



ACARA Work Studies Review Consultation 2024



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The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) is pleased to provide further feedback to the ACARA Work Studies Curriculum and career education review. The Australian Centre for Career Education is a national not-for-profit career development teaching association, and founding member association of the national peak industry body, The Career Education Council of Australia (CICA).

ACCE was established by the Victorian Government in 1975 to train teachers in career education so that they could support students to make informed subject choices and successful transitions from school. ACCE develops curriculum texts, lesson plans and has contributed to the Victorian Career Curriculum as a member of the Victorian Council of Professional Teaching Associations.

ACCE is also a CICA endorsed training provider of career professionals through its CEAV Institute (RTO 22523) and has trained career professionals in Victoria, Tasmania, WA, NSW, and Queensland. ACCE is the largest provider of career services in Victoria and delivers over 36,000 vocational assessments to year 9 students in government schools and equivalent settings each year followed by a career guidance session to unpack the results. ACCE was the sole provider of the Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors service, delivering over 33,000 career guidance sessions to Victorian adults in community between July 2021 and June 2023.

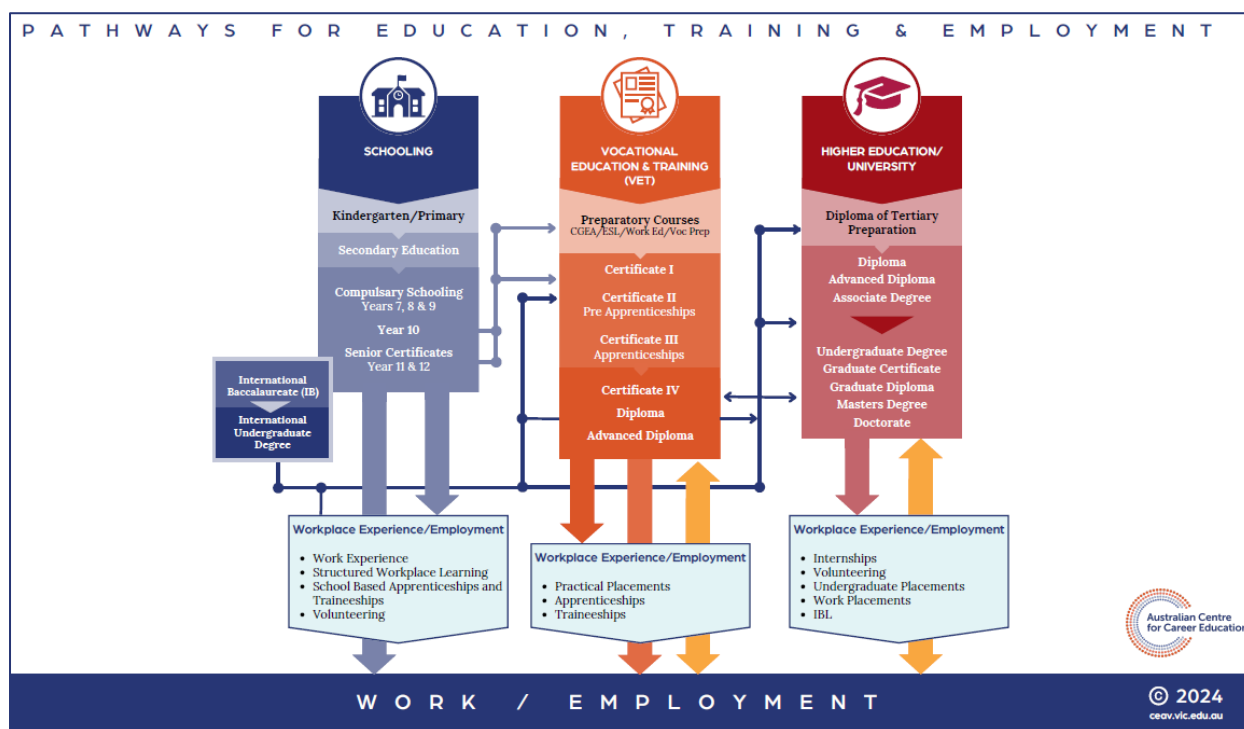
Further to the ACARA work studies workshop and follow-up survey in September 2024, ACCE is pleased to make the following submission to support career education in Australian schools from K-12.

Australia's Employment White Paper Consultation

The importance of the career development of students to help them reach their full potential and support industry cannot be underestimated and has been highlighted by the Australian Government in the Jobs and Skills Summit Employment White Paper Consultation. Significant workforce issues affecting national productivity and workforce capacity were outlined in the Employment White Paper Consultation.

ACCE responded to the Jobs and Skills Employment White Paper Consultation (2023) noting the career education and development levers that can be applied to improve the nation's workforce capacity. As both education and employment make up Australia's career industry, the role of curriculum must be included in the preparation of young people for the future to support national productivity.

Students are the future labour market supply chain to industry and each year from kindergarten is an opportunity to prepare children for their eventual transition into the world of work. To ensure they are resilient and capable of navigating their way in an ever-changing and more complex labour market, lifelong learning is essential if they are to transition effectively and maintain employability across their lifespan.



The Australian education and qualification framework has been designed to support individuals to develop and maintain their skills and knowledge across educational sectors throughout their life.

Career Education

When career education is appropriately delivered, it can help to tackle skill shortages, career mismatches, promote social mobility, increase participation rates amongst vulnerable youth and adults, and address gender stereotypes in work roles. Career education includes the systematic support of student career development using a range of educational mechanisms including curriculum. It delivers learning, experiences and information about different occupations and industries, builds career-related principles into academic curriculum, includes work placements/experiences and other work-related activities (such as job expos), and offers career decision making support through guidance.

Career education supports the critical work of government such as the work of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), established to ensure the full skills potential of the nation through improved workforce participation, productivity, wages and equity. JSA aims to ensure that Australia's human capital is activated to meet present and future skills needs. Similarly, the National Career Institute was established within the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations after recommendations from an independent review of Australia's vocational education and training sector to examine how to deliver skilled workers for increased productivity.

Without strong career education and development in schools, students can struggle to select the right school pathways or adhere to skills or education training post school.

Studies have shown that inadequate career education coupled with weak links between learning and skills requirements in the labour market can result in students switching programs more often and taking additional coursework, diplomas, degrees, and training in order to settle on a career direction and ultimately achieve labour-market attachment (Bruce & Marlin, 2012; Sweet et al., 2010; OECD & ILO, 2011; Bezanson, 2008; De Broucker, 2005). (CMEC, 2017)

Australia must ensure students are well matched to the correct pathways and levels to reduce the drop-out and incompleteness rates in tertiary courses. It is essential that the future supply chain into the world of work is engaged and prepared to meet the needs of tomorrow. Australia must ensure that students are aware of the importance of their learning, engage in career exploration lessons and activities, and can make informed decisions about their career and pathway options.

