

REVIEW TO INFORM A BETTER AND FAIRER EDUCATION SYSTEM (THE REVIEW) SUBMISSION

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREER EDUCATION IN FORMAL SCHOOLING: PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

ABOUT US

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is the peak industry body in Australia for career development. Our eleven-member associations represent over 6,000 career development practitioners in schools, vocational education and training, higher education, rehabilitation, elite athletes, and private practice.

CICA plays a national role in representing our member associations, providing professional endorsement of training courses across higher education and VET and serves as a focal point for government and other stakeholders in Australia concerned about and interested in promoting high-quality career development services.

SUMMARY

Career education is pivotal in formal schooling, equipping students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset to make informed career decisions and succeed in the dynamic global job market.

Career education can be defined as the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in education and training settings to assist students in making informed decisions about their life, learning and work options and enable their effective participation in working life.¹

In this submission, we focus on Terms of Reference 1,2,4 and 5.

This submission delves into the multifaceted benefits of incorporating explicit career education into the school curriculum. We explore how career education fosters self-awareness, enhances academic performance, promotes lifelong learning, bridges the skills gap, reduces youth unemployment, and ultimately empowers individuals to lead fulfilling professional lives. Emphasising the significance of collaboration among schools, policymakers, and the industry, we argue that integrating career education explicitly into schooling is vital in shaping a prosperous and sustainable future for the country.

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving world, education goes beyond merely transmitting knowledge; it must also equip students with the skills and abilities necessary for their future careers. Career education, as an integral part of formal schooling, aims to prepare students for tomorrow's dynamic workforce.

This submission elucidates the crucial role of career education in empowering students to make informed career choices, fostering academic excellence, bridging the skills gap, and ultimately contributing to overall economic prosperity and societal well-being.

¹ Career Industry Council of Australia (2022). Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners. Victoria.

SELF-AWARENESS AND CAREER EXPLORATION

One of the primary objectives of career education is to foster self-awareness in students. Through comprehensive career exploration programs, students are exposed to diverse occupations and industries, enabling them to identify their interests, strengths, and aptitudes. Students who understand their talents and passions can align their academic pursuits with their future career goals, leading to greater motivation and engagement in their studies.

ENHANCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Career education is intrinsically linked to academic performance. Students who can envision the practical applications of their studies in future careers are more likely to be focused and committed to their education. Career-oriented learning experiences provide students with a context for their studies, making the curriculum more relevant and meaningful, consequently leading to improved academic outcomes.

PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING

Incorporating career education into formal schooling nurtures a culture of lifelong learning. When students recognise the importance of continuous skill development and adaptation to technological advancements, they are better prepared to navigate the ever-changing job landscape. Lifelong learners are more resilient and adaptable, ensuring they remain competitive and valuable contributors to the workforce throughout their careers.

BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP

The contemporary job market demands a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. However, a growing skills gap exists between what schools offer and what employers seek. Career education endeavours to address this gap by aligning educational programs with the job market demands. Students can acquire the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in their chosen careers by fostering a closer relationship between schools and industry.

REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment among young adults is a pressing global issue. Integrating career education into formal schooling can help mitigate this challenge by equipping students with the skills that employers actively seek. As students enter the workforce with a more comprehensive understanding of their career options and the required qualifications, they are better prepared to secure gainful employment.

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

Career education empowers individuals to take charge of their professional lives. Informed decision-making leads to greater job satisfaction and a reduced likelihood of mismatched career choices. Moreover, as societies invest in career education, they witness a more productive and fulfilled workforce, positively impacting economic growth and overall well-being.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, POLICYMAKERS, AND INDUSTRY

To achieve the full potential of career education, collaborative efforts between schools, policymakers, and the industry are paramount. Policymakers must develop frameworks that prioritise career education and integrate it seamlessly into the curriculum. Schools should foster partnerships with local businesses and industries to provide students with real-world experiences and opportunities for workplace learning.

