



NCSEHE

National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University

BUILDING LEGACY AND CAPACITY WORKSHOP ONE

Career development for students in low SES and
regional/remote high schools

Summary of Outcomes and Good Practice Principles

Make tomorrow better.

About the Building Legacy and Capacity Workshop Series

The Building Legacy and Capacity Workshop Series is a strategic initiative by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) to explore in depth four topics chosen from the 'Ten Conversations' conducted during the NCSEHE Forum in November 2016. This new strategy aims to further extend the NCSEHE's capacity in synthesising, codifying and disseminating learnings from equity research and practice and use them to inform future initiatives, studies and policy.

The objectives of the workshops are to:

- define a collective knowledge base informed by research and practice
- engage in strategic and action planning to guide institutional practice and future research
- develop evidence-informed policy advice.

Each workshop consists of a small group of 10-12 participants, including researchers, practitioners, policymakers and community partners, who contribute their insights as subject matter experts. Taking recent research findings and case studies of good practice as the starting point, the workshops are structured around high-level questions which frame the group discussion. Instead of reviewing the details of individual research reports and case studies included in this publication, workshop participants are encouraged to draw on these insights and experiences to advance a national conversation at the intersection of equity research, practice and policy. The outcomes of the discussion will be shared widely across the sector, including via a webinar, written materials and professional illustrations.

Workshop One: Career development for students in low SES and regional/remote high schools

The first workshop in the series put a spotlight on career development for students in low socioeconomic status (SES) and regional/remote high schools. Young people face a complex and uncertain landscape in trying to identify potential career paths. For equity practitioners, researchers and policymakers, there are a series of questions about the nature of the problem and the best ways to support young people during this critical time:

- How do we ensure that young people have all the information and tools available to them to make informed and confident decisions about their post-school pathways?
- What additional barriers exist for young people in schools and communities that do not have ready access to relevant and high-quality information, experiences and resources about possible career paths, including those that lead into the most prestigious professions?
- To what extent do school-university partnerships help overcome these barriers?
- Are Government policy and programs ideally designed to support informed decision making by young people in disadvantaged communities?
- Do policymakers and practitioners in schools and universities have comprehensive evidence of effective strategies and approaches to design successful interventions?
- What will the changing nature of work and the skills required for a new work order mean for the design and delivery of career advice?

In trying to resolve these questions and work towards evidence-informed advice to policymakers and practitioners, this workshop brought together a group of subject matter experts who approached the topic from different perspectives. These included researchers who have explored students' decision making patterns, the kinds of career advice that young people find useful and the ways in which they navigate increasingly complex career choices and entry pathways.

At the same time, we learned from equity practitioners, and their school-based collaborators, who have designed and implemented school-university partnerships that aim to support young people in making informed and confident decisions about post-school options. The featured case studies have adopted different initiative designs, including place-based, embedded, blended (face-to-face and online) and near-peer mentoring approaches, which enable different scale and depth.

