



Careers Advisers
Association of NSW
and ACT submission
to the NSW
Curriculum Review

November 2018

Introduction

The Careers Advisers Association of NSW & ACT has been the industry body for school-based Careers Advisers for over 40 years. We support our members in a role where they are entrusted to develop and implement a comprehensive and planned program of learning experiences in education and training settings that assist students to make informed decisions about managing their life, learning and work over their lifespan. Our interaction with Government, educational institutions and industry provides us with the knowledge and understanding of what employers are looking for in future employees, what post-school study opportunities exist for our students and how to connect students with both.

Careers Advisers provide the connections to ensure schools prepare each student with a strong foundation of knowledge, capabilities and values to be lifelong learners, and to be flourishing and contributing citizens in a world in which rapid technological advances are leading to unprecedented economic and social change in unpredictable ways.

While currently not recognised as specific curriculum based teachers our knowledge and expertise provides the opportunity to work with students and prepare them for post-schools options that make the optimal decision to suit their skills interests and abilities. We have the knowledge resources and contacts to assist the students in their decision making, and teachers in their curriculum delivering to prepare students for the world of work.

Our submission has focussed on responding to the criteria in the Terms of Reference that are most relevant for our members and their role in schools. There is ongoing commentary in industry, government and education about how schools prepare students for further education and employment and the challenges faced by education in successfully delivering 'work ready' students. CAA and our members hope that this Curriculum review will be the start of ongoing discussions around ideas and solutions as to how schools best prepare our students for life beyond the school gate.

Jenine Smith
President
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Articulate the purposes of the school curriculum, including underpinning philosophies and principles

School curriculum should be about preparing students to be able to function as effective and productive adults in society. There are many layers to this, but all students should be able to leave school with sound numeracy and literacy skills.

Schools are for people of all learning abilities, but teachers and management are not all focussed on providing the appropriate learning environment for all learning abilities. The general age for ‘remaining in education’ is now 17. The positive outcome of this is it provides an opportunity for students to be better prepared for stepping into employment as well as further education. The challenge is that there are schools across all educational sectors where the secondary school curriculum is currently still delivered in a way that caters for the more highly academic students in years 11 and 12. For example, not all schools have embraced the introduction of the VET course offerings (both schools-based and external), and non-ATAR patterns of study for students are struggling for acceptance. From a cost perspective, it is far cheaper for schools to deliver, and students to afford, the traditional academic subjects than the more hands-on learning subjects that dominate the VET Curricula offered in schools and by EVET (External Vocational Education and Training) offerings. Therefore, the education system in NSW has not successfully adjusted in the classroom, for both content and teacher delivery, to readily cater for the wider variety of learning styles of students now completing the HSC.

Identify essential knowledge, skills and attributes as the common entitlement for every learner, ensuring parity of access to learning that is necessary for success, taking account of:

- a. the evidence on how skills and attributes are acquired through knowledge-based disciplines

The terms of reference for this review state that the expectations are to “equip students to contribute to Australian society in the 21st century” and ‘prepare each student with strong foundations of knowledge, capabilities and values to be lifelong learners, and to be flourishing and contributing citizens in a world in which rapid technological advances are contributing to unprecedented economic and social change in unpredictable ways.’

To understand how best to develop curriculum that meets these expectations the Education system needs to take account of the commentary and analysis being undertaken on the impacts of how students are being educated and prepared for the working world in our schools. The recent Victorian Parliament *Inquiry into career advice in Victorian schools* noted that “secondary school is a pivotal time when students make choices about their direction following school..... When done well, school career development improves students’ self-confidence, school engagement and educational attainment. The skills they learn to manage their career also enhances students’ employment outcomes in the future.”¹

¹ PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, *Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools*, August 2018, pg. xiii

From the Foundation for Young Australians, the 2018 reporting on their longitudinal study following the journey of students from 15 -25 years old, *Foundation for Youth – The New Work Reality* noted four factors that can accelerate the successful transition of students from education to work “should include:

- an education that builds enterprise skills;
- being able to undertake relevant paid work experience;
- finding employment in a sector which is growing; and
- an optimistic mindset.

