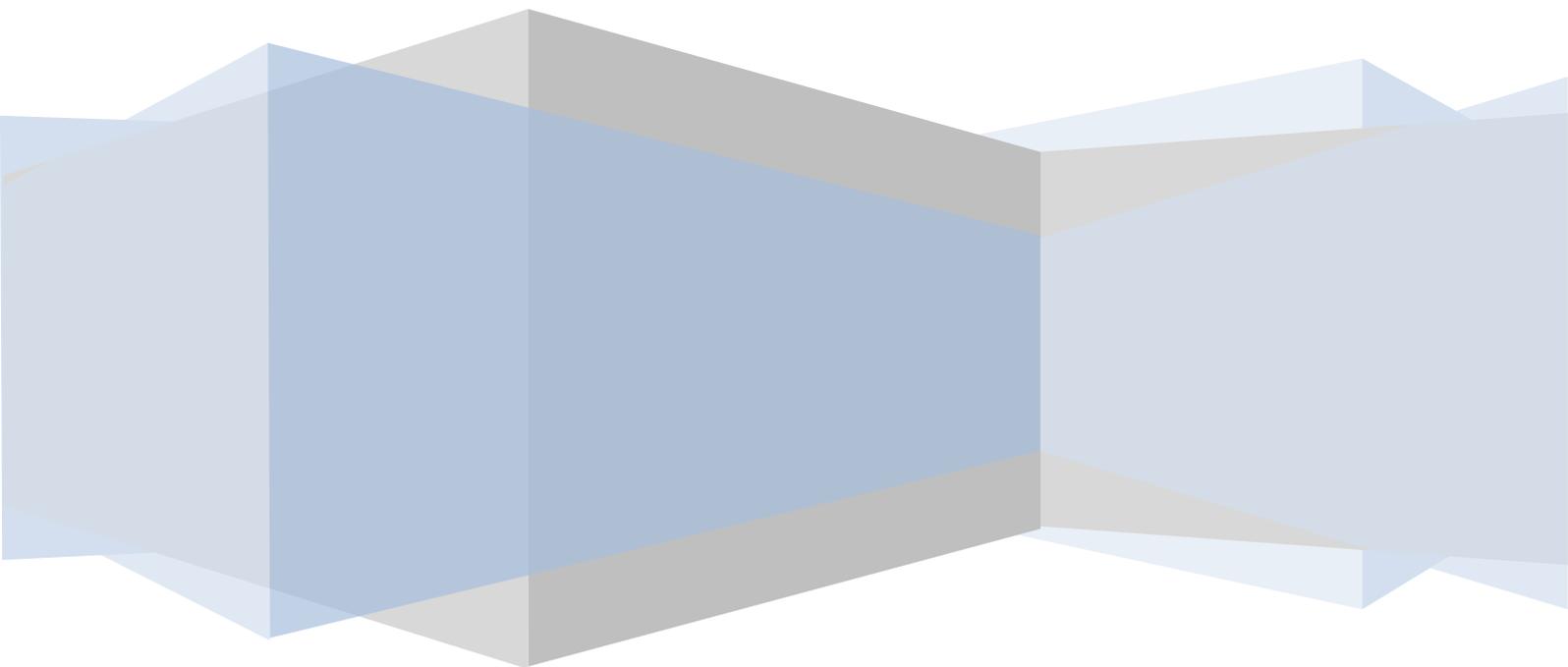


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Background Notes

“Factors Relevant to a Review and Renewal of
Work Experience”

Dave



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1. Youth Unemployment; A Driver for the Development of Work Experience

The 1980s

The weakening youth employment market in the 1980s gave impetus to government policy that boosted school retention (including reforms to curriculum and later the abolition of unemployment benefits for 16 – 17 year olds). For government, early school leaving further contributed to the growing problem of youth unemployment. As only 30% of the senior school students were proceeding to University (directly from year 12) questions were asked of the school curriculum for the other 70%.¹ A major response to this challenge was the development of vocational education and training, and programs that assisted young people to develop their work related skills and help them to become more competitive by increasing their exposure to work.² Hence, a key reason for the development of work experience programs is noted. Government reports and enquires in the 1990s into education and training (Finn 91, Carmichael 92 and Kemp 96) continue to encourage schools to better prepare students for work.

