



Submission

by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
to
House Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into combining school and work: Supporting successful youth transitions

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is in the business of collecting, analysing and brokering information about vocational education and training (VET). The organisation is responsible for collecting and managing national VET provider and New Apprenticeship statistics, and managing national surveys of graduates and students, and employers' views of training. We undertake a strategic program of research, and collect and provide VET research findings from Australian and international sources through the Vocational Education and Training Research Database (VOCED).

RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

NCVER provides references to research concerning school and work experiences and the effectiveness of school-based training pathways.

The research cited was undertaken as part of NCVER's managed research program and also NCVER's internal research program. The information is provided as background material for this inquiry.

Research

- The way school students understand work through their paid part-time work and participation in school-based apprenticeships has the potential to inform career decision making and further education pathways. Through classroom-based interventions, the research undertaken by Billett (2006), investigated how best to utilise school students' experiences in paid part-time work for the purposes of enhancing their understanding of work and working life and making decisions about post-school pathways. The key messages from this research are:
 - Paid work experiences provide a rich resource for school students, enabling them to consider the world of work and post-school pathways, including career planning. School students report that reflecting on their paid work is helpful in understanding the world of work, and also in making informed choices about: working life; similarities and differences in work options; preferred kinds of work in post-school employment; their suitability for their preferred work options; their suitability for their preferred post-tertiary or higher education work options.
 - Teachers in Australian schools have a vital role to play in ensuring that the full educational potential of their students' paid work is realised. The teacher's role includes providing classroom-based experiences such as individual and group reflection. Integrating students' paid work into the school curriculum could provide a vehicle for recognising and acknowledging workplace competence for vocational education courses within schools more readily than does the conventional work experience model of work placements.
 - Using student's paid work experiences can reduce the requirements for school-organised work placements and the resources deployed to provide them.
 - Careers advice schemes, such as the Australian National Industry Careers Advisers initiative, will benefit from integrating students' paid work experiences into their processes.

Reference

Billett, Stephen, 2006, *Informing post-school pathways: Investigating school students' authentic work experiences*. NCVER, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/1681.html>

- The research undertaken by Smith and Green (2005) also deals with the work experiences of school students; specifically – how experiences with the workplace while at school affect young people after leaving school. The experiences include those gained through work experience, school-based New Apprenticeships, part-time work, and vocational placements in VET in Schools programs. Specific areas explored include the views of young people on the value of the various workplaces experiences. The report describes and analyses how work activities undertaken by students while at school affect their post-school pathways into work and between work and study. The key messages from this research are:
 - Workplace engagement while at school provides many benefits, including the development of employability skills, confirmation of skills and interests, specific experiences in preferred jobs, which can confirm or deter entrance to that career, and the potential for gaining permanent employment at the same workplace, or through contacts made at work.
 - The broader the range of workplace experiences, the more options appear to open up for young people.
 - Students participating in school-based New Apprenticeships tend not to undertake other forms of workplace experience. These apprenticeships do, however, lead to positive post-school employment options in the areas with which they are associated.
 - Part-time jobs while at school are important, less as career pathways than as earning opportunities and a means of supporting other study and career options.
 - As part-time jobs often lead to post-school employment in the same industry, industries currently experiencing difficulties in attracting labour should consider making part-time jobs available for students where possible, and where legislative requirements allow.
 - An adaptable model is suggested, which describes the links between school workplace experiences and post-school activities. However, it is important to highlight that workplace experiences are only one group of factors affecting young people's decisions about post-school options and subsequent careers. Workplace experiences are of more importance to some young people than to others.

Reference

Smith, E and Green, A, 2005, *How workplace experiences while at school affect career pathways*. NCVET, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/1606.html>

- While restricted to New South Wales and Queensland schools, the study conducted by Porter (2006) considers the views of various stakeholder groups in relation to school-based vocational education and training (VET) programs over a three year period (2000 – 2002). In particular it examined the objectives and expected outcomes of VET in Schools programs for students; school VET coordinators; trainers; and employers. The key messages from this research are:
 - The schools and communities involved in this study saw positive results from their school-based VET programs, although the various stakeholders emphasised different outcomes. Governments, schools and training organisations emphasised the attainment of specific skills and qualifications. Students and most employers emphasised the development of personal qualities and generic work skills.
 - Traditional pathways from school remain the norm and are influenced by the structure of the school curriculum. Those students taking all or mainly general education subjects anticipated going on to full-time study. Those students taking all or mainly VET subjects aspired to full-time apprenticeships or full-time work.
 - VET courses with a structured workplace component were highly regarded by students, coordinators, trainers and employers. For employers, work placement allowed students to achieve a degree of work readiness. Students were able to practise work skills, experience real job application processes, and experiment with different career pathways.

