited social networks which may not support access to a broad set of employment opportunities (Torii, 2018). Relating to the issue of maintaining high expectations of young people with disability, any partnership approach includes providing young people with work experience that mirrors the type of work done at the level of their capability instead of menial and mundane work or even just shadowing (Sheppard et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2018). Effective employer involvement instead might include providing appropriate work experience for younger students or more formal work integrated learning arrangements for post-secondary students (Austin et al., 2020).

Collaboration requires a specific skill set and may require additional professional development if careers staff in schools struggle with this aspect of their role. This gap has been identified in the literature (Spratt, 2019) and the ability to work effectively in teams, in purposeful collaboration is regarded as an essential component of a successful career development practitioner (Bridgstock et al., 2019).

## FAMILY

One of the strongest influences on the life choices and opportunities of young adults is that of parents and carers however, family often encounter overwhelming obstacles created through a lack of coordination and consistency among transition service providers. A lack of information regarding the availability of services, different application procedures, a lack of systematic organisation of transition services, create variable and ad hoc school to work transitions processes for young people with disability and their families (Keele et al., 2020).

The importance of including parents and carers is because of the significance of their impact on a successful career development of their child. Encouragingly, Leonard et al.'s (2016) Australian study, reported that the majority of parents (80%) had been involved in transition planning with their school with 87% stating they had been involved in decision-making. In contrast however, data in the USA revealed that all students in a sample with a mild intellectual disability participated in their transition planning (Bouck & Joshi, 2016).

Leonard et al., (2016) as a result, recommends three strategies indicated by parents that assisted with transition planning related to the provision of more information about financial assistance, the school transition programme and the building of informal community-based supports. These findings echoed other earlier research by Collins & Cash, (2014) found that parents felt 'underprepared and uninformed' to support their children and adolescents with career advice and that parent programmes builds confidence by helping them to understand that careers follow many pathways over a longer period of time; and further, that young people will make many career decisions and the career support and advice that parents provide is ongoing.

Good practice career development needs to be culturally and/or community sensitive. Meeting cultural needs and providing content that is culturally relevant sit in relationship with the method of a student- centred career development that is embedded within family and community practices. The recognition of student diversity is necessary to support the career aspirations of all students (Australian Government, 2019). It is recommended that culturally appropriate role models and mentors be provided for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The notion of appropriate role models and mentors can also be extended in scope to include champions of disability in the community (Keele et al., 2020).

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

While the point has already been raised regarding the professional standards of career staff, there is the overlap of good practice from a programme structural perspective. The human resource element of employing the 'right' career adviser who possesses the necessary attributes that enable effective programme delivery is important, where the career adviser is "multi-faceted requiring the individual in that role to be many things to many people" (Yates & Bruce, 2017, p. 65).

Employing a person well suited to the position of career adviser is a method to maximise the effectiveness of career development provision in schools. Underpinning this point, all teaching staff involved in the management or delivery of career development need to be appropriately trained and continuously involved in professional development pedagogies and Yates and Bruce (2017) suggest upskilling all teachers to successfully integrate career education strategies into their curriculum planning. Additionally, Indigenous perspectives, and disability perspectives should be embedded in practitioner training (Austin et al., 2020; Laffernis, 2018). Such an approach ensures students with disabilities receive the same services as others with some additional accommodations to ensure disability-related barriers are also addressed, rather than a separate or different service to that provided to other students without a disability.

Career development initiatives in schools require strong leadership, where effective and supportive leaders are of central importance to successful career programmes. Good practice occurs when schools have the support of both the school principal and senior leadership of the school (Furbish & Reid, 2013). In schools themselves, there are different models that are all recommended, and these include adding the career adviser to the school management team (Furbish & Reid, 2013); or engaging a senior leader with oversight of career education and guidance across the school (Yates & Bruce, 2017). Ultimately, having a strong advocate who is able to promote a culture of career development in the school is essential to be responsible and accountable for the career programme and to maintain the relationships required to ensure its success (Sheppard et al., 2017; Yates & Bruce, 2017).