Currently

Although current school retention rates dramatically exceed the 35% school completion levels of 1980, they remain similar to Australia's previous peak of 77% in 1992.³

As we know, our current policy context (Youth Attainment and Transitions) is to increase retention (to year 12 or equivalent) from 76.8% to 90% by 2015. My proposition is that it is not the same new/dramatic/overall threat of youth unemployment to all classes (as in early 80s) that now drives the case for retention and work related education and training (including work experience), but it is the plight and needs of **early school leavers** and young people from lower SES communities (for example aboriginal young people i.e. Closing the Gap targets). We know from the statements of employers and labour market forecasters, that 2011 is also characterised by a concern about skill shortages i.e. a demand for skilled and educated young people/workers.

Back to the early school leavers!! We know (Thanks to How Young People Faring 2010) that

- 246,000 teenagers are currently not in full time education and work re 16.49%
- The unemployed rate for teenage males is 18.8% of to around 5% for adult males
- 43.5% of school leavers (year 12) compared to 26.0% of year 10 students or below are in full time work
- 51.5% of year 10 or below school leavers are either not in the labour force or seeking work of 21.2% of year 12 completers

¹ Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth – Research Paper Number 10 ACER – sue Fullarton (1999)

² OECD Report on Australia (1997) “The Transition from Initial Education to Working Life”

³ Fullarton 1999

- Note special challenges in outer regional and rural/remote – finally
- The FYA report also reinforces the need for partnership and work related curriculum initiatives for school retention **and** also does make the rather chilling observation that the teenage unemployment rate of 17.9% is far greater than pre the GFC and little progress was made in the last year to reduce this heavily burden on the early school leaver.

2. The Student Led Project Model of Work Experience (UK and Australia)

This model or approach to young people “experiencing work” is based upon the principles that

1. Young people will form their team and design and manage a real piece of work (project) that they value and lead.
2. The project will either generate
 - A community benefit e.g. Changemakers
 - A service or goods that is sold to customers e.g. Young Enterprise (often heavily structured/mentored by a volunteer from the world of work)
 - Information and insights into the world of careers and pathways for youth people e.g. Transition Teams/Career Search and Motivated by Choice
3. The project will be facilitated (but not run or mentored) by a teacher or skilled adult **and** engage volunteers from the world of work in either the stages of project design, development, and particularly in the **review** of learning and its relevance to paid work.

History

As early as 1992, a large multi-national (Toxide ICI) based within, and dominating two low SES regions of the Northeast of England sought to develop an additional model of work experience (to the placement) because

- It was swamped by requests from schools, parents and students for work experience placements (including the priority group of its own staff’s teenage children)
- It had reduced its capacity to supervise school students on placement as it had flatter hierarchies and moved to a more self-managed and coached team culture within the manufacturing process
- As OD/HR internal process which included quality circles become established, a move to intrapreneurship required new recruits (both graduates and trainees) who were open to an enterprising mindset rather than the traditional employee culture

- It had a strong community presence/profile (for such reasons as license to operate and social responsibility) and wanted to use its strong research capacity to help meet a challenge within the two regions (500,000 and 300,000 people).

Their model named “Beyond the Placement” was integrated into their own work experience and youth traineeship program (like a quality circle) and focused upon the development of 12 enterprising skills (Tioxide called them the Industrial “O” Levels). This work, thinking and experience of implementation directly impacted upon the development of the UK national models Changemakers – Complementing the Placement/Social Enterprise.

More Recent Developments

Changemakers UK (1994 – 2005) was an NGO committed to young person led citizenship and work related project development by young people. The model (including resource material for employer respondents) is well documented in the UK and has heavily influenced the development of Changemakers WA (Anglicare) and Working Community (Victoria) in Australia. In a nutshell, the model is

- Young people form their team, design and lead their community project and review the development of their basic and higher order enterprising/employability/generic skills with a respondent from the world of work (someone from a career or pathway that has relevance to the career interest/exploration of the students). This **works** only because the project is student not staff led. It is therefore possible for students and employers to reflect, discuss and look into the future about the relevance of those practiced skills (some successfully, others not so successfully) in the world of work
- This model has been used to varying levels of success with year 10 – 12 students (low, mixed and gifted ability levels) as part of academic (UK citizenship and work related curriculum), vocational (e.g. VCAL) and elective studies.