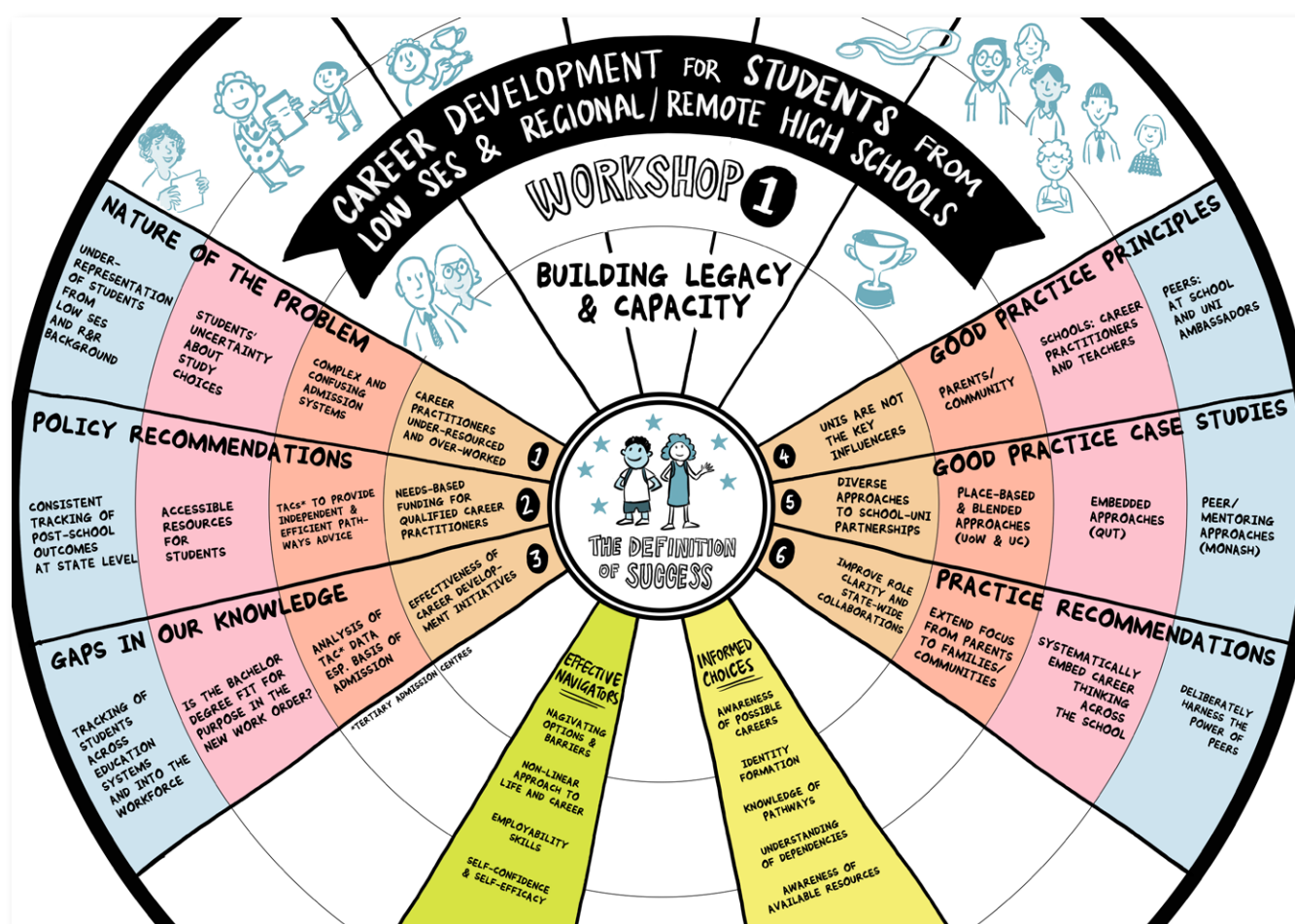
The workshop was structured around high-level questions which framed the group discussion:

- What are we trying to achieve? What do effective career development activities for students in low SES and regional/remote high schools look like?
- What do we know about the nature of the problem? Why is it difficult to deliver effective career development activities in these schools?
- What do we know from current practice and research: What worked? What didn't work? And why?
- What are the 'must have' elements of successful approaches to career development for low SES and regional/remote schools? What are common challenges and potential pitfalls?
- How could the Australian Government, and State Governments, better support effective career development approaches in low SES and regional/remote high schools?
- Is there a gap in knowledge which impacts on the quality of policy and practice? If so, what kind of research is required to fill the gap?

The insights and recommendations from the workshop will be shared with policymakers at a separate event.

Summary of Workshop Outcomes

The outcomes from the workshop have informed this good practice guide for the sector, as well as a set of recommendations for policymakers and future research; they have been captured in this visual illustration:



Defining Success: Informed Choices and Effective Navigators

The workshop focused strongly on notions of success. Workshop participants identified two key outcomes of effective career development activities in the target schools: that students would be enabled to make informed choices about their post-school options and became effective navigators of increasingly complex tertiary education options and labour markets. These concepts are further elaborated below.