More than ever before, young people need access to relevant, high-quality education and learning systems that reflect and respond to their changing and diverse needs, and those of the economy. Investment in redesigning learning pathways from education to work to ensure young Australians are equipped and empowered with the skills, mindset and confidence to navigate *The New Work Reality* is essential.”²

“To ensure young Australians are prepared and equipped with the skills and capabilities required to successfully navigate their futures there is an urgent need to:

- Equip young people with the career management skills they need to navigate the new work reality
- Encourage young people to choose pathways that will equip them with enterprise skills that are portable to many jobs in their future which are key to successful transitions
- Consider new models for work integrated learning to ensure young people can gain the critical relevant work experience they need alongside their education
- Ensure our systems support well-being for young”³

A snapshot of the weaknesses in how our schools prepare students for further education and work is evident in the recently released *Skillsroad 2018 Youth Census*. Results noted that only 52% of their “participants reported they received quality career advice throughout their schooling”⁴ and that “Youth who have an adult available to counsel them on career questions are more likely to end up in a career that relates to their post-school education and training”⁵. Further, the report noted that “statistically significant findings highlight that those who report that they do not receive quality Career conversations have lower overall wellbeing scores than those who report that they do. While there may be factors requiring further exploration to better understand this result, it nonetheless reaffirms the importance of holistic guidance programs”⁶

Quality career advice comes with expertise and the relevant time allocation, the same as quality subject-based results comes with teachers who are experts in their curriculum area and mandated hours for teaching their subject area. Currently, the ability for Careers Advisers to deliver best practice in schools is limited. A survey of our membership shows that 77% of schools across all sectors have at least one Careers Adviser. Of those members, 65% qualify as Professional members. The majority of our membership do not have a full-time allocation for their role. Our ability to work with students and staff to enable students to

² Foundation for Young Australians, *The new work reality*, report prepared by AlphaBeta (2018), pg.3

³ Foundation for Young Australians, *The new work reality*, report prepared by AlphaBeta (2018), pg.9

⁴ Apprenticeship Support Australia, *Skillsroad 2018 Youth Census Report*, pg.8

⁵ Apprenticeship Support Australia, *Skillsroad 2018 Youth Census Report*, pg.8

⁶ Apprenticeship Support Australia, *Skillsroad 2018 Youth Census Report*, pg.9

achieve their best possible options and pathways to further education and work is inconsistent across all education sectors.

To help prepare students well for life beyond the school gate, it is important that the Review consider looking to a uniform criteria for a realistic standard for delivery of Careers Advice and related curriculum in schools across all sectors by a full-time (appropriately qualified) Careers Adviser that references the national curriculum – the Australian Blueprint for Career Development⁷ using its competency based learning model and the CICA School Career Development Service Benchmarking Resource⁸.

All schools across all educational sectors need to be consistent in delivering a school-wide effective career development program that enables students to achieve their best possible options and pathways to further education and work. Schools need to embrace opportunities to connect with external sources of learning rather than focusing inward and assuming all learning is done best in a classroom.

b. the extent of overcrowding in the curriculum

There is so much going on in schools, that teachers are struggling to complete the set curriculum amidst all the other pressing demands on students' time where they lose classes because of other (frequently mandatory) events. Students need be able to undertake other events as learning is not all about being classroom based. The extent of the problem varies between schools depending on student numbers and school priorities. There is however, an overwhelming feeling of frustration in teachers when their planned schedule of classes is interrupted and the race to finish the curriculum gets harder. Teachers understand the value of the other activities students are undertaking, but there is still a large curriculum content to get through. When teachers cannot get through their Coursework, students cannot be expected to achieve their best (whatever that might be for each student). Teachers feel a constant pressure to complete the stated curriculum rather than trying to encourage a love of learning and discovery.

c. the appropriate scope for school community choices about content

School community choices about content is very important as no one school is like another. There are even bigger challenges for our rural and remote schools in the limitations they have with access to resources, be they human, technological or hardcopy. Schools need to be able to access and work with the local community to incorporate learning experiences relevant to students' backgrounds and that assists them in understanding and connecting with post-school opportunities in education and employment that are relevant to a student's skills and abilities.