Please note an exceptionally successful derivative of this model was the Community Dreaming pilot program (funded by Health, and engaging youth services and schools) for aboriginal and non-aboriginal young people in rural Victoria. The review of student led learning was not only done by employers who were members of local service clubs, but also by aboriginal elders and community leaders. An evaluation of this program is available.

Transition Teams/Career Search

In the early-mid 1990s, the British Government piloted a “voucher scheme” for early school leavers; one in which they could purchase their own packages of further education and training. It was soon apparent, that many of these young people were unaware of what the “market place” offered. Leeds University (CCDU) decided to pilot a program whereby students in year 10 and 11/12 (in more disadvantaged and special schools) were supported to

- Design and lead their team’s project which explored career pathways, post-compulsory provision and career development issues of relevance of team members and their peers

- Develop and review their enterprising and employability skills through the various phases of a facilitated young person led project
- Present and share their findings with their peers – the notion of peers being a positive support to the learning transitions and career development of young people.

(I can access you to various case studies and evaluations across the UK if you so desire.)

Please note that nearly all Transition Team projects included either electronic communication or face-to-face meetings with employers and their employees and education/training providers. Employers found this an attractive program – i.e. spend time with a team and they will then share their insights with their peers i.e. multiplier effect.

In Australia

This Transition Team model was piloted by Dusseldorp Skills Forum in the mid 1990s and it has provided insights into various State/Catholic/Independent initiatives. In 2008, an updated version of Transition Teams, called Career Search was piloted and developed by DET (NSW) to enhance their Work Education and Work Studies subjects. Career Search continues to expand in the Western region(s) of Sydney. This updated version also includes a parental engagement strategy and in 2011, one secondary college (Chifley) is set to pilot Career Search as an integral part of year 10 English curriculum (for both high and low performers/streams). If integration into curriculum can occur, we make work experience become core business for the school and generate best practice.

Last comment – when students travelling well and mixed ability classes have the opportunity to access Career Search and Changemakers, “awe and wonder” is not unusual. They are **very** respectful and empowering models of experiencing and exploring work and do enable young people to inspire each other and not in frequently, employers and parents. **However** their use has mainly been targeted to more, even the most at risk (sometimes mistakenly at year 9 boys).

Equity Success

Transition Teams evolved into the highly successful “Motivated by Choice” project (quality awarded) in the particularly disadvantaged urban region of Liverpool (UK) and operated for more than 10 years. Evaluators and case studies are available of this true partnership initiative (by Education, Business, University, Military/Sport and Labour Market). Five phases of activity that incrementally and deliberately moved from adult structured activity (in classroom, community and workplace) to young person led project work by most “at risk” students (years 10 – 12) were developed.

3. Australian Employer Contribution to the Review and Renewal of Work Experience

It is not possible to provide a comprehensive (no holes) picture of the contribution of Australian employers to the review and renewal of work experience (as distinct from SWL). A scan of ACCI/BCA/IAG websites indicates that peak employer organisations have (often with government funding) commissioned research and development work that has significantly contributed to the education – business partnership movement, work related curriculum and had some implications or a potential impact upon the evolving character of work experience.

Two such examples are

1. **ACCI/BCA 2002** – Employability Skills for the Future and then the Employability Skills framework – defining the social and personal attributes that employers want young people to demonstrate, use to progress and contribute to the enterprises’ strategic direction – studied and used by many schools in their jurisdictions in developing work related activity/curriculum. Also remains a key platform for ACCI advocacy to government i.e. The Job Ready Certificate (2008 proposal) for VET. Manuals and Guides produced especially for VET.
2. **IAG** – the development and integration of the Adopt a School project into the Career Advice Australia LCP role. Adopt a School was about business adopting a school and engaging students in hands-on-learning that offered real experiences, learning about career opportunities, employer needs and action project with an industry mentor.