A final component of good practice relevant to programs and services is that career development initiatives evaluate their outcomes and success to ensure that students are being effectively prepared for further education and employment (Joyce, 2019; Yates & Bruce, 2017).

## **Systems-focussed programme structures**

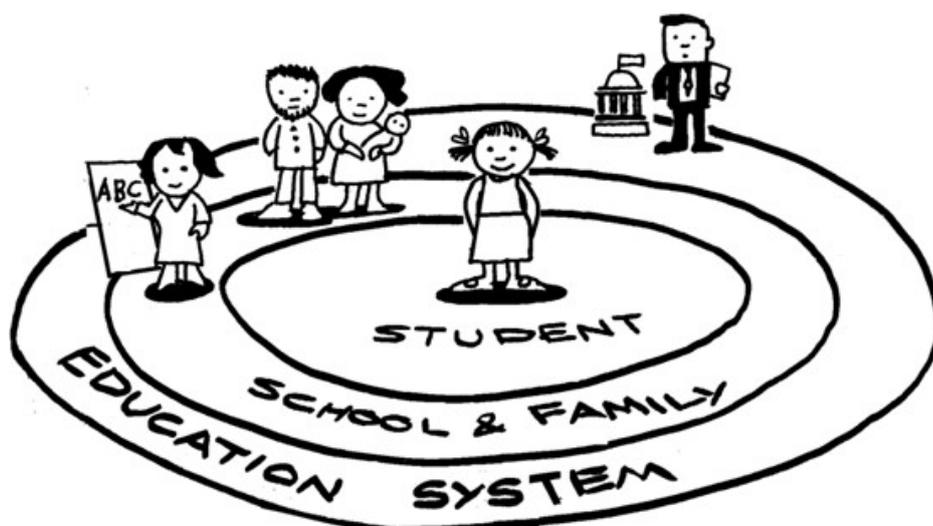
With overarching impact on all components of good practice is that of systems' focussed programme structure, which can be seen from the illustration provided earlier. Systems' focussed programme structures include policy, philosophy, and strategic planning and each of these subgroups has a significant impact on its relationship with all parts of a career development framework.

How career development is systemically organised is one consideration and good practice occurs when programmes are embedded within the curriculum. Additionally, it has been suggested that career development should occur as part of an integrated, whole of school approach (Economic Education Jobs and Skills Committee, 2018) including collaboratively across all stakeholders (Meadows, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's (1999) socio-ecological model is a useful framework to conceptualize a student-centered approach, integrating all direct influences alongside the broader system, social and cultural structures in which student's live. This model is conceptualised as a series of concentric circles that illustrate various layers of influence, beginning at the centre with the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

The next layer, regarded as the micro-system, is the most direct layer of influence to the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; 1995). This layer represents a range of individuals or organisations of immediate influence to the student (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). This layer reflects the school and family, including teachers, tutors, specialists, friends, siblings and parents, as dominant sources of influence.

The following layers—meso-system and exo-system — are not concrete structures; rather they are relational dimensions of interaction. The meso-system focuses on relationships between the individual and significant others within their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The exo-system represents the relationships between people or groups within either the micro or macro-systems, without the individual's involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The final layer is the macro-system, representing the overarching education systems, laws and culture of a given context (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). This layer is recognised as influencing all other layers and can ultimately impact the individual at the centre of this model (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). From the student as the centre of career development, the perspective of the capabilities approach can be realised to drive the individuals programme from a strength based perspective (Terzi, 2014).



### Figure 1: Systemic student-centred approach to career development

In terms of national policy that ultimately governs the delivery of career development, there is little to guide a co-ordinated approach (Polvere & Lim, 2015). The Australian Government wishes to minimise youth unemployment by equipping young people with the skills to move into the labour market. Nationally, there has also been an increase in the school leaving age to keep young people in education for longer. As a result, there has been more concerted efforts made in the field of career education with an emphasis on post-school education and training. Effective services however, such as supported employment (such as on-the-job training) have been found available in only 2.2% of cases (Athanasou et al., 2019; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Ameri et al. (2018) states that it is as though there is no conscientious national effort to allay disability.