⁷ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, 2010

⁸ Careers Industry Council of Australia (CICA), *School Career Development Service BENCHMARKING RESOURCE*, 2011

Explain how the curriculum could be redesigned and presented to better support teaching, learning, assessment and reporting, including consideration of:

- a. the desirability of identifying priorities for learning at different stages of schooling

Look to how students are assessed to move through the stages of learning. Give consideration to different ways of assessing and learning. For example, competency-based learning – you demonstrate your knowledge by doing a particular task. When you meet the requirements set down for that competency, you pass and move on to the next competency. If not, you try again.

Change teacher attitudes to understand that not all students need to be academic but all students can succeed if shown how to connect learning to their skills and abilities

- b. the appropriate level of detail in curriculum documents

Curriculum documents are currently very detailed which helps with developing programs. The problem is the amount of content that needs to be covered can be challenging in the time available when balancing the numerous expectations placed on schools.

- c. the breadth and depth of study

Get the basics (e.g. literacy and numeracy) right and then worry about building on the details. Schools can introduce students to a vast range of learning. In primary schools focus on getting the fundamentals right. In high school students begin searching through the various subjects on offer to determine where their skills and interests lie so that they can follow through to post-school specialised training and study in their area of interest. It is good for them to undertake every subject on offer at their school in years 7 and 8, even the subject areas they (might think they) hate. It provides diversity and understanding of things that interest others and allows them to understand how we are all different, and the relevance of that difference in making a society and meeting the employment opportunities that exist in their local area. As they move through high school refining their subject choices it is also important to understand how what they learn connects with the world of work. It has been noted that if a student understands the relevance of what they learn in school to employment they more readily engage in their learning. As they move through high school selecting subjects that are of interest to them, being able to explore topics in depth allows students to

strengthen their knowledge which is then developed even further in relevant post school education.

d. ways of improving every learner's transition into school and across the years of schooling

While we do not have the detailed academic knowledge to comment on student learning, we do have the 'on the ground' experience with students. Our experience suggests that it is better to put the effort in to working with students to improve, or extend, their knowledge and understanding within their own cohort. There are those rare students who require a different approach to their learning to support them. They should be provided with the resources and encouragement to advance their learning appropriately. For the majority of students, especially in their teenage years, they do not want to stand out from the crowd. They want to move through school with their peers and be able to experience the various social stages of development with them. It is hard enough being a teenager and dealing with all the social and educational experiences they face without being singled out for advancement or to be held back because of their ability to learn. Teachers often work as a team with each other the appropriate support staff to ensure the best outcome for students. The challenges arise when a school is under resourced to meet the challenges of their students.

e. ways of enhancing the options and pathways for all students to further education and work

Ways of enhancing the options and pathways for all students to further education and work is fundamental to why we provide education. Students need to acquire knowledge as they grow but not all of it needs to come from being in a classroom. In recent years schools seem to have forgotten this and are now focussed on the belief that students need to be in a classroom to learn and to be able to cover all topics set down in the curriculum. Experiential learning is becoming less and less in some schools. Including opportunities to connect with, and experience, industries and post school education and training as part of subject based learning while still in secondary school is important. It allows students to understand the connection between their learning and further education and work after completing school. For example, the Victorian Inquiry noted that "Workplace exposure and work experience are crucial components of career development."⁹ There is a strong belief across industry and government that allowing students to undertake work experience and work placement as part of their high school education informs and equips students with necessary work relevant skills. Currently there is no consistency across schools in providing work experience for students. If it is provided in schools, how it is delivered varies subject to a school's circumstances but all schools who offer work experience to their students agree that it is a great benefit to students.

