

Eight Key Factors – Internationally Evidenced

“For the development and operations of a Regional Job Development Initiative”

1. Skill development by young people is much more effective if **the world of learning and the world of work are linked together**. The OECD 2012 Skills Strategy also proposes that hands-on and workplace learning can help motivate disengaged young people to be involved in education.
2. There is clear and growing evidence of the positive impact of employer engagement on the employment, education and career development outcomes of young people, even in times or regions of high youth unemployment (USA, UK). This engagement can take many forms, - from conversations with employers, to work exposure and work experience, and to offering pathways of paid work and learning. When that engagement is strategic; that is changing the structures and culture of education, its impact can be profound (Switzerland).
3. A growing number of employers and their associations (e.g. CiPD – UK) have stated that in order to tackle youth unemployment, there is a need to develop the work readiness of young people, and to develop youth friendly pathways in the workplace e.g. “work ready kids” and “youth friendly employers”. This is essential in a modern economy where the labour market for teenagers is literally collapsing.
4. An emerging trend within certain OECD nations (e.g. UK, Australia) is that the traditional work experience placement should occur in the post 16 (senior) years of schooling, and wherever possible as part of a vocational course or pathway, and/or in response to clearly chosen career direction by the young person. **Whilst** in Year 9/10, all young people should be exposed to the world of work (before subject and pathway choices are made). This work exposure is by nature exploratory, introducing young people to a range of job roles and/or organisations, and wherever possible it should be interactive (with adults in work). A key element of such a program is interactive and inspiring career conversations between students and employees – sharing hopes and career stories!!
5. Successful employer engagement in education is intricately linked to the offering of **quality workplace learning** (that is skills development and personal/career development). This requires skilled coaching and supervision and often involves young workers as well as mature adults at work engaging with the student. The internationally renowned Swiss system of apprenticeships and the preceding school-employer collaboration is an excellent example of this link being made and it is having a real impact upon their teenage/youth unemployment levels.
6. There is a need to support Small Medium-sized Employers (SMEs) (singularly or as clusters) to offer young people quality workplace learning and even more broadly, engage with education. They want such support as they do not have the “HR” infrastructure of larger enterprises. There is clear evidence of this need in such nations as Australia, Canada and the UK.

7. In more remote and rural communities, and in certain disadvantaged “hotspots” of youth unemployment, there is a limited range (or even number) of employers available to engage with education. Creative brokerage and the facilitation of innovative links between local and distant employers (and their employees) is vital if we are to offer external learning opportunities to these young people.
8. The UK has shown us, that if a culture that encourages/rewards employer engagement exists, it is possible to develop forms of “virtual” (IT platform based) and inexpensive brokerage that can work alongside intermediaries, and be able to match schools and employers (and their employees) in a way that generates a range of interactions – from work exposure – work experience placements, review of learning and enrich curriculum and even employment pathway opportunities provided to young people.

Sources of International Evidence

“For the Eight Key Factors of a Regional Job Drive Initiative”

1. Skill Development – linking the worlds of learning and work

The **2012 OECD Skills Strategy** is the result of research across OECD nations. The spokesperson (Deputy Director OECD Directorate and Special Adviser on Education to the OECD Secretary General) in his paper “OECD Skills Strategy; the pathway of choice” makes the following key points.

“Governments must work more closely with the business sector in designing and delivering curriculum and training programs”.

“Skills development is simply more effective if the world of learning and the world of work are linked together”.

“Beyond state conceived classrooms, they (young people) develop the hard skills (that working on modern technology brings) and the soft skills of real-world experience – creating a smoother transition to the labour market”.

“Helping young people to gain a foothold in the labour market must be a priority”.

“Quality career guidance should be a critical feature of public policy”.

Clearly building links between employers and schools is an essential component of tackling youth unemployment.

- **The ILO** “Investment in young people” briefing note (2010) explains why young people are disadvantaged in the labour market.

“They have less work experience, they have less knowledge about how, and where to look for work and they have fewer contacts upon which to call”.

Contact with employers whilst still at school is clearly vital.

2. The Positive Impact of Employer Engagement in Education on Employment Outcomes

The USA Career Academies are a hub of a normal school that are about academic and vocational education and they heavily depend upon partnerships with local employers for career awareness and work based learning. As they have been in operation for 40 years, longitudinal evaluations are possible.

“At risk students in the Academy doubled their rate of completing core curriculum (cf to a normal high school control group) and secured the greatest labour market benefits” (employment and a premium wage of 17%) page 25 Kemple and Willner 2008 Career Academies long term impact (New York MDRC).

- **The Education and Employers Taskforce (UK) 2012 research paper**

“It’s who you meet that stops you from being a NEET” revealed that of a random sample of almost 1,000 British 19 – 25 year olds, those who could recount four or more interactions with an employer whilst at school, were statistically five times less likely to be a NEET than those who could not recall such interaction.