The author's view is that long-term and adequate funding, restructuring of the school timetable and greater integration of community resources have the potential to generate increased efficiency in the delivery of school-based VET programs and enable multiple post-school pathways. However, cultural change within schools, as well as changed perceptions of the status of VET is needed.

Reference

Porter, J, 2006, *What makes vocational training programs in schools work? A study of New South Wales and Queensland schools*. NCVET, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/1629.html>

- The study undertaken by Taylor (2004) provides a view into experiences of disadvantaged young people. Specifically it provides insights into the school-to-work transition of 72 young people from a low-income region, who undertook an industry-specific school vocational education and training (VET) program. The training program was a one-year building and construction industry initiative, which involved schools, industry and TAFE. The study also drew on longitudinal data gathered by the author and colleagues over two year evaluations of the school VET program. In addition, the study examined the longer-term outcomes and the relationship with industry in relation to:
 - Employment and/or apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities being realised;
 - Entry, retention rates and early career experiences of those who exited school during or at the end of the Year 11 program and those who elected to complete Year 12;
 - Young people's assessments of their choice of occupation and involvement in the building industry;
 - Perceptions of relationships between the industry-specific Year 11 VET program and early career opportunities and experiences;
 - The ways in which economic fluctuations in general, and the concurrent building and construction industry business cycles in particular, impact on the transition and early career experiences of these young people.

Findings indicate that the majority of students reported confidence, enthusiasm, and satisfaction with their transition to work and early career experiences. Further, they recognised the value of persevering with their training despite challenges, and this was reflected in the high retention rate in apprenticeships for this group.

Reference

Taylor, A, 2004, *Entering industry: A case study of links between a school VET program and the building and construction industry*. NCVET, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/1450.html>

Data

The following two publications relate to studies undertaken by the NCVET. They provide analyses of data pertaining to school vocational education and training (VET) programs, including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

- VET has been seen to be an important element of school education for some time. More recently, school-based apprentices and trainees have been given more prominence as an element of VET in Schools, partly as a response to skill shortages in a wide range of areas. This report provides data on school-based apprentices and trainees to enable a judgement to be made about how this policy push is unfolding. Key messages from this study are:
 - The number of school-based apprentices and trainees is still small compared with all young apprentices and trainees.
 - The number of school-based apprentices and trainees is growing rapidly. Numbers vary considerably by state, with Queensland and Victoria leading the way.
 - School-based apprenticeships and traineeships are concentrated in the retail and hospitality training packages and are more likely to be at certificates I and II level than at certificate III and above level.
 - Completion rates for school-based apprentices and trainees are a little higher than for their non-school peers at the certificates I and II level, but lower for certificate III level. The lowest certificate III completion rates for the school-based apprentices and trainees are in the trades.

- Early attrition is low among school-based apprentices and trainees, suggesting that drop-out after completing school is relatively high.

Reference

Karmel, T and Mlotkowski, P, 2008, *School-based apprenticeships and traineeships*. NCVER, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/2068.html>

- School VET programs were introduced to provide more diverse pathways to work and further study for young people. This report investigates whether school VET programs provide successful outcomes for their participants. 'Success' is defined in the school context as retention to Year 12, and outside school in terms of full-time engagement with employment or learning, or part-time employment combined with part-time study. In addition, consideration is given to whether school VET programs have been successful in establishing post-school VET pathways. Key messages from this study are:
 - Participation in school VET programs was found to have a positive impact on Year 10 to Year 11 retention but a negative impact on retention from Year 11 to Year 12. Overall, these programs had a small negative impact on retention from Year 10 to Year 12.
 - The overall negative effect on retention from Year 10 to Year 12 is larger for boys than girls, for which it is close to zero. The negative impact is too small to be of any real policy significance. This conclusion is not altered if the vocational equivalent to Year 12 is included.
 - There is a clear positive impact on post-school outcomes for students who participate in school VET programs in Year 11 but do not go on to complete Year 12. These gains are more sizeable for girls than boys. Over time, however, the positive effect is diluted. These gains are not seen for those who complete Year 12.
 - School VET programs provide a clear vocational pathway for some students, particularly for boys studying in the areas of building and engineering. However, for most students the pathway is not so direct. Further, when comparing students of similar ages, we see different types of vocational education and training studied in and outside the school environment. For most students, there is a poor alignment between the types of VET programs studied at school and the requirements of the world of work or further study.
 - Policy issues to emerge include: a) should school VET programs be offered at Year 10 rather than being concentrated at Year 11 and Year 12, given that many students leave before Year 11?; and b) should school VET programs be better aligned with the world of work or, alternatively, concentrate on broad pre-vocational skills?

Reference

Anlezark, A, Karmel, T, Ong, K, 2008, *Have school vocational education and training programs been successful*. NCVER, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/students/publications/1654.html>