⁹ PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, *Inquiry into carer advice activities in Victorian schools*, August 2018, pg. xv

We increased the leaving age to 17 from 15 but not all schools introduced the broader curriculum options (e.g. VET courses) to accommodate the change in student learning types. You have students being forced to take subject options that do not suit their learning abilities or interests. It is only in recent years that NESAs has expanded the English and Maths Curriculum to work with a greater range of learning abilities. It is time to acknowledge that students with a much broader range of abilities are completing their HSC and we are not undertaking best practice to prepare all students for further education and work.

Identify the implications of any new approach to curriculum design for:

a. assessment and reporting (including NAPLAN, the Record of School Achievement and the Higher School Certificate)

There will always be a need for assessment and reporting but how it is done needs to be reviewed. NAPLAN is of value, as it helps schools flag when additional assistance is needed to ensure the best outcomes for students. NAPLAN is the means to identify where resources should be placed to strengthen students' learning.

One of the biggest problems with NAPLAN, is varying negative perceptions and the lack of positive promotion of the value gained from the evidence gathered through NAPLAN by NESAs to the community. NAPLAN has the potential to be a very effective tool in identifying students who need assistance to strengthen, or extend, their learning and level of knowledge. A good example of the poor marketing was the proposal to use year 9 NAPLAN to determine students' ability to complete the HSC. What could have been a good process to ensure strong HSC results for all students by identifying where additional support was needed ended up being portrayed as another stress for students.

The honouring of strong HSC results by schools and by NESAs is extensive and to be applauded. The focus on academic subjects is not. Where is the applauding of students who achieve strong results in the school-based VET learning? What about those students who achieve at WorldSkills or as School Based Apprentices or Trainees? NESAs does note some successes, but the impression is there is a greater emphasis on the academic subjects than the vocational subjects. The media also does not seem as interested in promoting Vocational learning successes.

Currently there are effectively two systems of reporting happening in secondary schools. The standard reporting process for traditional subjects and the competency-based learning and reporting for the VET subjects. Both are relevant and appropriate for the type of learning. Schools, however, often struggle with reporting on competency-based learning as the format does not fit their report generating systems. The competency-based learning and reporting needs to be separately explained to parents.

b. pedagogical practices and teacher workload

The pedagogy of how to teach has changed over the years, but are teachers being encouraged to move with the changes? (e.g. Teachers should be moving about the classroom, but there still exists teachers who teacher from their desk). How well do teachers cope with the greater range of learning abilities that are now acknowledged in the modern classroom? Are we still trying to teach to a sameness of outcome for students? Teachers need to be curious and allow students to show what they know – not just assume they, the teacher, are the font of all

knowledge. Teachers need to truly acknowledge that lessons should not be purely teacher-oriented and that individuals learn in diverse ways.

Curriculum areas can tend to work in silos in some schools. While many people who deliver specific curriculum are enthusiastic about what they are teaching, they can forget that students come with a variety of interest and skills. Similarly, teachers in high school can forget that not everyone has the same enthusiasm for a subject area or the type of learning it involves. Our difference is good in the sense that we are not all the same, and do not have the same interest and skills. Helping students to understand this and identify their individual skills and abilities and how to best align these with their learning, is what will ensure that each student experiences success personally in society and in the world of work.

Teacher workload is beyond the reasonable. Teachers were trained to deliver to students, but the existing paperwork processes are so time consuming that teachers spend more time focusing on making sure they look good on paper than whether they are being effective in the classroom. Being accountable is not a bad thing. However, this accountability has not improved student outcomes, but has created a huge 'other layer' on top of an already heavily-loaded curriculum.

Schools are caught between trying to be an educational facility and trying to operate using a business model. For example, the Annual Review process in schools has been set up in a similar way to how businesses do their annual review of staff. The difference is that in business the annual review is commensurate with a salary review, where effective work is rewarded with a salary increase and/or a bonus. In Education, it is simply about teachers identifying goals and seeing if they have been achieved at the end of the year. There is no monetary (or any other external) reward for effective or innovative work.