Benefits of Career Education

There is significant international research substantiating the value of career education to economies, individuals and communities. Finish researcher, Jaana Kettunen noted that:

There is also early evidence that early exposure to career education can contribute to the development of broader career expectations and aspirations, mitigating the impact of societal and familial pressures that may prematurely foreclose career choices (Welde et al., 2016). There is also a known correlation between immediate learning outcomes and longer-term social and economic outcomes (Hughes et al., 2016; OECD, 2010; Mann et al., 2021). Other studies indicate that students who gain some insights into the challenges of the labour market while still in education are likely to experience better psychological well-being when they begin to look for desirable employment opportunities. (Koivisto et al., 2010; Mann et al., 2021). (Kettunen, 2024, p. 74)

Career readiness research by the OECD has highlighted that persistence, better grades and increased earnings are the result of career education. With student learning peaking at around grade five, students begin to ask questions about why and how their learning is linked to their future. Without answers and a connection, engagement begins to decline. However, career education can deliver substantial benefits by:

- Ensuring students understand why they are at school and the purpose of their learning.
- Supporting exploration of future opportunities so that students can make informed career and pathway choices.
- Developing a sense of hope about their future and building their confidence.
- Supporting students to reflect on their own values and interests to understand themselves and what possible career futures suit them.
- Providing different types of career learning activities and work-related experiences.
- Highlighting transferable skills from school and from students' activities outside of school.
- Increasing students' understanding of different roles, industries, workplaces, types of employment, and what they may or may not like.
- Developing knowledge of the labour market, priority job opportunities and what impacts the labour market.
- Reducing the likelihood of not being in employment, education and training.
- Teaching work search and job application skills.

- Building essential non-technical skills: communication, teamwork, problem solving, organisation, initiative, digital competence, decision making, self-management
- Developing future-proof skills: emotional intelligence, opportunity awareness, uncertainty tolerance, resilience and adaptability, navigation failure, lifelong learning, diversity, entrepreneurship.

The province of New Brunswick in Canada made its case for a career education curriculum framework from K-12 identifying the following issues:

- Young people stay in education longer so need to make more decisions
- Higher qualifications are not always leading to better jobs
- Decision-making is becoming more difficult
- Societies increasingly recognise better career education is needed for multiple purposes
- Substantial new evidence is now available to show how career education links to better outcomes.

Through career education, students are supported and guided to explore their strengths and aspirations. School-based career education helps them to become work ready and develop employability skills. In reviewing career education, ACARA should consider the domains that need to be coordinated for the successful implementation and delivery of the desired outcomes through curriculum. Three models have been identified if career education is to be delivered equitably to students taking into account jurisdictional curriculum differences, different school types and settings:

Curriculum models can incorporate career education in one of three ways: as a separate subject, as an element of other subjects, or across the entire curriculum (e.g., Kettunen, 2023; OECD, 2004; Watts, 2001, 2011; Zelloth, 2009).

The third model that crosses the entire curriculum requires careful coordination and strong school leadership and support. The literature also emphasises the value of collaboration within and across different sectors and the strengthening of ties between education and the world of work (e.g., Holman, 2014; Kettunen et al., 2020; OECD, 2004; Sultana, 2013, 2018). Ongoing evaluation, monitoring and review of the career education system is essential to ensure its quality and

continuous improvement (e.g., McCowan & McKenzie, 1997; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021). (Kuttunen, 2024, p. 74)

Gendered Career Choices

Career education can improve gender equity in employment and impact student gendered career decisions. The Australian Treasury Employment White Paper Consultation highlights the gendered nature of a range of occupations and sectors that is not unique to Australia. International OECD also shows that “Women remain overrepresented in service sectors, in particular health, social and education sectors and underrepresented in STEM sectors, even with all other factors being equal” (OECD, 2024, p. 72)

With students linking gender and careers around the age of seven, early career education provides a mechanism to affect gender skewed career decisions by exposing children to the wide range of career options and different pathways. Career education must start early as, “Gender stereotypes at home, in the class and in society as well as the absence of role models play a key role in determining both boys’ and girls’ field of study choices and career expectations” (OECD, 2023).

While the OECD has made gains in promoting gender equality in school curriculums (OECD, 2023) teaching practices and supporting better representation of girls in a range of roles and STEM pathways needs addressing for Australia to counteract the lower representation of women in many careers and sectors. With female graduates impacted more than male graduates in employment equity, and tertiary graduates suffering more from depreciation capital than vocationally qualified individuals, female students need to increase their career consideration set early in their schooling.

A 2022 study from Monash University (Gleeson et al., 2022) surveyed 1,339 female school students in years 10 to 12 from four Victorian schools and found that while more than eighty-three per cent wanted to go to university, there was a significant degree of uncertainty about what was next. One third did not know what career best suited them; nearly forty per cent were concerned they would never have a “real” career; nearly one third felt unemployable; four per cent said they were doing subjects or activities with no sense of purpose, and twenty-six per cent said they often felt down or worried about selecting a career. They also continued to nominate careers within narrow fields.

Over half of the respondents’ chosen careers were in areas such as medicine, law/paralegal fields, nursing, creative arts and teaching. Young women are overlooking many future careers requiring digital skills and non-traditional roles like trades also noted by (Encinas-Martin and Cherian, 2023, p. 3).

National and international research points to long term outcomes for women that include lower income opportunities, lower career progression/outcome expectancy, and less career resilience across their lifespan than their male counterparts. However, effective career education can counter this trend.

An OECD Education Spotlight, *Teenage career uncertainty: why it matters and how to reduce it*, (2024) cited Australian researchers (Sikora and Saha, 2011) who identified that teenagers who can express career certainty at 25 years of age, have higher levels of occupational status by the time they are 25. As the effects were greater for young women than men, there is a substantial case for more career education throughout school.

Narrow Career Decisions

Worldwide, students continue to narrow their career consideration set and are selecting careers from an ever-narrowing range of options. The 2018 PISA survey found that 47 percent of 15-year-old boys and 53 percent of 15-year-old girls from 41 countries expect to work in one of just ten jobs by the age of 30. This narrowing range of expectations has increased over time and influences were stronger for students with lower school performance, less exposure and understanding of future work opportunities, and confusion about how education and qualifications are related to jobs and careers (OECD, 2020). The 2024 OECD Education Spotlight, *Aligned Ambitions?* noted that education ambitions must align with entry requirements of anticipated employment. Students with high and aligned ambitions did better in work as young adults than their peers. However, across the OECD, misalignment was not uncommon and more common for disadvantaged cohorts.