However, unlike the UK there is no clear or accessible evidence of leading employers and their peak bodies participating in a thorough and ongoing review of work experience (as distinct from SWL). What is particularly interesting is the seemingly missing link between how a work experience placement can be developed to enable young people to develop the ACCI/BCA higher-order employability skills; a set of skills that maybe much more readily developed in a project context, particularly one led by students. Perhaps, employers and government assumed that these same higher order skills of initiative, enterprise, self-management, organising would have developed through other “enterprise-education style” projects such as Adopt a School, E Teams, ABW, Practice Firms and Young Achievers.

Case for Review – how can a 2011 review of work experience help identify/predict how these ACCI nominated skills are developed through work experience?

Before leaving this section, it is important to note the contribution of two foundations (FYA and Beacon) to the work related curriculum and therefore they have valuable implications for work experience. It would be amiss not to also note the outstanding contribution of the Lendlease sponsored – Dusseldorp Skills Forum to the development of VET and SWL (but they stayed away from work experience).

WOW (Worlds of Work) Foundation for Young Australians – offering young Australians (year 10) an experience of five days tapping into the resources and knowledge of diverse

organisations (including employers) in the CBD, in order to answer the question “What does it take to succeed in life and work”. WOW students

- Sit down and engage with executives and employers
- Learn how to network
- Hear from inspirational speakers
- Engage in skill development workshops.

After 2 years of partnering with FYA, schools are empowered to launch their own program.

Polish (Beacon Foundation) – one of Beacon’s projects (in context with Industry Tours, mock interviews, buddy-up etc) which helps students prepare for careers through personal presentation and communication training. This is a one-day interactive program which explores the work ethic, employer expectations, networking with local industry and confidence building (sponsored by the Macquarie Foundation).

Try a Trade (various TAFE colleges and Group Training Organisations)

Last but no means least, I refer to the relevance of this recent and successful program. This extremely popular project is a one-off day event where students (years 8 – 12) can participate in, and navigate around, a series of “hands-on trade activities” – build a wall, fix a tap etc. The students also are able to engage in informal dialogue with apprentices and tradespeople and learn more about the world of the trades and its vocational, education, training and employment pathways. There is also the potential for students, Try a Trade supervisors/coaches and Maths/Science teachers to combine their talents and integrate the activities into formal curriculum (especially years 8 – 9 Maths/Science) – thereby helping students find relevance and motivation to learn theory!! Certain elements of this initiative are likely to be integrated into the work experience component (especially year 9) of the new National Trade Cadetship.

4. More about the Development of Work Inspiration (WI) in the UK and Australia

(Please read in conjunction with the relevant section of the draft paper previously sent!!)

Having conducted initial discussions with BiTC about WI, “Schools and Industry Partnerships Broker” Penrith decided to consult with staff of British Telecom (UK) who are actually implementing WI in their Business. Key learnings were that

- There is some overlap between WI and high quality work experience placements but WI has much more of a career development and “open your eyes to the ways in which careers develop” focus than traditional placements

- WI can be introduced to smaller business, if say a large company like British Telecom supports a federation of small suppliers to implement
- WI needs to take care to be realistic – work perspiration as well as inspiration
- WI very effective with A Level students who have already done year 10/11 work experience – open their eyes to broad range of choices/pathways and styles of career development
- Team projects/research i.e. career boards are important to engage the less confident(peer support is generated if the teams are of mixed ability and utilised technology e.g. video diary)
- Our staff need to take their role and preparation seriously - and that required planning within the business and with the school (we try to have a smaller “big – conversation” with students before they come).

British Telecom does WI because we want to re-invigorate our work experience programs so they are best practice (needed repackaging after 30 years or more). We want to “turn-on” young people by engaging them with our staff – finding out what has shaped their career history and inspired their performance. We also do it, because we are a keen supporter of BiTC and we were part of the “Big Conversation” with students.

Current State of Play

1. UK Tour of Australia (more successful than the Ashes I hope!!)

Schools and Industry Partnership (Penrith) are in communication with BiTC to explore if BiTC and one or two of the larger companies who have actually implemented WI, can travel to Australia in 2011 and promote/workshop the concept with interested parties. BiTC have also been offered a contact list of key and relevant organisations, if they so wish to plan their own strategy from the UK. The Roundtable can become part of that process – please talk to Ian Palmer.