Currently schools are trying to work out how to apply business operations to an educational workplace and many are struggling. There is an urgent need to look at how teachers and their work are reviewed with regards to the Teaching Standards, the time it takes to do this, and then to implement a common process that sets down how teachers observe and review each other in school that does not rely on the voluntary process.

c. teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning

While recruiting highly academic students to be teachers is a good idea for Primary and a selection of High School Curriculum areas you still need some more practical learners for some curriculum areas. The actual training for working in Education needs to be at an appropriate academic level – and not fast tracked. We have to remember that in high school, for 'hands-on learning' curriculum areas, there is the need for vocationally trained expertise to having a curriculum delivered correctly.

VET teachers are required to regularly (every 2-5 years) update their qualifications to teach their subject and adjust the curriculum each time there is an update to the training package approved by the Australian Skills Qualifications Authority (ASQA). Should other curriculum areas also be regularly reviewing and updating? The challenge – VET Teacher updates are already an expensive exercise for the education system. With the growing

requirement for Professional Development to meet the Professional teaching Standards, schools are facing increased costs to support teachers to maintain accreditation.

For Teachers who become Careers Advisers, we are required to comply with two separate Professional Standards. Along with meeting the Australian Standards for Teachers, Careers Advisers are required to undertake specific post-graduate study to be professionally recognised and participate in ongoing professional development (under the requirements of the Australian Professional Standards for Career Development Practitioners¹⁰), in order to maintain their Professional Status. The ability to meet the Standards for Career Development Practitioners is being undermined by a number of factors.

1. The cost of such study when financial assistance is not provided to teachers by their school sector.
2. When a school's allocation for a Careers Adviser is below 0.5 it is hard to justify the cost and time taken to gain the qualifications and maintain the professional development.
3. The sliding scale of school's allocation of less than full-time for a Careers Adviser restricts their ability to deliver the best possible outcomes for students.

d. school organisation and regulation

Some points that come to mind here are:

- Is it time to have all three sectors work together in the delivery of education in schools? Time for all sectors to be on the same page in terms of head office support and services provided by schools and how they operate.
- There are increasing and more complex challenges for teachers working in toxic environments in schools. Many of the challenges are generated from Head Offices and filter down. Do staff in Head Offices really understand how things work in schools today? Are Head Office staff teachers who wanted to stay 'in education' but no longer wanted to deal with the classroom?
- Principals who don't appear to have the personal skills to understand how to manage a large number of staff, who seem to believe that running a school is like running any other type of business. Schools desperately need HR Departments when you have large number of staff.

e. relevant legislation

Not an area we have sufficient knowledge on to comment

¹⁰ Careers Industry Council of Australia (CICA), *Professional Standards for Career Development Practitioners*, 2011

f. measuring the quality and impact of schooling.

Schools need to move away from focussing on how many band 6 results the students achieve in the HSC and focus more on the learning gains of their students. Evidence of how good we are as teachers is better reflected in the learning gains of students over their schooling rather than how many Band 6 results you achieved in your HSC class. A student whose learning grows by, say, 70% across the six years of their high school is evidence of effective teaching regardless of their final HSC Band results or ATAR calculation.

Recommendations

Below are some recommendations for your consideration in this Review process:

1. That all school sectors work from the same page e.g. using the same version of the paperwork processes for Work Experience
2. That consideration be given to a VET / Careers Co-ordinator be recognised in all schools as a subject Co-ordinator (as for HSIE, Maths, Science or English).
3. a) That serious and urgent consideration be given to full-time Careers Advisers in all High Schools across NSW.
b) That consideration be given to having a realistic ratio of Careers Advisers to students in schools, reflective of their needs (e.g. Recommendations 13 - 15, Pg. 65 of the PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, *Inquiry into carer advice activities in Victorian schools*)

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