De Bortoli (2021) notes there are opportunities for educators and policymakers to use PISA information to compare Australian students' occupational aspirations and the roles they expect to be engaged in when they are about 30 years of age following the PISA assessment, 2000. 10,000 Australian students were included in the research. ACER considered the research to mirror findings in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth research and the data showed that the career aspirations of girls became more concentrated between 2000 and 2018, but for boys, it became less concentrated.

It is important for governments and education authorities to recognise that making career decisions takes time. A significant amount of labour market information, job roles information, work types, and industries need to be investigated for students to understand the opportunities beyond the narrow consideration set most are considering. Students also need structure and guidance to see beyond the social and environmental influences impacting their narrow options:

- Peers
- Social media

- Their school performance and engagement
- School myths (our school does well in particular areas)
- Parents (who may not understand the labour market opportunities)
- Subject scaling and pathways myths
- Teachers
- Popular TV roles

In marketing parlance, investment in cutting through the vast array of information must be at least three times that of the competition. This means that education must undertake significant work and investment to overcome the 'noise' and influences impacting students' decisions. Students need to move through appropriate developmental milestones to understand themselves and reflect on their values throughout school as they develop into young people. They need to be given opportunities to reflect on issues that will impact them and their lives in developmentally appropriate ways throughout their schooling. This is not a process that can be or should be condensed into a convenient few years at the end of secondary school.

Cognitive decision-making supports career decision making and career decisions are complex life decisions. A student's first career may not be their last career. However, they need an idea of the direction they will head towards, and which pathway/s suit them to get there. This involves research, evaluation and planning. Students must engage with information sources and experiences to inform their decision making and importantly, build their career readiness, career search and job application micro-skills.

Enhancing student thinking capacity and decision-making skills is a key component of career education and will impact a student's life from personal growth through to career success and overall well-being. Career education supports students to develop clear and logical thinking to prioritise more effectively, leading to more balanced and rational decisions. As they come to understand they are making well-considered decisions and that their learning and transferrable skills are valued, their confidence will increase.

By implementing a career education subject from K-12, students will have the necessary time and opportunity to explore a wider range of career options to support more informed career and pathway choices. This will improve their exploration of apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational and higher education options, and help governments provide support to priority industries. The current approach in many schools is to focus students on career decisions in the later senior years of secondary school (amongst other curriculum pressures and last-minute career decision making pressures). This is tantamount to letting the cart lead the horse in the last furlong of one of life's most important races.

Poor School Transitioning

Tertiary drop-out rates impact the rate at which individuals enter their first career and contribute to their lifetime of earning potential. More than 500,000 students drop out of university each year and NCVET research shows that 47.6 percent of students who commence a nationally recognised VET qualification will complete it.

Supporting students while they are still at school to make the right choice is critical to:

- reduce waste in funded places from course swapping or incompleteness
- protect students from the economic costs of a failed qualification investment
- ensure students make sound career-decisions to increase their opportunity outcomes
- improve transition to work
- support the labour market and national productivity.

Roles of the Future and Labour Market Changes

World labour markets are diverging and those with lower education and women will face lower employment levels. The *Future Jobs Report* (World Economic Forum, 2023) highlights results from a survey of 803 companies employing more than 11.3 million workers across 27 industry clusters and 45 economies. Predictions indicate that 69 million jobs will be created, and 83 million jobs will disappear leading to a contracting in the global labour market in the next five years.

AI and digital transformation will have a significant impact on labour-market churn. 85 percent of organisations surveyed identify increasing new and frontier technologies and broadening digital access as the trends as likely to drive transformation in their organisation. Agriculture technologies, digital platforms and apps, e-commerce and digital trade, and AI are all expected to result in significant labour market disruption, with substantial proportions of companies forecasting job displacement in their organisations, offset by job growth elsewhere to result in a net positive. Jobs in education are expected to grow by 10 percent, agricultural operators by thirty percent, along with digital transformation specialists, digital marketing specialists and e-commerce specialists.

Digitisation and sustainability technology roles are the fastest growing roles. AI and machine learning specialists top the list of the fast-growing jobs, and the fastest declining jobs are secretarial and clerical roles. The OECD has highlighted that individuals must be able to adapt to these changes and reskill to transition as jobs appear and disappear. STEM skills will underpin many of the new jobs of the future and Australia is aware of the declining number of students taking maths/STEM subjects at school. Many students have not linked the importance of STEM subjects to future labour market conditions, or how it may narrow their own field of employment opportunities.

ACCE has been working with the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (through a Toyota Community Trust grant) to increase math/STEM teacher understanding about roles of the future. The grant funded a teacher career exploration immersion day to highlight the vast array of exciting STEM career options available for teachers to share with their students. However, this and other programs highlight the inequitable state of career education in Australia. Far greater impact can be delivered by upskilling teachers in career education, providing career education time in the curriculum, and ensuring qualified career practitioners support school career curriculum and guidance.

The ongoing patching and money that goes to deliver career programs, activities, and pay for career platform products from organisations and enthusiastic entrepreneurs to fill the gap in Australia's career education is mind-blowing and costly to the nation. In many cases providers may have no career qualifications or theoretical underpinning, and our schools are nothing more than a gold mine of unrequited opportunity. Australia has made opportunists career rich while our students remain career poor. Including a career education subject/time in the national curriculum throughout schooling enables the establishment of a benchmark, baseline for career education outcomes and equity for all students.

Skills and Dispositions Students Need

ACARA has already identified the types of skills that students will need in the future:

So schooling, while preparing our children as best it can for the changing world of work, is going to need to focus more on these aspects of humanity that are exclusively human and vitally important for our development as communities. School leavers will need human skills that are not easily replicated by machines, such as creativity, problem-solving, adaptability, ethical awareness, emotional self-regulation, teamwork and critical thinking.

David de Carvalho

CEO, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (Newspaper opinion piece)

These 'human skills' can be defined as futureproofing and employment skills.

Future proofing skills:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Opportunity Awareness
- Uncertainty Tolerance
- Resilience
- Navigation Failure
- Lifelong Learning
- Diversity
- Entrepreneurship

Employment skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Organisation Skills
- Initiative
- Digital Competence
- Decision Making
- Self-Management

The problem of assessing the 'human skills' is not new. Work by Professor Sandra Milligan highlights the challenges in assessing the highly valued skills that students need, and employers want. Helping students understand their employability skills is part of career education and can be supported through school career education curriculum. Similarly, researcher, Kate Daubney identified the importance of making employment connections to school learning, "This is because the level of self-awareness is not only desired by employers, but also what they need to make connections between study and their choice of career or first workplace role" (2021, p. 111).

Career Education Curriculum

Career education supports schools to deliver on their purpose to prepare students for life beyond school in the working world. In 2019, the Department of Education released *Future Ready: Research into incorporating career education into the Australian Curriculum*. The research included international perspectives on career education and how career education had been implemented. It identified the following critical issues for the successful delivery of career education in Australia:

For embedded approaches to career education, the knowledge, expertise and career education awareness of learning area teachers are recognised as critical. Where career education is a shared responsibility, those consulted also reported on the value of having a leader or champion to maintain focus on shared objectives and to encourage and support others.

