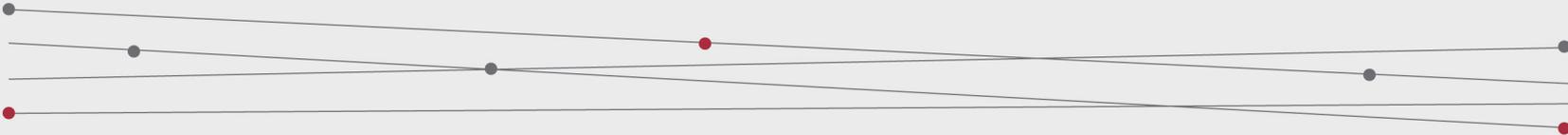


Review of career education in Victorian government schools

KEY FINDINGS

November 2017



Introduction to this project

Context

The Department of Education and Training (DET) commissioned [dandolopartners](#) to undertake a review of career education provided in Victorian government schools (“schools”). dandolo is a specialist public policy and management consultancy based in Melbourne. dandolo partnered with the Mitchell Institute as expert advisors on this project.

Scope

dandolo was asked to:

- Identify what best practice for career education looks like;
- Assess the extent to which practice in Victoria aligned with this; and,
- Make proposals about potential opportunities for change.

Methodology

The project included a desktop and literature review and an extensive program of consultation. This included:

- More than 40 individual and group interviews;
- A survey of principals in schools, and another that principals were asked to forward to the individual responsible for career education in their school;
- An open public feedback form, to which there were almost 300 responses;
- Focus groups with six broadly representative groups of Year 10 students at six different schools.

Engagement with school workforces and students was in accordance with an application approved by the Department’s Research In Victorian Government Schools or Early Childhood Settings process.

This project was completed between August and October 2017.

Thanks

dandolo is grateful for the opportunity to complete this project on behalf of DET, and for the support of the Mitchell Institute. We also express our sincere thanks to the many stakeholders, including and especially students, who took the time to share their perspectives.

Disclaimer

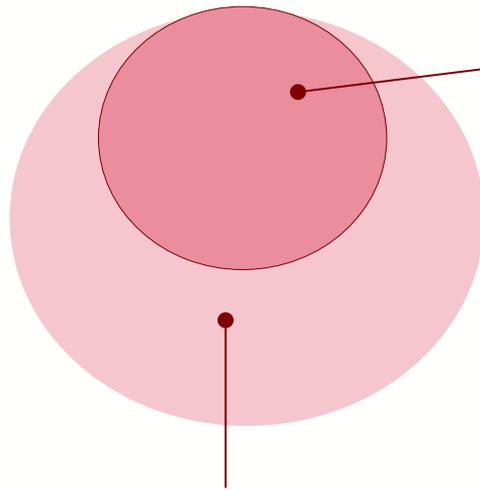
This document represents the views of dandolopartners only. It does not necessarily represent the views of DET and is not government policy.

The importance of career education

Career education helps students understand themselves, the opportunities they have, and what they need to do to realise them.