- **Switzerland** is regarded by many western experts as having world class practice in the development of both apprenticeships (15-19 yrs) and the preceding school – employer collaboration (Years 8 – 10). The UK government’s Commission on Employment and Skills (UKCES) nominates Swiss school – employer collaboration as World’s Best Practice. 70% of all young people (15 – 19) learn in both the workplace (3 days) and the class room (2 days). Year 9 students are enabled (even required) to undertake trial apprenticeships – at least 2, some up to 9). The Swiss teenage unemployment rate is 3 – 5% and their youth unemployment rate 7%. Profound employer engagement in education has had a marked impact upon the employment outcomes of their young people.

3. Tackling Youth Unemployment – Work Ready Kids and Youth Friendly Employers

The final report of the recent review of **Scottish** Vocational Education and Training “Education Working for All” headed by the industrialist Sir Ian Wood strongly argues that **employers enhance the quality of educational experience** (of young people) and provide better knowledge of careers in the workplace. He also agrees that **employers need to create pathways** for young people straight from school.

“Employability must be considered as an outcome of schools and young people should be exposed to a wide range of career options. This can only be achieved by schools and employers systematically working together to expose young people to the opportunities available across the modern economy”.

The labour market of a modern economy is collapsing. Whether in the **UK or Australia**, government advisers such as Alison Wolf (The Wolf Report – review of vocational education for the current UK government 2011) or Australian academics (such as Margaret Vickers (University of Western Sydney) point out that jobs for teenagers are fast disappearing. Unless government, education and employers work together to facilitate transitions and create youth friendly pathways, teenage unemployment will rise – even when the school leaving age increases. To further support the case for employers creating pathways, it is worth noting that the **UK** Chartered Institute of Personal Development state in their 2012 publication “Learning to Work”, that *“by the 1990s, it took the average young person six years to find stable work, despite the fact that the school leaving age has risen”*. This landmark document (Cipd) proposes a two pronged strategy to tackle youth unemployment:

1. Help young people (especially the “at risk”) to become more employable
and
2. Help companies to establish more “youth friendly” pathways.

4. Work Placement (post 16) and Work Exposure (pre 16)

- The **UK** Wolf report on vocational education and training recommended that work experience be an integral part of post 16 studies (whenever possible, relating to a course or pathway) and that pre 16 educational provision concentrate on the basics of literacy/numeracy etc. Although there has been acceptance of her first recommendation, UK schools and employers have deviated from the second idea, and intensified their commitment to work exploration and exposure programs that occur, pre the key making

processes/choices of subjects and pathways by students. British initiatives such as Work Inspiration (led by business) have sought to introduce young people to a range of roles, and employer organisations in Years 9/10. Inspiring the Future has matched employers and their employees with 100,000 school students in the last 3 years in order to discuss the world of work and its associated pathways and employment. More than 50% of these interactions have occurred in Years 8 – 10.

- **Australia** is also evidencing such a trend. The work placement is increasingly dedicated by schools to SWL students who are undertaking workplace learning as part of a VET (accredited) course. At the same time schools, employers and key NGOs such as Beacon Foundation and The Smith Family (via Work Inspiration) are developing work experience/inspiration programs for students at Years 9/10. These Year 9/10 programs do not need to use up a placement; rather they enable students to gather insights into career development and employability through conversations with employees. UK research by City and Guilds and, the evaluation of the Australian Work Inspiration pilots clearly show that young people want to gather such information from adults in work, but this does not need to be achieved through a placement. Important, as there is a need to make the most effective use of available placements.

In Switzerland, there is some difference. Work experience placements are made available to Year 9 students who have already chosen to take up an apprenticeship opportunity at the end of the same school year. They are in effect, trial apprenticeships – “try before you buy” experiences, both for the young person and the employer. In Year 8, Swiss employers tend to invest in class visits, work exposure programs, expos and more informal interactions with students.

5. Employer Encouragement and Quality Workplace Learning

The UK Government for Employment and Skills recently acknowledged the **Swiss Approach** to employer engagement as best international practice. A continuous stream of American academics/journalists have publicly applauded this system of apprenticeship development and work based learning. Recent and intense research of the Swiss system has been funded by a range of Australian organisations. The research has entailed interviews with young people, parents, teachers and employers. A few key learnings about quality workplace learning and employer engagement are as follows;

- The timing of a work experience placement immediately precedes a major career/pathway decision-making point by the student;
- More exploratory methods of students interacting with a range of employers and organisations precedes that placement;
- The student placement and the apprentice pathway is supervised by a Vocational Trainer/Apprenticeship Mentor who has been trained (by the state or a Professional Association) to nurture young people in the workplace;

- Young apprentices play a vital role in providing interaction and support to school students on exploratory visits, on placements, or even support new apprentices eg induction, team structures;
- Apprenticeships are dedicated to the integration of young people into the labour market (99% taken by teenagers);
- The state education system has an inspectorial service to monitor the quality of placements and to assist any young person in difficulty;
- The employers are strategic partners – they jointly develop curriculum with educators, they have worked out the “productivity” of employing apprentices versus “recruiting a graduate”, and they also work for a common or national interest. It is the Swiss way!!
- Parents and students are confident of the **status** and quality of care and learning that the young person will receive in the workplace.