While the qualifications and expertise of the people currently responsible for career education in Australian schools is highly variable, many stakeholders identified a need for personnel with professional qualifications in career education. Some jurisdictions have introduced or increased minimum qualification requirements for these roles and have provided targeted professional learning for the career educator workforce.

These success factors – school leadership, teacher awareness, and career educator expertise – are viewed by stakeholders as more important than curriculum content for supporting effective career education. Research and consultation for this project suggests that changes to the Australian Curriculum may be beneficial if they prompt positive change in school leadership, teacher awareness and career educator expertise. (Clark, p.10)

In summary, the success factors are:

- Career educator expertise
- Teachers with career education awareness
- Leadership support for career education

While curriculum was noted as less important than the other factors, if the other factors are barriers, then curriculum has a larger role to play. In Australia, the key success factors can be substantial barriers to effective and equitable career education in many schools. Each factor varies in its impact across jurisdictions, school type, school location, student cohort and by individual school, resulting in inequitable career outcomes. These outcomes are evidenced in Australia's data for engagement, transitioning outcomes, gendered and narrow career choices and work readiness referred to in the Australian Treasury Employment Whitepaper Consultation (2022). Improvements across all areas are essential to drive change, including positive impacts that can be delivered with career education time/curriculum.

Researchers (McCowan et al., 2023) provide recommendations for assessing career education in schools and highlights the difference between Australia's vision and school reality:

While there is evidence of career education on students' learning and development (Berger et al., 2019; Hooley et al., 2011; Lapan et al., 1997; McWhirter et al., 2000; Whiston et al., 2017), successive reviews of career education in schools have been critical of the lack of a consistent curricular framework and learning resources (Education Council, 2020; Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, 2002). Gonski and Shergold (2021) stated, 'in the absence of help with career development, many students are at significant risk of embarking on educational or training courses they either fail to finish or take much longer to complete than is necessary' (p. 17). Furthermore, the Australian Government's stated vision is that "every school student will have access to high-quality career education" because it 'builds resilient individuals who can adapt to the evolving nature

of work and manage multiple careers in their lifetime, according to their circumstances and need' (DEET, 2019, p. 5). (p. 122)

Shen (2021) notes the value of integrating career planning into the curriculum from research studies that identify the impact of career education classes on student outcomes:

Research has found that students lacking access to career education classes are more likely to be uncertain of their futures and have no clear career goals, which may affect students' perception of what is realistically achievable as well as their subject choices in high school, leading to choosing the courses that are either not well suited to their abilities or their desired career pathways [4]. On the contrary, students with clear career determination often took more electives during high school and were selecting subjects based on personal interests, planned study, or future careers [4]. Students who exhibited consistency between their career interests and specific subject choices would also have greater motivation in schoolwork and improvement in their approach to learning [4]. Therefore, guidance on career planning and subject selection could avoid mismatches between student's interests or strengths and school courses, as well as helping students to know the relevance of school education to post-school lives and thus enhancing their motivation in school learning. (p. 2116)

Australia has developed the Australian Blueprint for Career Development framework, and this is a nationally understood approach to the development of career development learning. With curriculum remaining a critical driver in schools and with the loss of career education methodology from Australian education qualifications, subject teachers cannot be expected to know how to deliver career education. However, mandated curriculum time throughout school, teacher professional development, and support from qualified career school practitioners can make a substantial and positive impact, particularly with priority cohorts

who need additional connection to their school learning and career support to improve their work readiness.

While there have been concerns about a crowded curriculum in Australia, the entirety of curriculum can be rendered disconnected from students' futures if they cannot connect the purpose of their learning to the world of work.

The barriers to equitable career education in schools across Australia include:

- School leadership understanding/support
- Parent understanding
- Initial Teacher Training and subject teacher training in career education
- Qualified career practitioners in schools
- School resourcing (funding, teachers and career professionals)
- Time within the curriculum
- Career space/school service location

Career Education Teaching Methodology

Australia once had career education methodology in education qualifications so teachers could support career education in schools. As this is no longer the case, many subject teachers wonder how to help students to link their learning to labour market opportunities and roles of the future. Career education is a specific field of knowledge and career teachers need to understand career development theories and how to support students with developmentally appropriate career learning. Career education draws on career theory, developmental psychology, social-learning theory and cognitive decision making, education theories and pedagogy, labour market knowledge, career service delivery, workplace structures and employment, and transitioning pathways. Without explicit information, students are not good at translating their skills into what employers need, and employers are not good at articulating what they need.

Daubney's analysis of the UK curriculum shows that although specific definitions are given for the skills that students will learn, there may be no correlation between employment. She asks, "what happens if you make it easier for learners to identify the transferable skills they develop through their subject study, the same skills that employers want to develop in them?" (Daubney, p. 107). Like the work of Professor Milligan, she notes the gaps in the successful articulation of school learning to employability.

Australian employers have asked for a range of employability skills for over twenty years and continue to highlight these employability skills are still missing. In 2023, ACCE supported the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to develop its career strategy policy paper (Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2023) with employers noting the missing

skills and calling for more career education for youth. These missing skills and work readiness issues may count toward the greater rate of youth unemployment compared to other age groups.

System Implementation

While national standards for career qualifications have been developed and the Australian Register for Career Practitioners requires a CICA endorsed qualification at Graduate Certificate (Level 8) or equivalent, not all school career practitioners hold an endorsed qualification nationally. In addition, many schools do not have enough career staff or time allocation to deliver the necessary services. As a profession that is intermittently funded by governments, a lack of consistent investment has resulted in a career workforce that is not sufficiently developed to meet Australia's needs. The Government's Universities Accord Final report (2024) has recognised the gap. However, investment and time will be required to meet the nation's requirements. Until career education and development are elevated as a national priority, Australia will remain unable to adequately provide the necessary support to students, graduates and the community.

While ACCE fundamentally advocates for the development of a professionally qualified career workforce to meet the needs of the nation, the current shortfall should not impact other important career education and development decisions. Curriculum can improve career education in schools and importantly, have a positive impact on student future success. Other countries have ratios of one career professional to 250 or 185 students (Scotland and Ireland) so adding career education as K-12 subject or minimum time allocation in the national curriculum will have a substantial, positive impact. If this is accompanied by career education training for subject teachers and resources, Australia's highly professionalised teaching workforce and the current career workforce in schools can impact students through a whole school approach. This should be supported by national data collection that evaluates change and outcomes aligned to a baseline of career development outcomes that should be established for the career education of the nation's students.