Informed choices:

- Awareness: a broad view of possible jobs and careers, i.e. one passion/interest can translate into many jobs
- Identity formation: “what I want to do when I grow up”; students’ ability to see themselves in different spaces
- Knowledge of different pathways that lead to particular career destinations and likely ‘returns’ associated with particular destinations (e.g. earnings, hours worked; unemployment risk; work-life balance)
- Broad understanding of the dependencies in the process (e.g. how curriculum/subject choices in upper secondary school may shape chances of getting to a particular destination)
- Awareness of resources available to young people (e.g. career guidance; online; in the community) to help them navigate their journey

Effective navigators:

- Utilising your skills to navigate the landscape of possible options in a way that takes into account the various barriers and constraints that a given person may be facing, including the secondary and tertiary education systems and an increasingly uncertain labour market (bridges and barriers)
- An approach to life’s decisions: it’s not a linear journey
- Employability skills, including resilience and grit
- Self-confidence/self-efficacy

This definition of success drove the development of *Good Practice Principles* and *Recommendations for Future Practice and Policy*.

Good Practice Principles

Good Practice Principles for University-Led Career Development Approaches

- Universities are not the key influencers in young people’s post-school decision making.
- Child-centred: in respectful partnership with young people and their key influencers, namely parents/family/community, career counsellors, friends, teachers.
- Focus on what universities are best placed to do: demystification, role models, curriculum enhancement, and information about pathways/access.
- Remain faithful to a non-marketing philosophy: independent voice.
- Work in place-based and sustained approaches.
- Leverage the power of near-peer delivery, esp. for myth-busting activities: the power of honest narrative of similar others.
- Be of practical use to schools.
- Work on both attitudes and skills.
- Strategically include teacher professional development activities.

Recommendations for Future Practice and Policy

Recommendations for Future Practice

1. Improve role clarity: What should universities be doing in the career development space?
2. Broaden the stakeholder groups involved in career development activities.
 - Explicitly extend the focus on parents to families and communities, especially for young people from collectivist cultures, including Indigenous people, as well as young people in out-of-home-care.
 - Establish partnerships with employers and employer groups to demystify professions/career options and offer real work experiences.
 - Embed career thinking across the school in partnership with school executive team.
3. Invest in partnerships between universities at state level, and other appropriate constellations, to strengthen practice, coverage and advocacy.

Recommendations for Policy: Commonwealth and State with Implications for Schools and Universities

1. Create a curriculum framework for career development:
 - As a specialist area based on agreed principles from P-12 (Commonwealth/ACARA)
 - Articulate career development as a curriculum theme or competency (State)
 - Enable the effective and consistent delivery of career development activities at school level (schools)
 - Embed career development in pre-service teacher education programs (universities).
2. Ensure needs-based funding for schools to enable the protection of existing, or creation of new, dedicated resources for students to implement curriculum and support.
3. Establish consistent tracking of post-school outcomes at state level.
4. Produce accessible resources for students which are evidence-informed, collaboratively developed and supported by cross-sectoral communities of practice.
5. Assign explicit responsibility to Tertiary Admission Centres (TACs) for independent and efficient pathways advice:
 - Resource key decision points, especially change of preference week
 - Rationalising alternative access schemes
 - Analysing their data on basis of admission to provide guidance to universities

Gaps in Knowledge

The workshop also identified gaps in knowledge which should be addressed by future research to enable evidence-informed practice and policy:

- Tracking of students into tertiary education and beyond
- Analysis of TAC data, especially basis of admission
- Further research with employers to explore whether the bachelor degree is fit for purpose in the new work order
- Evaluations of existing approaches to support students in regional schools who complete specialist subjects via distance education
- Formative and comparative evaluation of career development initiatives and outcomes, including the qualification levels of career practitioners involved in the implementation of these initiatives
- Conceptual work to clarify the concepts of 'Informed choices' and 'Effective navigators'

Read the final report [here](#).

View the accompanying webinar [here](#).

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