It is not surprising that Switzerland has a teenage unemployment rate of 3 – 5% and an even more impressive youth employment ratio $\left[\frac{\text{No of 15-24 unemployed}}{\text{Total population of 15-24}} \right]$ than nearly all other OECD nations including Australia. The Swiss ratio is 5.7, whilst the Australian ratio is 13.0.

6. Support for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SME) to Partner with Schools

In 1998, a **Canadian** study of SMEs undertaken by Life – Role Development Group (Career Development Consultants) revealed that although SMEs are likely to introduce a new employee or person on placement to their role and immediate co-workers, new people to the organisation receive little supervision, that supervision is unlikely to be carried out by a trained person, feedback is random and/or rare, and work structure is heavily dependent upon the initiative of the new worker.

In 2004, the Australian NGO Brotherhood of St Lawrence, conducted “An Employing Young Workers” project in Frankston (Vic) 51 employers and 88 young workers were interviewed about induction procedures, workplace characteristics and skills in managing young people. Only 50% of the SMEs provided mentoring, buddy systems, job rotation and external training to the young people and about a third did not offer a formal induction procedure. The young placed a much greater priority on “building a relationship” with the employer than vice-versa. Generational difficulties were acknowledged and more than 50% of the SMEs welcomed further information and advice on how to improve communication flows with their young people.

In 2005 the research paper “The Employers Perspective on Vocational Education and the Placement Programs” (Victoria University Department of Education) revealed that SMEs enjoyed offering placements, benefited from the program and were willing to continue to participate, provided they were given adequate support e.g. coordinated approaches, effective selection of students and advice on handling “difficult” students.

In 2010 – 14, the first-hand experiences of larger companies and partnership brokers (Australia) involved in the Work Inspiration initiative suggested that SMEs needed support to offer school students work exposure activity. In the UK, British Telecom (a champion of Work

Inspiration) took a lead role and engaged neighbouring SMEs to develop a cluster or supply chain structure to engage with young people in certain communities. The Australian Work Inspiration evaluation report (2013) recommended that SMEs would require support to develop such programs, whereas large business was far more able to design and manage their own programs.

7. Rural Remote and Hotspots – Employer Engagement needs Facilitation

In the Highlands and Islands of **Scotland and rural/remote Canada** schools are partnering with well-established community based organisations, social enterprises and First Nation organisations to develop a range of opportunities for employer engagement in education; whether that be speakers in schools, curriculum enhancement, work placements or work pathways. There is clearly a need for an intermediary to work with schools and local employers and to also leverage work exposure/experience opportunities that are external to that community. In Australia, rural remote communities and schools (many who have a large aboriginal population) are seeking to establish a working relationship with an external organisation (including Aboriginal Development Agencies) to explore their range of work experience opportunities and to connect (face-to-face or IT) their students to employees who have occupations that are simply not existent in the local community. This approach will become much more apparent with the demise of both the Partnership Broker and Youth Connection programs.

Certain youth unemployment hotspots are regions/communities that are challenged by poverty and a struggling economy and labour market. Many local employers feel they do not have time to deviate away from their daily struggle for survival. In such regions, external stakeholders must play a vital role in supplying local employers to engage with education. In the UK, support from such corporations as British Telecom (UK) has been offered to smaller employers in these communities. Leverage of such support is vital.

8. Moving to an IT Brokerage System for Employer Engagement

The Education and Employers Taskforce (UK) has developed the Inspiring the Future (ItF) initiative which enabled 100,000 secondary school students to have some form of contact with adults in work. ItF is a platform and portal which enables schools and employers to register their willingness to engage, and then it allows the two partners to self-match. In a period of 3 years, 2,500 schools and 12,500 employees have registered.

The monitoring of ItF by the Taskforce indicate that this “IT” approach to brokerage; is

- Cost effective and easy for schools and employees to use
- Does not demand too great a commitment from employers and their employees – a vast majority of the employer engagement takes the form of talks/visits by employees to school class or a setting
- Particularly attractive to larger businesses and public agencies.

This UK approach has been able to build upon a culture of education – employer partnership that has been developed over 40 years. The two parties are used to collaboration and understand the mutual benefits. Australian communities are generally not yet in this position.