At a national level, ACARA has a role to play in establishing a career curriculum that can avoid the type of confusion in the UK:

Of the eight Benchmarks in the Guidance against which provision is evaluated

[1], four relate to some aspect of the workplace, but none of them explicitly

outlines how learning about the workplace should be applied to enable

learners to understand or develop their employability. One of those,

Benchmark 4 "Linking curriculum learning to careers", hints at the connection

that is surfaced by the more academic definitions summarised earlier, but it focuses on a very linear interpretation of the relationship between subject and career outcome, as if this might solve the conundrum of what employability is: “All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths” (p. 7). In other words, the emphasis is on the ability to be employed in these sectors. This only creates more problems for educators: what about those subjects which do not have an obviously linear relationship between knowledge and a career choice? And what is it in the curriculum that they should be linking to or emphasising? (Daubney, 2019, p. 112).

Challenges have been noted by school practitioner/teachers that are not unique to Victoria: *Victoria has 100 nominal hours of delivery for all VCE and VCE/VM units. A stand-alone subject could be problematic, but time should be set aside for careers education developed by professional career practitioners and ideally delivered by a career practitioner.*

Each year level of students should participate in a specific number of hours of careers education to acknowledge the importance of the content. The current system is inconsistent in delivery with some students missing out resulting in inequity. Some schools purchase expensive programs due to a lack of time and resources, while other schools are unable to access the same resources for financial reasons.

An Australia-wide curriculum with supporting resources that could be adapted to meet local requirements and can be accessed free of charge would be ideal, as with the NZ system. Some schools have reasonable staffing levels with qualified staff and others don't.

Australia does not have the necessary career professional resourcing like Finland and there are not reasonable ratios for careers support in schools. Accordingly, curriculum and time allocation can play a role in improving outcomes.

National Curriculum Opportunities

Career education is essential for the nation to ensure schools can deliver on their purpose to prepare students for the working world. By establishing a baseline for career education delivered in schools as a standalone subject or mandatory minimum hours from K-12, jurisdictions and schools will have greater opportunities to provide better support for students. Increasing complexity in the job market and issues with student wellbeing and disengagement can be positively affected by career education that connects students to their learning and future.

With resourcing issues in schools across the nation, curriculum can play a greater role and improve optics, leadership support for career education, and a whole school approach.

Positive opportunities include:

- Establishing a national baseline for career education and development outcomes that is supported through national legislation aimed at ensuring equity outcomes (especially for students in remote, rural, low SES, and ESL schools, disengaged students, students with disability, migrant/refugee students and indigenous students).
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through a national K-12 career education curriculum that includes an indigenous career education framework to help Close the Gap in educational outcomes for First Nations Peoples. The Nunavut Approved Curriculum and Teaching Resources (Canada) provides an example (2019-2020).
- Overcoming systemic issues and structural barriers in schools where teaching and leadership staff may not have the requisite understanding or training in career education to support a whole school approach to career education.
- Establishing an agreed national baseline of career development outcomes and national evaluation of student work readiness and destinations to support governments with essential information for funding and investment.
- Ensuring students understand labour market information (jurisdictionally and nationally) and the wide range of opportunities in different industries, priority sectors, and how to navigate to these.
- Improving student understanding of the equitable pathway options to reach their goals through apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational studies or higher education, and removing embedded social biases about vocational pathways.
- Improving the link between curriculum subject learning, transferable skills and employability skills.
- Supporting the development of professional career education training can be made available to subject teachers to support career education and link general subject outcomes to employability skills.

- Ensuring quality career education and guidance is delivered by career practitioners in schools who can support subject teachers, parents and students.
- Providing curriculum/time so jurisdictions can adopt or customise a quality career education curriculum, programs and lessons created by qualified career and education experts, rather than by profiteers.
- Supporting school leadership to understand and increase support of career education through systemic change in curriculum.
- Improving parental engagement and understanding of career development and the opportunity to deliver better support to parents for career conversations with their children as a result of career education from K-12. Parents remain a major influence on student career decision making and through career education subject homework, parent information nights and other information coming from schools to home, ACARA can support a national shift in student work readiness and career decision making for all students.
- Using the Australian Blueprint for Career Development as the foundation of Australia's K-12 career education subject framework and curriculum are essential. It has been developed for education and is well understood by career educators and career curriculum writers in all jurisdictions.

As Australia's independent statutory authority responsible for the development of a national curriculum, a national assessment program, and a national data collection and reporting program, ACARA should seek to represent the importance of career education to student learning and outcomes. Future ready research commissioned by the Department of Education investigated incorporating career education into the curriculum to identify the factors that can support better career development outcomes for students.

Recommendation 2 stated,

Explore options to prominently identify the preparation of young people for effective participation in working life as one of the key purposes of the Australian Curriculum to ensure the curriculum reflects the broad definition and rationale of career education.

(Ithica Group, 2019).

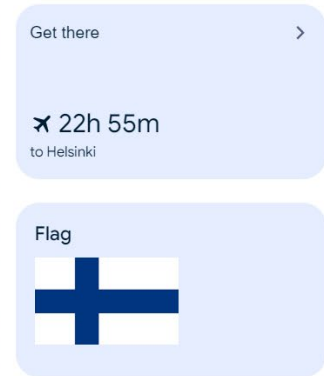
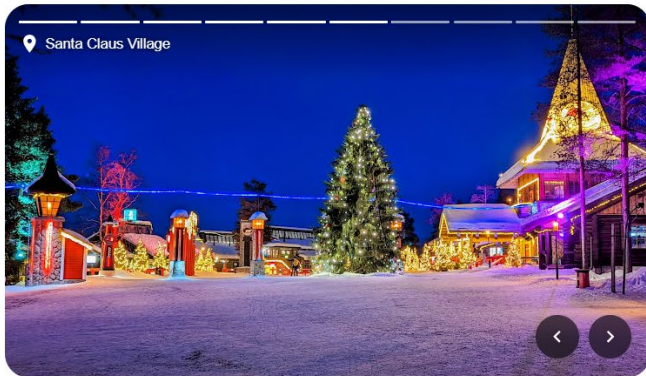
The report identified that overcoming barriers and factors such as ensuring school leaders prioritise career education were integral to student education (Recommendation 9). When considering the costs associated with tracking and assessing career education outcomes, ACARA could consider leveraging current data collection methods to collect additional career development information for governments. This would help ensure governments are not reliant on second-hand information from 'career-iteers' who have acquired children's details for their own profitable gain.

Transparency and accountability have been identified by McKinsey and Company as a factor in improving school systems. The OECD case study on the development and implementation of NAPLAN and My School (Zanderigo, 2012) notes the many benefits of school transparency and accountability, and its impact on encouraging innovation and excellence in schools. The My School website provides an opportunity to highlight the preparation of young people for the world of work, including school effectiveness in its delivery.