Definition of career education in context

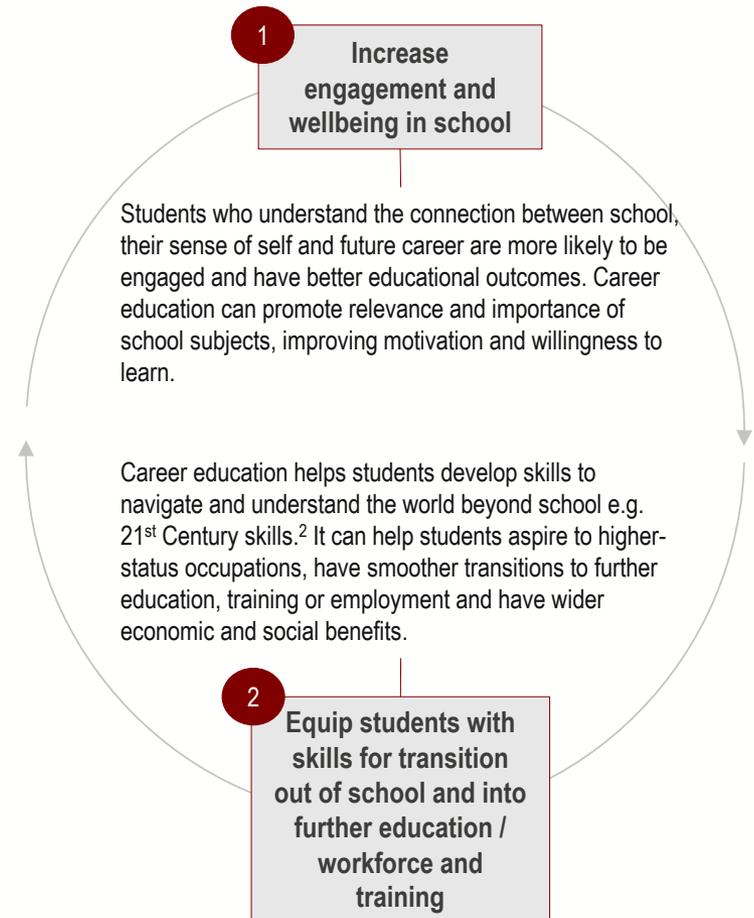
Career education has a specific, independent focus, but also contributes to wider educational outcomes.



Career education is the development of knowledge and skills through a planned program of learning experiences in education, training and workplace settings, which will assist students to make informed course and career decisions and effectively navigate multiple and complex careers throughout their lives.¹

Career education sits within the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship, as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum and senior secondary certificates.

Delivered effectively, career education supports student engagement and achievement both within and beyond their time at school.



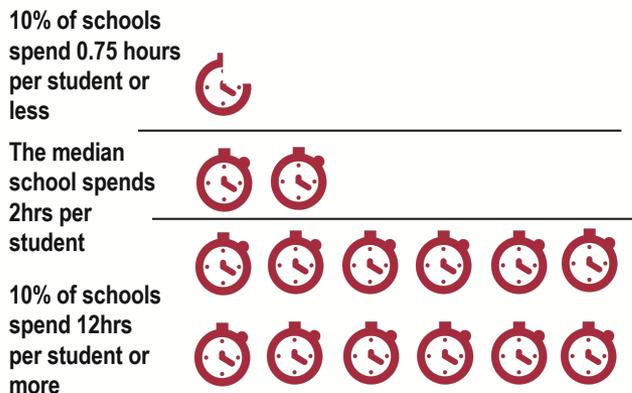
¹Definition provided by the Department of Education and Training

²21st Century skills relate to ways of thinking that are replacing basic skills and knowledge expectations of the past. To meet the needs of the future economy, students need to acquire skills that will enable them to collaborate and communicate with others. The skills include critical thinking, creativity, innovation and problem-solving. (M Binkley et al, 2014, 'Assessment of 21st Century Skills: Defining 21st Century Skills')

Variable provision in Victorian government schools

Career education varies significantly in both quantity provided and quality.

There is wide variation in the amount of career education provided to students in different schools.¹



In practice, the vast majority of hours are spent on senior students.



Consultation identified both excellent and concerning examples of practice in career education.

	Excellent practice	Poor practice
Activity focus	<p>Career education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on activities that provide the greatest value to students Is collaborative, and connected to other organisations 	<p>Career education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers on formal obligations only Is treated as a compliance exercise Gives information only, not advice
Attitudes	<p>When working with students, career practitioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are positive about potential of all students Balance giving advice, without being prescriptive or directional 	<p>When working with students, career practitioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make judgements / predeterminations based on student characteristics Are either overly passive or too directional in advice
Profile in school	<p>Career education is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised as valuable and the career practitioner is represented on the school leadership team Resourced beyond specific DET funding 	<p>Career education is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-profile / not seen as a priority by school leadership

School size, location and socio-economic status doesn't explain variation. Variable provision is caused by different schools choosing to prioritise career education to a greater or lesser extent.