Despite these figures, schools can assess the disconnect between national policy and practices for students with disability. In Australia and many other countries, post-school compulsory education is increasingly seen as an option for young adults with disability, including intellectual disability (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020). Continuing education should not therefore be overlooked and schools, can overcome in part, the societal attitude that students

with intellectual disability do not participate in post-school education with the most obvious being that it is never presented to them as a possibility (Bouck & Joshi, 2016). To achieve this aim, schools need to interpret the context of challenges within the presented by societal challenges such as negative attitudes and low expectations that might be present as well as the vision of full employment that is held as a national standard by policy makers (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020).

Rice et al. (2020) cite that policy makers are most concerned about the quality of career development in schools. From this position, quality assurance within the country has tended to focus on the qualifications and professionalism of the people delivering career development programmes rather than on systemic or organisational quality. It was also concluded that the range of quality assurance tools that are deployed by such policymakers varies across the different Australian jurisdictions and is influenced by geography, the size of the jurisdiction and the level of priority given to career guidance.

This is an international concern. National guidelines that support approaches to career development in other countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the US, have been criticised as being inadequate (Economic Education Jobs and Skills Committee, 2018; Yates & Bruce, 2017). For example, the provision of career education in some UK schools does not meet statutory requirements to provide impartial career support for all students (Moote & Archer, 2018). Moote and Archer (2018) found that less than two thirds of Year 11 students in the UK reported that they were receiving career education. In Australia also, a 2017 review of career education in Victorian government schools found that the provision of career development varied significantly between schools (Economic Education Jobs and Skills Committee, 2018). The review found career development provision was not perceived as being useful by stakeholders or students, with these groups feeling that it was outdated and not adequately preparing students for life after school (Economic Education Jobs and Skills Committee, 2018).

An absence of national, regulated and consistent career development policy and practice is also a highlighted issue for the UK as well as Australia (Andrews & Hooley, 2017). Without 'universal benchmarks', career services may not be implementing the most effective practice principles in their work. However, benchmarking of school good practices goes at least some way to address the lack of national policy and increase the likelihood of successful student outcomes.

Prioritising career development is difficult however, without adequate resourcing. A lack of resources is frequently cited as a problem for the provision of career development in schools in Australia as well as those in England (Moote & Archer, 2018; Australian Centre for Career Education, n.d.). Some resources have been highlighted as useful however. Several Australian schools in Clerke's 2015 study made use of supporting DVDs to teach students vital information about working in a structured workplace.

There are several DVDs available which address students' expectations of work and how to interact with employees and employers.

They include basic information to teach students to find their own way to the workplace and to build their confidence (Clerke, 2015). Adequate levels of human resourcing practices speak to reduce these high ratios but do not suggest the most appropriate balance, although Meadows et al., (2005) reported that approaches using full or part-time dedicated staff resulted in student benefits that included improved self-esteem, independence through work experience and independent living skills, and the promotion of relationships between students, parents, teachers and agencies (Meadows et al, 2005). The study reinforced the notion that students with disability are likely to require additional support and resources to be able to access career development (McMahon & Cuskelly, 2020; Sheppard et al., 2017). The extra support should be factored into school budgets.

## CONCLUSION

The provision of a quality career development framework for students with disability has never been more important. The effective transition from school into the reality of the workplace, appropriate skills, knowledge and work experience is vital. Young people with disability need the skills to navigate diverse and flexible study pathways to acquire these attributes and importantly, be supported to realise their goals.

Career Development Learning can provide support as young people traverse this process of educational and career decision making and reach their full potential. Good practices in career development are essential to achieving equitable and successful outcomes for young people with disability. To meet this end, career development should begin as early as Year 3, be student-centred, individualised, contextualised, culturally sensitive, and inclusive. Programmes should be part of a whole-school, partnership approach, which involve key stakeholders. The programmes should be accessible to all, targeted to meet the specialised requirements for the individual with disability, and evaluated for their effectiveness.

Professionals involved in career education should be appropriately trained and involved in professional development and have the support of strong leadership and school policy.

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