Finally, ACARA could consider its role in highlighting the value of legislation to support career education through a career education act to support the nation to improve student outcomes. In other countries, legislation and minimum career education delivery demonstrate the importance that other nations place on the preparation of young people for the world of work. Korea and Finland are two examples, and have legislated career education. Perhaps it is time for Australia to acknowledge it and support workforce development and national well-being.

International Career Education

Each of the following countries have embraced career education as critical to student success. Each has an approach to curriculum and systems.



Finland

Finish career education has been successful at a systems level and is supported by explicit legislation. Strategic leadership is shared nationally, and locally, and coordination involves networks across sectors and outside school that strengthens links between education and industry.

Much of the work is delivered by career professionals who have mandated, high level career qualifications and who support and develop career education in schools. There is systematic, uniform implementation of career education as a compulsory subject in all schools.

Finland has around 70 multi-agency, one-stop guidance centres across Finland providing information and guidance. This is need-based for those under 30 years of age. From 2025, employment areas will be also organising joint services for young people like the one-stop guidance centres.

There is co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and other stakeholders to develop and integrate these systems. They are represented in the National Lifelong Guidance Forum appointed in 2020 to coordinate and develop lifelong guidance. The national cross-sectoral policy development is complemented by 15 regional lifelong guidance working groups.

Finland has professionalised guidance certified to international standards and qualifications defined in legislation. Career Education in Finland is also supported by explicit legislation and requires each student access to adequate guidance and counselling through school.

The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for national curricula, which specify key objectives, core content for school subjects and cross curricular themes, including career education. Within the framework of the

National Core Curriculum, schools and local authorities then formulate their own curricular regulations. The local curriculum complements and emphasises the goals, and the policies that direct the activities, the key contents and other aspects related to the organisation of education specified in the core curriculum from a local perspective. At the school level each school drafts its own curriculum founded on both the national and the local one. This means that teachers (including guidance counsellors) are also involved in refining the school-based curriculum, and the schools have a chance to refine the curriculum in relation to local circumstances.

In Finland students receive guidance and counselling all through their basic education. All teachers provide guidance counselling and the goals and divisions of labour between different providers are set in the national curriculum. Students are entitled to individual and group guidance and counselling. The national curriculum provides 76 hours during grade 7-9 (or the last 3 years of basic education). Class-based lessons are usually given by a guidance counsellor who covers study skills, and school life, self-knowledge, education and training options, occupations, occupational sectors and the world of work.

Comprehensive school guidance counsellors usually have teacher training plus 60-credit guidance qualification or a masters degree with an equal amount of study in guidance and counselling. Delivering career education in schools requires specific training and knowledge. Regardless of whether teachers are trained to also provide career guidance, they require career education subject knowledge and skills to deliver career education.

Comprehensive school education providers have a duty to ensure that students in grades 8 and 9 of compulsory schooling receive individual guidance and counselling to prepare them for the next phase of their studies. Students who encounter challenges in terms of career planning, planning for further studies and/or entry to upper secondary level are entitled to more targeted and intensive guidance counselling (Act on the Amendment of the Basic Education Act 1216/2020).

(Kettunen, 2024, p. 77)

The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for national curricula, which specify key objectives, core content for school subjects and cross curricular themes, including career education. Within the framework of the National Core Curriculum, schools and local authorities then formulate their own curricular regulations. The local curriculum complements and emphasises the goals, and the policies that direct the activities, the key contents and other aspects related to the organisation of education specified in the core curriculum from a local perspective. At the school level each school drafts its own curriculum founded on both the national and the local one. This means that teachers (including guidance counsellors) are also involved in refining the school-based curriculum, and the schools have a chance to refine the curriculum in relation to local circumstances. (Kettunen, 2024, p. 77-78)



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Denmark

Compulsory education starts at preschool to grade 9 (children start school in the year they turn 6 and complete lower secondary education aged 14 to 17). Primary and lower secondary is grade 0 to 9 or the non-compulsory grade 10.

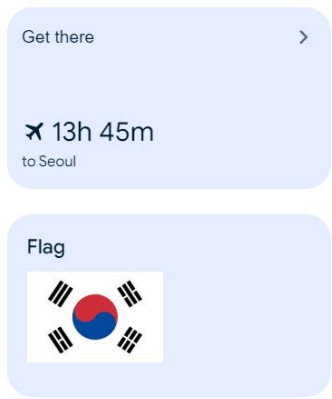
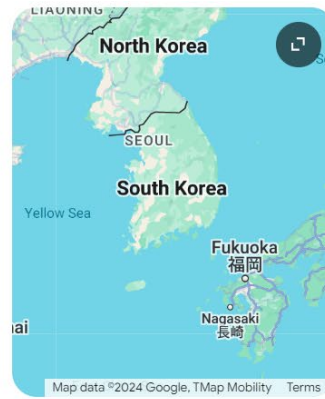
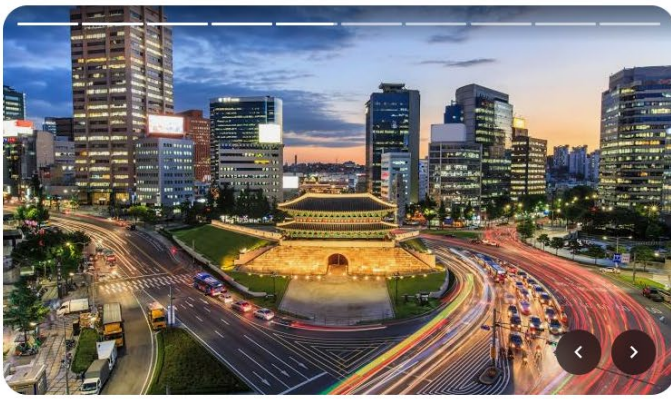
Orientation to occupations and educations was introduced in 1960 and teachers teach 'education and work' to all grades. There are not specific qualifications required but a new teacher education curriculum contains an optional subject on education and work that carries credit points.

Guidance professionals at youth guidance units deliver career guidance for the transition from compulsory lower secondary education to vocational or general upper secondary education, or work. This forms collective and in-class activities.

All councils must plan to deliver career guidance to pupils in grades 1 to 9. Students who are assessed as ready for other activities than general upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education have the right to guidance one-on-one or in smaller groups (one-on-one career guidance is not a part of career education activities for all pupils).

Career professionals in the council youth guidance units must have a diploma or master's degree in educational and vocational guidance or a bachelor's degree programme in public administration specialising in career guidance. Those with extensive experience in the field can apply for assessment and recognition of prior learning.

A review of the Danish system in the early 2000's raised concerns that there was not specification of the number of lessons delivered or the means to ensure what was delivered and the quality. Researchers Thomsen, Tybjerg and Skovhus (2024) have identified the need to be more explicit about the objectives in career education activities to ensure the activities do not become the primary objective rather than servicing to facilitate meaningful career learning experiences (p. 27).