¹For the purposes of calculating hours per student of career education practitioner time, we assumed each FTE practitioner had 800 hours of time to deliver programs per year. This was based on OECD data on teaching hours at schools in Australia. OECD, 'Teaching Hours', <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/teaching-hours.htm>.

Consistency with best practice (1)

There is mixed performance and scope for improvement at both the school and system level.

Career education should...

Because...

And in Victorian government schools

Be a priority

Quality career education provides significant value to student wellbeing, engagement and achievement while in and out of school. Career education should be reflected as a priority among DET, schools and career practitioners.

- Although principals and career practitioners claim career education is a priority, this is not generally reflected in resourcing decisions or in the assessment of stakeholders.
- There is a surprisingly strong consensus among stakeholders outside schools that career education is not meeting student needs.
- Many students report that their career education is not useful.
- Accountability for career education is weak: schools are asked to report only on the number of Career Action Plans (CAPs) they complete.
- Schools that prioritise career education tend to spend beyond their formal allocation*. Removing this funding would undermine moves towards greater prioritisation.

Start early

Students start shaping their identities and aspirations early, career education should intervene similarly early to enable rather than limit possibilities.

- The vast majority of career practitioner time is directed towards senior secondary students. Career practitioners (CP) report that 80 per cent of their time is spent with Years 10-12 students. While such students have immediate needs for guidance in subject and course selection, other students get little or no support.
- Students who have disengaged by Year 10 are not generally supported.

Support students through decision-making

Decision-making is the hardest part of the career development process. Students need to reflect and build on identity and career awareness as an ongoing process with specialist expertise.

- Career education is currently focused on following defined pathways and addressing immediate imperatives such as subject selection; not on equipping students to make meaningful decisions about their future working lives. This focus is a necessary but not sole function for career education.
- A combination of factors, including workforce capability, resourcing and accountability, have led to a focus on information and plans rather than decision-making.

* Formal funding allocation relates to the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) funding

Consistency with best practice (2)

There is mixed performance and scope for improvement at both the school and system level.

Career education should...	Because...	And in Victorian government schools
Reflect the changing world of work	The future of work is constantly evolving and there is a gap between career education delivery and real-world industry contexts. Career education should reflect a closer alignment with industry and future skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students and career practitioners are aware of the challenges posed by the changing world of work, but do not feel well-equipped to navigate them. Industry is concerned about its future workforce.• Career education focuses on narrowing students into a pathway, not preparing them for a multifaceted career.• Work experience is valuable for students, but hard to organise.
Engage parents	Parents are influential in shaping student aspirations and decisions. Career practitioners should engage with parents to ensure they are equipped with informed and accurate perspectives on the modern world of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools struggle to meaningfully engage parents in career education, reflecting broader challenges they face across many areas.• Parental engagement varies from complete disengagement to intense and focused engagement.• Parents and schools sometimes have mismatched expectations and aspirations for students.
Differentiate delivery to different cohorts	Some cohorts of students have different access to career opportunities and pathways. Career education should tailor support to ensure the students most in need of it are strongly supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The focus on senior secondary students means those with high needs may have already disengaged by this time.• Where attempts at differentiation occur, they often result in students being pushed into stereotypical pathways.
Be explicitly incorporated within curriculum	Career education should be explicitly incorporated in the curriculum to increase its prominence, reflect its importance and to equip students with significant support before they leave school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career education is not explicitly incorporated in the Victorian curriculum, however some of the skills and capabilities associated with career education can be found in different areas of the curriculum. The comprehensiveness of the coverage is difficult to assess.

Stakeholders with a national perspective tend to suggest that Victoria is among the best jurisdictions in Australia, but express concern about them all.

A vision for world-class career education in Victorian schools

To meet the challenges of the changing world of work Victoria needs to transform career education from variable and largely transactional practices, to a professional service for students that supports them through a decision-making journey.