QUALITY CAREER EDUCATION AND IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

In recent years, research has highlighted a compelling link between quality career education and improved mental health outcomes in students.^{2 3}

ENHANCED SENSE OF PURPOSE AND DIRECTION

One of the key benefits of quality career education is that it helps students develop a clearer sense of purpose and direction. Students become more aware of their aspirations and goals by exploring various career paths and understanding their interests, strengths, and values. This increased clarity fosters a positive mindset, reduces uncertainty about the future, and decreases stress about not knowing what lies ahead.

INCREASED RESILIENCE AND COPING SKILLS

Quality career education equips students with academic knowledge and gives them essential life skills, including decision-making, problem-solving, and resilience. As students navigate different career options, they may face challenges, setbacks, or uncertainty. However, exploring careers and learning from failures helps build strength and coping mechanisms, enabling students to bounce back from adversities more confidently.

REDUCTION IN ACADEMIC PRESSURE

Traditional education systems often emphasise academic performance, leading to a stressful environment for many students. Quality career education helps shift the focus away from solely achieving high grades and towards personal growth and self-awareness. When students understand that success is not defined exclusively by academic achievements but also by their unique skills and interests, they may experience reduced academic pressure, leading to improved mental well-being.

NURTURING PERSONAL INTERESTS AND PASSIONS

When students are encouraged to explore various career options, they are more likely to pursue areas of personal interest and passion. Engaging in activities aligned with their passions fosters a sense of fulfilment and provides an avenue for stress relief and a positive mental state. As students delve deeper into their interests, they experience a greater sense of purpose and motivation, which can positively impact their mental health.

STRENGTHENING SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Quality career education allows students to understand their abilities and potential better. When they recognise their strengths and talents, they develop higher self-efficacy and self-confidence. A strong belief in their capabilities empowers students to tackle challenges, seek opportunities, and navigate life with greater assurance, contributing to improved mental health and overall well-being.

² Redekopp, Dave & Huston, Michael. (2018). The broader aims of career development: mental health, wellbeing and work. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*. 47. 1-12. 10.1080/03069885.2018.1513451.

³ Magnusson, Kris Dr. (2022). Connecting Career Development and Mental Health for Youth.

<https://ceric.ca/ceric-events/webinars/connecting-career-development-and-mental-health-for-youth/>

ENHANCED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND NETWORKING

Through career education programs, students can connect with mentors, professionals, and peers with shared interests. Building a supportive network of individuals who understanding their aspirations can immensely benefit a student's mental health. Social connections provide emotional support, decrease feelings of isolation, and create a sense of belonging, all contributing to positive mental health outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Career education is undeniably an indispensable aspect of formal schooling. By facilitating self-awareness, enhancing academic performance, promoting lifelong learning, bridging the skills gap, reducing youth unemployment, and empowering individuals and societies, career education paves the way for a prosperous future.

The evidence supporting the link between quality career education and improved mental health outcomes in students is compelling. By promoting a sense of purpose, enhancing resilience, reducing academic pressure, nurturing personal interests, and fostering self-confidence, career education equips students with valuable tools to navigate the challenges of adolescence with greater ease.

Schools and policymakers need to prioritise and invest in comprehensive career education programs to ensure a brighter future for our youth. By doing so, we can empower the next generation to excel academically and thrive mentally, leading to a more resilient, motivated, and fulfilled workforce in the years to come.

To adequately prepare tomorrow's workforce, schools, policymakers, and industry must collaborate in making career education an explicit central pillar of a modern Australian education system.

Only through these collective efforts can we cultivate a skilled, adaptable, and motivated workforce capable of navigating the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly evolving labour market.

CICA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Australian Capital Territory Careers Association (ACTCA)
Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE)
AIS Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement Network (AIS)
Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA)
Career Advisers Association of New South Wales & ACT (CAANSW/ACT)
Career Education Association of Western Australia (CEAWA)
Career Educators Association of the Northern Territory (CEANT)
National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services (Aust) Inc (NAGCAS)
Queensland Association of Student Advisors (QASA)
Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)
Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia Inc (RCAA)

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS SUBMISSION

David Carney
CICA Executive Director