South Korea

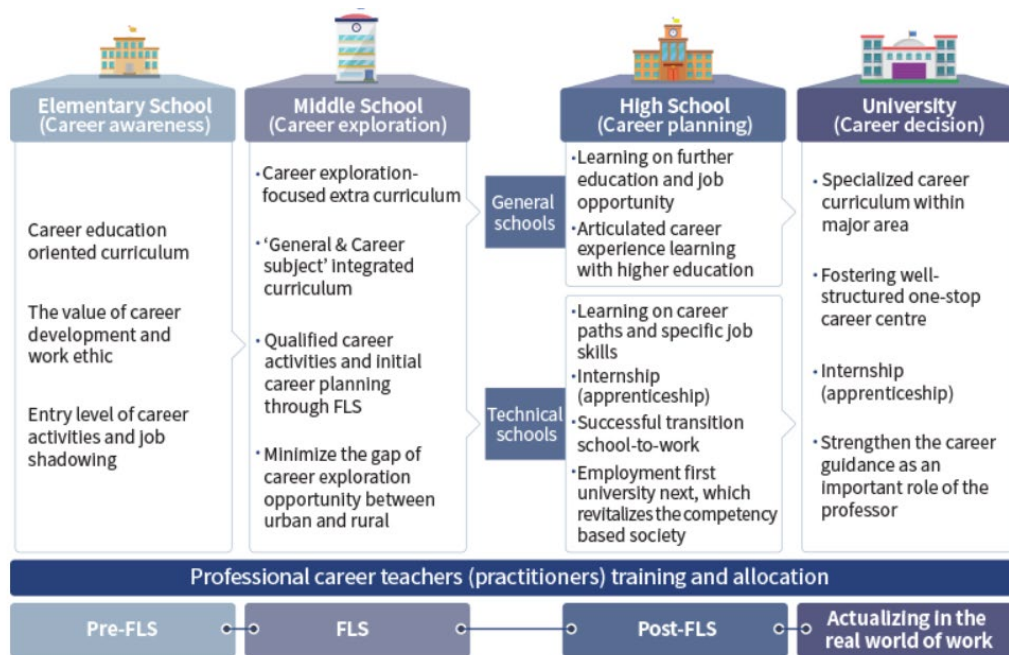
South Korea has a National Career Development Plan involving school curriculum. Its aim is to strengthen aspirations and talent to contribute to citizen wellbeing and provide individuals with a career path from school and workplaces that suits their talents and aptitudes.

Researchers (Lee et al., 2021) highlight the importance of career education in South Korea:

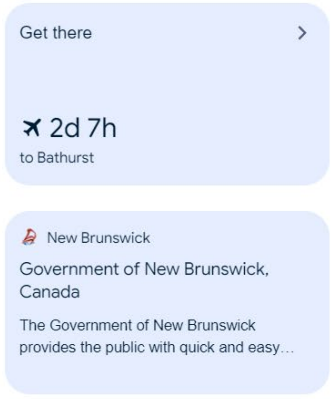
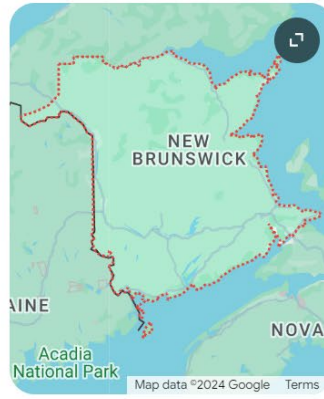
School career education had been rapidly expanded in South Korea by training school career counselors, allocating funds for career education, and developing a variety of career development programs [6]. As a result, more than 94% of secondary schools in South Korea became able to allocate financial and human resources for career education as reported by the Korean National School Survey of Career Education (KNSSCE) in 2019 [7]. The expansion can be attributed to the Career Education Act in South Korea, enacted in 2015, aiming to ensure opportunities for all students to be given career education programs and acquire career development competencies [8]. (p. 11)

The National Career Development Framework in South Korea is key to national human resource development and is considered critical for the efficiency of national growth and productivity. Korea faces similar issues to Australia in the perceptions and uptake of vocational pathways and tertiary education has produced overly qualified Koreans for certain fields and jobs. Career development starts at the earliest stage in school and there is public policy around career development including a Free Learning Semester (FLS), customised career design, and happiness education.

- FLS provides career exploration opportunities for students in middle school to develop their career vision and goals. This is usually the first semester of their middle school period and includes intensive career experience programs.
- Key stages of career development in the curriculum: primary school (Period of learning career awareness), middle school (Period of learning career exploration), and high school (Period of learning career decision).



Importantly, career education is supported by the Career Education Act that guides career education at school and the national career education policies. The Act highlights the supports career education opportunities to develop students' skills and aptitudes, and promote wellbeing and economic and social growth.



New Brunswick, CA

The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) is focused on systemically advancing the current design and delivery of career development (K-12 through career connected learning (CCL)) that will be incorporated into public schools.

CCL will deliver:

- social emotional learning
- experimental learning
- New Brunswick's global competencies learning
- Labour Market information learning
- myBlueprint Educational Planner Tool
- Financial Wellness

The education and early childhood department identify in their case for career education that:

Career development is about more than helping students to find a job and build a career. It has an important role to play to help young people manage anxiety, depression, and other manifestations of poor mental health that can make transitions from education into work more difficult and can in turn be extenuated by poor transitions. Young people suffering from poor mental health are likely to require greater support in visualising potential futures, embracing career development activities and experiences with confidence, and developing helpful social networks (Redekopp and Huston, 2020).

Anxieties can be expected to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hooley, 2022). (p. 9)

New Brunswick has introduced a universal design initiative to support career education. Train the trainer has been developed for teachers to upskill them in career development to support all students. Training includes instructional strategies and ideas for engaging, expressing and representing career learning.

The career development framework includes OECD career readiness indicators to ensure the universal foundations and provisions incorporate aspects of guidance that can most confidently provide students with effective career development.

This research-based framework is intended to be embedded in all subject areas and program blocks by curriculum and resource developers, as well as educators and school communities. Further, within the Hopeful Transitions career education/ transition Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the framework provides for Tier 1 foundational learning, which is the responsibility of all educators. It is designed to ensure that New Brunswick's provincial curriculum provides each learner with equitable and inclusive career education and pathway planning. Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the framework addresses barriers to quality career education participation, processes, and outcomes, ensuring that each learner is valued and engaged. Within its overarching strategy to enhance educational provision, the framework articulates the activities and experiences expected of Early Childhood to Grade 12 students attending Anglophone and Francophone early learning centers and K-12 schools in the province. The framework will outline the career development competencies and attitudes associated with better transitions and psychological well-being in young adulthood. (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. p. 2)



Wales, UK

Wales has launched a new curriculum that has subjects removed and replaced with areas of learning and experiences that have embedded careers and work-related experiences from primary school through to graduation across all areas of learning.