2. Australian Developments

In close association with Schools and Industry Partnership and in a more informal connection with the Beacon Foundation, Dave Turner is exploring how the concept of WI could become more accessible to small employers and to less confident/skilled students (who often live in economically disadvantaged regions and with a limited local labour market). How can WI become part of the way in which employers, schools parents/carers, community volunteers and peers (within and beyond the placement) support, inspire young people about working, navigating career choices, and hopefully even developing a sense of vocation i.e. young people **raising their aspirations**. As the OECD international study on Education – Business partnerships deliberated in 1990, it is better that the shoulder for public education’s drive to develop the work readiness and learning of student not simply the business, but consist of a broader coalition of stakeholders.

5. Work Inspiration and Raising Aspirations (UK)

Although the WI campaign/concept has clearly been developed by large business and has an agenda of “turning-on and inspiring” young people undertaking work experience in these companies, it can also be seen as a response to UK public policy regarding **raising the aspirations** of young people. As early as 2007/8, Government had argued that to narrow the attainment gap between the more comfortable and poor (defined by Free School Meals) required schools and partners to boost the wishes, ambitions and dreams of young people to learn and work. Key aspects to this concept included

- Broadening horizons – exposure to new learning and work opportunities (location and level)
- Developing a “can-do” mindset
- Creating connections and networks with those who can inspire and/or offer opportunities.

The concept was thoroughly explored by educators, youth services and employers, particularly in regions considered to be culturally more at risk of dependence upon the state e.g. Northeast UK.

By logic and by definition, inspiring young people is important, perhaps essential to raising aspirations. BiTC and their member companies seek to engage young people participating in work experience in reflection, dialogue and project work (career boards) with their staff whose stories, articulation and modelling of values/benefits can motivate/stimulate the young people to commit themselves to learning and career development (work, career and vocation).

Hence the emphasis of the design of WI and its essential three insights are about young people searching for meaning and relevance in work and learning, rather than concentrating on what specific job tasks they undertook or observed.

My early observations are that the UK WI concept is more finely tuned to raising the aspirations of those young people (seen as classic Y Generation) in order that they become even more creative, enterprising and lateral thinking, thereby meeting challenges, innovating and driving productivity and change in the future corporate workplace, rather than it being about raising the aspirations of the “at risk”. Many of these “at risk” (young people i.e. Freedom’s Orphans) have a more immediate set of needs and aspirations – around connecting to not only a reliable, consistent and caring adult but also to a place of work and learning that offers structure, support, praise, affirmation and security. **Another Issue/Priority** – but when we do develop WI in Australia, the needs of Freedom’s Orphans will be a top priority – this can happen in a work experience placement setting with a nurturing supervisor (who becomes a significant adult) and it can happen through other models, and through the auspices of parents, peers, significant adults other than employers – but this is another topic!!

6. Elements of Best Practice (Current Placement Model)

“Generic qualities; as best practice elements do vary according to the purpose of that particular work experience program and placement” (derived from UK/Australian literature)

	By Education	By Employers
1.	Continual communication on the primary and shared goal – the needs/hopes of the student; and acknowledgement of the core business needs of each partner.	
2.	Prepares materials on purpose and roles include OHS and pre-placement work readiness occurs	Read materials and orientates/staffs the supervisor and their leaders support
3.	Prepare student and relays their hopes/etc to employer. Student to keep notes on learning; practice visit	Has an appreciation of what each student wants out of the placement and helps inform students of theirs!! (speaker to school)
4.	Nominates clear/accessible contact person and leader – core business (develop next plan)	Nominates accessible contact person and leader in their business strategy
5.	Supports employers to design effective induction	Welcomes and orientates the student to organisation and placement (like new entry employee)
6.	During but especially after placement, time and space to reflect and capture learning	Time for reflection and supervisor offers coaching and feedback to student against learning outcomes and performance
7.	Teachers aware of opportunities for “relevance”; integrates learning back to curriculum and mainstream studies	Discussion whenever possible about relevance of classroom study to their workplace and roles - debriefing
8.	Accreditation/Affirmation of learning of student and Recognise/Affirm the contribution of employers	Celebration of learning and performance – fond farewells and possible engagement of and/or feedback to parents/carers. Recognition to their supervisors (i.e. part of appraisal)
9.	Equal Opportunity and social Inclusion strategy clear – priority groups, awareness of gender/race/stereotyping issues	Open to equal opportunity and social inclusion strategies reflecting or even informing company policy/values
10.	Researching new models especially for the “at risk” e.g. twinning, coach	Open to new ideas – seeking and sending helpful feedback; 360° feedback
11.	Staff committed to support employers to innovate e.g. project with a placement and time fillers	Willing to pilot new approaches – become a more “Youth Ready” employer
12.	Shared review (satisfaction of all) and forward planning and quality improvement – moving towards a real partnership	

