

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM on CAREER DEVELOPMENT and PUBLIC POLICY

Shaping the future: Connecting career development and workforce development



Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training



THIRD INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

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Manly Pacific Hotel, Sydney, Australia

A Vision

Shaping the future: Connecting career development and workforce development

International Symposium 2006 is the third international forum of senior government policy makers and experts in the field of career development. It will focus on the connections between career development and workforce development. This is the first such Symposium to be held in the Southern Hemisphere. It is also the first to be held in the Asia Pacific region.

Symposium 2006 is committed to shaping the future. It will examine and articulate the links between career development and workforce development. This is so that together they can advance the economic, social and cultural objectives of the nations represented. It will examine public policy issues raised by reviews of career guidance services conducted by the OECD (2004) the European Commission (Sultana, 2004) and the World Bank (Watts & Fretwell, 2004). It will explore how the recent OECD/European Commission (2004) joint publication *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers* can be applied. It will pay particular attention to the ways that career development services contribute to effective workforce development systems.

Symposium 2006 takes place against a backdrop of a highly competitive, increasingly global, knowledge-intensive economy in which skills and innovation are crucial to the productivity and growth of enterprises and nations. In this economy, the traditional view of human capital as the knowledge, skills and competencies of workers is broadening to also include the ability to develop, manage, and deploy skills and competencies, including through career self-management (OECD, 2002).

At the same time, there is a growing realisation that meeting the demand for skills and labour is becoming difficult. A large proportion of the existing workforce is nearing retirement, and the size of the working age population is shrinking in most developed countries. Developed countries are asking how state pension funds can support more retired people. Many policy makers argue that there is a need for people to work beyond current age limits for retirement.

In an environment where economic growth and social wellbeing may be impeded by a lack of skilled labour, and where older workers are becoming a more significant section of the workforce, there is increasing interest in

workforce development. Governments worldwide are examining ways of producing skilled, flexible workforces that facilitate economic competitiveness and high standards of living. Enterprises, regions, and countries are creating integrated workforce development strategies, across a number of policy areas.

All good workforce development strategies are built upon accurate, comprehensive data and information. Enterprises need good information to build strong and profitable businesses. Governments need good information on economic and labour market trends to effectively target industry, employment, immigration and skills development strategies (Government of South Australia, 2005). Similarly, individuals need quality career information to make informed decisions about the skills they should acquire to pursue the jobs and lifestyles that they choose.

The scale of the current difficulties in meeting skill and labour requirements is large. Both governments and employers are trying to develop, attract, utilise and retain skilled, innovative and self-directed workers. This has led to an examination of the impact of a broad range of policies: education and training; social welfare; industry; human resource management; industrial relations; retirement; superannuation; immigration; and labour mobility.

As more comprehensive workforce development strategies are created, career development services need to be seen as an essential part of the policies and programs that they include. Career development can increase the efficiency of investments in the education and training of young people. It can also support higher workforce participation rates and the up-skilling of the existing workforce (OECD, 2004).

Career development services assist individuals to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to manage their life, learning and work in self-directed ways (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2002) and to make meaningful life choices. They often provide information on occupations and education and training options as individuals choose their work and learning pathways. They assist individuals to gain self-awareness and the decision-making and transition skills needed to fully participate in learning and work. They encourage and, importantly, motivate people to establish and achieve learning and work goals.

Career development should therefore be a key element of workforce development policies, as well as a key element of lifelong learning policies. It has a role to play in active employment policies, in social equity policies, and in social inclusion policies (OECD, 2003; 2004). It is both a private good and a public good (Watts, 1999).

Symposium 2006

Symposium 2006 will examine a number of issues:

- **Human capital:** What is human capital and what is the role of each stakeholder in its development? Where do career management skills fit in? What strategies are required at local, regional and national levels for governments and social partners to have career development as an integral part of workforce development policies and programmes? What are the respective and complementary roles of career practitioners, employers, and policy developers in the provision and accessibility of such services? How can enterprise and sector workforce needs be reconciled with individuals' career needs and goals? What are the specific ways forward to begin to implement this policy direction?
- **Labour supply:** How can career guidance help to increase labour force participation rates? How can career development services and policies increase effective use of the skills and talents of groups such as: those who have disengaged from learning and work; people with a disability; women returning to the workforce; refugees and recent migrants; and sole parents? How can career development services help to address skill shortages?
- **Employability skills:** How effectively do career development services help to develop employability and career self-management skills in young people (the workforce of the future)? What policy, program, organisational and delivery barriers exist to them playing a more effective role? How in practice do the challenges of developing and enhancing employability skills in adults differ from those that apply to young people? What should the priorities be in targeting adults for employability skills programmes?
- **Career development services for workforce development:** Does the way in which public employment services are organised assist workforce development as effectively as it could? What is the role, and what should be the role, of career development services in modern public employment services? What should the role of private employment services be? What policy safeguards should be put in place for the expansion of this sector? How should career development services be funded, given that they contribute to both private, organisational and public policy goals?

- **Older workers:** How effectively do career development services assist in retaining the skills of older workers, and in providing more flexible pathways into retirement? How can career development services assist in the achievement of the goals of active aging policies?
- **The information base for public policy making:** What do we now know? What else is needed from the stakeholder perspectives? How do we get there? To what extent are we learning to base our service models on evidence from research? Is this how we begin to move from a supply-based to a demand-based delivery system?

To try to address these questions, Symposium 2006 will examine challenges raised for policy makers by the OECD, European Commission and World Bank reviews of career guidance services and by the OECD/European Commission (2004) publication *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers*. In particular, it will address three challenges:

- How to create lifelong guidance systems that develop career self-management skills in addition to support for immediate occupational or educational decision making;
- How to find cost effective ways to expand citizens' access to career development services; and
- How to improve the database for public policy-making.

Policy makers, career development practitioners and career development researchers worldwide have taken some steps towards addressing issues identified in the OECD, European Commission and World Bank reviews. However, there has been little opportunity to examine in depth the various issues that connect workforce development and career development. Symposium 2006 represents an opportunity to further progress the work already begun, to develop new collaborations, and to forge an international vision for career service delivery.

Symposium 2006 is committed to shaping the future by examining and articulating the links between career development and workforce development in order that together they may advance the economic, social and cultural objectives of the nations represented.

Note:

The terms career development and career guidance have been used interchangeably in this paper to reflect their usage internationally. Career development is the term agreed in Australia through the National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners Project.

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