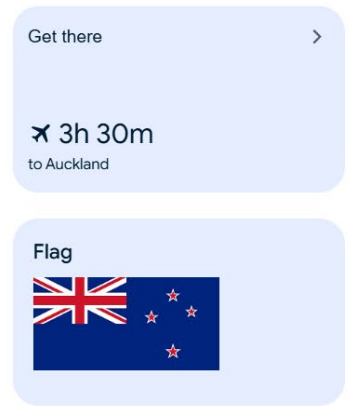
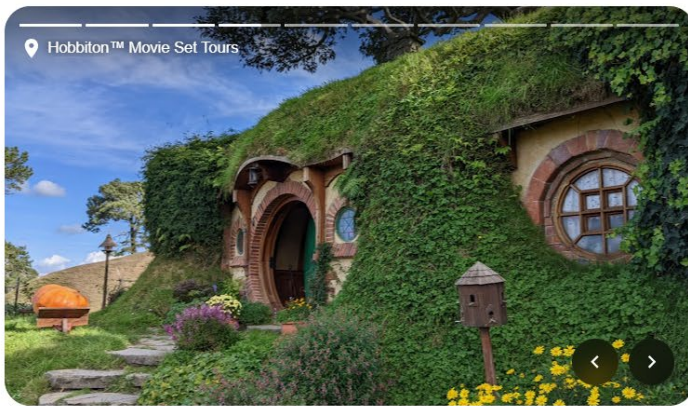
The aim of the Welsh Government's new Curriculum for Wales and the Tertiary Education and Research legislation is to transform teaching and learning in Wales to support young people in moving confidently into the world of work, with relevant and desirable skills, knowledge, and abilities. (David, 2023, p.1)

Prior to this, from Year 9 (age 14) schools delivered career education, but the framework was not compulsory. It resulted in great disparity in quality across the school system. The new proactive approach is to embed career management competencies early on to take citizens through to adulthood, helping to ensure they are better equipped to navigate labour disruptions, plan for their futures, and access Work in Wales.

High-quality careers education, advice and guidance are considered important for supporting students to reach their full potential. Effective careers education provides learners with a better understanding of the world of work, the skills they need, and the wide range of opportunities and pathways available to them.

Careers and work-related experiences (CWRE) are critical in the curriculum for Wales. It includes opportunities to develop career management skills and should be planned within a school or setting's policy. A toolkit supports careers and work-related experience in the curriculum help schools and education settings in designing CWRE in their curriculum. This helps evaluate the delivery of CWRE, and assess the impact on the progress made by learners. Effective careers education motivates and inspires children and young people and can excite them about subjects, increase motivation and confidence, and improve their attainment and progression in education.

The Welsh career initiatives are a collaboration of the Economy Minister and Minister for Education and Welsh Language. CWRE is for 3 to 16-year-olds and is a cross-cutting theme in the curriculum that is implemented in primary schools and nursery schools. CWRE is expected to contribute to learners' achievement of the four purposes.



New Zealand

New Zealand has a National Careers System Strategy aimed at raising the education level of New Zealanders and their skills and aspirations to meet the demands of work and future labour market complexity.

Careers.govt.nz is responsible for the career development benchmarks that establish different levels of achievement for schools and the tertiary system to measure their career development programmes and career services. Career management is among the key competencies that schools should develop and promote in their local school curriculum.

Careers.govt.nz provides teachers and leaders with resources to implement a school-wide approach for students in Year 7 and 8 and Year 9 to 13 so students can manage life, learning and transitioning decisions.

The Quality framework for career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) includes a key principle that underpins all elements of the framework, and five criteria to inform and guide quality CEIAG across the system:

Careers Quality Framework

The quality framework for CEIAG supports the careers system to take a consistent and coordinated approach to delivering high-quality careers services. The framework's principle and five criteria were developed through research, analysis, and engagement across the careers system. The development of the quality criteria is a key foundational action of the NCSS Action Plan and also underpins the delivery of a number of other Action Plan initiatives.

Committed and trusted leadership

High quality CEIAG is enabled by committed and trusted leadership that champions and values long-term commitment to the careers system and its workforce.

Meaningful and diverse knowledge-based practice High quality CEIAG is enabled by meaningful and diverse knowledge building, sharing and learning practices.

Self-determined success and well-being

High quality CEIAG will support self-determined definitions of success and well-being.

Thriving and secure identities High quality CEIAG will acknowledge and affirm people's diverse identities and be an empowering space for them

Sustainable past, present and futures

High-quality CEIAG will be responsive to the needs of the present without compromising future generations while preserving the shared past.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Wrapping around the criteria is the principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, based on the concepts of tangata whenua (Māori as indigenous people of the land) and tangata Tiriti (people who settled in Aotearoa after Māori occupation). This principle may be viewed as a korowai (cloak), providing all people with an understanding of whanaungatanga the close connections between people and the relationships between people, place, space and time.

to grow and thrive. (Reid, 2024)

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ACCE is a founding member association of the national peak industry body, The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA). ACCE was founded by the Department of Education in 1975 to train teachers in careers to support the introduction of the work experience legislation. ACCE is a national career education subject association, subject expert, and endorsed training provider of career practitioners by CICA through its career industry RTO (CEAV Institute TOID 22523).

Examples of our work include

- Design and delivery of the My Career Insights program to over 36,000 year 9 students in Victorian Government schools for the Department of Education.
- Supporting the development of the Inclusive Career Benchmarking Tool for schools for the Brotherhood of St Laurence.
- Exploring Work Futures through VET to raise the profile of VET pathways for students in rural and remote regions and from Low SES schools.
- Redevelopment of ACCE RTO courses with indigenous partner (the Aboriginal Teaching and Learning Service) and Koorie learners based on traditional learning methodologies.
- Department of Education World of Work on Wheels mobile bus delivering career education to 6,000 students in rural and remote government schools in Victoria.
- Development of Lesson Plans for the Skills Victoria Skills Gateway Project.
- Training and support for Toyota Drive program successfully transitioning 6,000 manufacturing plant staff.
- Development of career education curriculum/resources for the Department of Education, MyFuture and the Victorian career curriculum.
- Design and delivery of mentor training for the Australian Glass and Glaziers Association successfully raising apprentice completions to 90%.
- Work readiness assessments and career counselling of vulnerable jobseekers using the Employment Readiness Scale™ vocational tool for the City of Greater Dandenong, City of Hume, and the City of Moonee Valley through Community Revitalization Funding.
- Sole provider of the Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors Service for Jobs Victoria.
- Training development and delivery to train Jobs Victoria Advocates.
- Development of Hope Filled Engagement and vocational assessment training for Corrections Victoria vocational education officers.

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