Thanks also to Ian Palmer (Schools Industry Partnership, Penrith NSW)

7. Why Business May Want to Review and Re-Invigorate Work Experience

Kelly – I have jotted down a set of reasons as dot points, some are already in my earlier paper and now re-emphasised. If you wish to further explore any one of them, please ring me (preferably as I am a bluddy slow typist) or email and I will respond ASAP. Unfortunately, I am not contactable (out of mobile range etc) between 21st – 24th January.

Some Possible Reasons – Pragmatic

1. A review of work experience will put the spotlight on the roles and contributions of both employers and schools. Many employers will be pleased to see schools paying even greater attention to the quality of work experience – including aspects of innovation, and the planning/preparation of students and support by schools to their own supervisors/staff. After all, the same product has not been significantly repackaged, let alone renewed in 40 years.
2. Some employers cannot meet the demand for placements and the quality supervision required for best practice. Demand has increased (SWL – VET, HE, Job Services Network, Work Education/Studies courses, Increased School Leaving Age). They will be pleased to see some clear thinking about prioritisation (coordination) and new/alternative models that are more employer-friendly i.e. less disruptive and demanding.
3. In an era of skill shortages and the associated need to recruit and retain productive drivers, employers will be keen to gain assistance in informing, engaging, inspiring talented young people. If work experience turns these young people “on”, then all the better.
4. Some employers want to recruit young people who can help profile/relate their business/organisation with/to ethnic communities. Ways to better engage, support and “attract” young people from such groups will be an attractive proposition.
5. Employers in more regional/remote communities need help from afar – limited range and number of possible placements. A review should deal with this challenge.
6. Models that are less disruptive (than the placement) to the daily routine of the business/organisation will appeal to many employers – especially those that do not operate in a traditional hierarchical culture i.e. flatter hierarchies, self-managed teams, strong OHS procedures to cover danger!!
7. We need models that are more practical for the ever growing number of “micro” business/self employed people who do not have the capacity to supervise a work **experience** placement.
8. A review should help employers find new ways of enabling young people to explore skilled and professional jobs that can never be **experienced** by a young school student e.g. neurosurgeon.

9. Additional models (e.g. project based) generate work experience activity that is more “media – captivating” than the individual placement. If an employer wants recognition and to generate public relations coverage (e.g. license to operate, goodwill with customers and media), they will be interested in a review that incorporates this element/agenda.

More Idealistic

10. Participate in such a review can be a more strategic contribution to their social responsibility agenda (triple bottom line) i.e. spin-offs, multiplier effect, influencing.
11. A review that recommends improvement to work experience for the “at risk” and to various minorities is also an act of social responsibility.
12. Improving work experience for young people will please their employees – many who are parents/relatives of local school students. It will also offer greater satisfaction to their employees who are supporting students on work experience. Certain new and creative models may accentuate staff development opportunities for employees i.e. facilitation and/or coaching of teams, mentoring etc.
13. A review is in itself a statement by government that work experience is valued and important. All those employees who have already made (often long-term) commitments to work experience should feel **more valued** i.e. what I have been doing is worthy of serious review and renewal. They may also be pleased to be informed about the big picture and the current state of work experience i.e. as basic as how many students across Australia participate; is it expanding or retreating and why? A lack of a thorough review means such information is not easily accessible.

