CASE STUDY
★ Are we doing OK? Developing a generic process to benchmark career services in educational institutions
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ARTICLES
★ Is adult reading a guide to educational–vocational achievement?
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★ Life-career re-engagement: A new conceptual framework for counselling people in retirement transition—Part 1
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★ Life-career re-engagement: Considerations and implications for counselling people in retirement transition—Part 2
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BRIEF RESEARCH REPORT
★ The perspectives of students undertaking masters' degrees by coursework on career development learning
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The Classic, the Cutting-Edge and their Application

This issue begins with a case study of an approach to service benchmarking. Col McCowan OAM and Malcolm McKenzie describe the development of a new framework for quality assessment. Their framework contributes to ongoing efforts to ensure that professional standards of practice (for example, Career Industry Council of Australia, 2007a, 2007b) are respected and, moreover, that they are formulated and applied in the field as vehicles for service advancement, rather than their being treated as instruments of compliance.

James Athanasou asks a question: Is adult reading a guide to educational–vocational achievement? Naturally enough it is, one might think—but to what extent has the career development literature actually focused upon this vital human ability? His article highlights reading as a fundamental dimension of career development. This has several important implications for theory, research and practice. Do current theoretical frameworks and concomitant approaches to practice adequately deal with reading? Is reading ability, or perhaps verbal ability more broadly understood, relevant to the constructivist and social constructionist theories and models of practice such as narrative career counselling? How might career development practitioners integrate reading ability into their assessment of the problems of presenting clients?

Super’s (1992) theoretical framework of the developmental stages through which individuals progress is certainly the classical view on adult career development but there is a pressing need for theory and practices that go beyond general propositions.

In two parts, Charles Chen provides an overview of a conceptual framework of career development and retirement. This is a fascinating contribution to a burgeoning field of research and practice.

This issue of the journal features two papers that were presented at the annual conference of the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. Shari Walsh and Kelly Tucker consider an important client population: postgraduate students. Much of the research and practice published in our field relates to undergraduate students, so it is timely that postgraduate students are represented in the literature. Technology has long featured in the work of career development practitioners, and Maria Sponza’s paper is both an example of technology-enhanced learning and one that demonstrates how the profession is keeping up with cutting-edge approaches to practice.

I am confident that you will find the contributions in this issue very rewarding.

Dr Peter McIlveen
Editor

References


Are We Doing OK? Developing a Generic Process to Benchmark Career Services in Educational Institutions

Col McCowan OAM
Cromach Careers

Malcolm McKenzie
University of Technology Sydney

In 2007 the Career Industry Council of Australia developed the Guiding Principles for Career Development Services and Career Information Products as one part of its strategy to produce a national quality framework for career development activities in Australia. An Australian university career service undertook an assessment process against these principles but with minimal success. An alternative benchmarking process was developed, taking into account the work done in university career services in the UK and the USA, together with experienced career professionals in Australian university career services. This benchmarking process was further refined and piloted in another Australian university with great success. Only minor adjustments were needed to be made as a result of the learning from this pilot work. The process could be used by career services in other institutional settings.
The eight Guiding Principles for Career Development Services are these:
1. to promote awareness of the service and goals
2. to ensure user entitlement
3. to ensure that users and clients have access to career information and are assisted in their understanding of that information
4. to create channels for generating/incorporating user feedback
5. to differentiate service provision to accommodate diversity
6. to collaborate with other facilitators of career development
7. to provide staff with sufficient support to deliver a quality service
8. to monitor the outcomes of service provision.

The fifteen Guiding Principles for Career Information Products are these:
1. career information products make their purpose explicit
2. career information products are consistent with current career development theory
3. the relationships between key data streams are made clear
4. educational and training information are verified by reliable sources
5. occupational and industry information is verified by reliable sources
6. occupational information is comprehensive
7. labour market information is derived from reliable data
8. authors of information are identified
9. limitations of the data are acknowledged
10. the currency of information is verified
11. information users are referred to multiple sources
12. terms are clearly defined
13. all text and imagery assists understanding
14. products are free of extraneous material
15. information is free from stereotyping.

In 2009, the manager of the University of Technology (UTS) Careers Service decided to audit the service against these guiding principles. This was the first Australian service to do so and in a sense was field-testing the principles. This was the beginning of a four-stage process for developing a generic process to benchmark career services in Australian universities and educational institutions in other sectors.

### Stage One: Using the CICA Instrument

For each of the eight Guiding Principles there are approximately five criteria against which a service can self-assess its services as **meet fully**, **meet partially** or **do not meet**. A column is also provided for those performing the self-assessment to provide supporting evidence for the decision. A snapshot of the layout of the Guiding Principles instrument is provided in Table 1. It contains an example Principle, a sample of the Criteria listed under each principle, empty boxes to tick against the scale and a space to provide evidence.

### Table 1: Example Layout for the CICA Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Self-assessment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Promote awareness of the service and goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Service is adequately promoted within organisation/community so that people are aware of the purpose of the service</td>
<td>Meets fully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets partially</td>
<td>Do not meet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Process

Staff of the UTS career service used this CICA framework to undertake a self-assessment of the service. Each member of staff was given a set of the self-audit documents and was asked to comment against each of the criteria listed under each principle. One of the senior staff collated all the comments against each criterion and presented a collated list under the three different categories for each criterion: **meets fully**, **meets partially**, **does not meet**. The comments were recorded as were the number of staff who commented in each section.

The manager of the service contracted an independent consultant (first author) to undertake an objective assessment using the same framework as the staff, in order to test the validity of their self-assessments. The consultant interviewed a range of academic and support staff, two groups of students and the careers service staff. People who were familiar with the service, intensive users and others who had minimal or no contact with the service were included.
in the interview process. In summary, 24 people were interviewed in a period of 2 and a half days. The consultant then rated the service using the same categories as the staff and reported it using bold text against the self-audit results.

After inspecting the ratings, service staff considered which of the guidelines had the highest importance so that a brief analysis could be made of the value of the ratings in terms of future priority actions. In summary, for the UTS career service there were several areas of importance:

- two areas of the service that the staff considered very important and the service was doing extremely well (guidelines 6 and 7)
- three areas that the staff considered important and the provision of services was good (guidelines 2, 3 and 5)
- three areas that the considered to be very important and the service was not doing as well as hoped (guidelines 1, 4 and 8).

This result provided a brief snapshot of priorities for future action. For career information products, all of the guiding principles were met either fully or partially but the instrument was deemed inappropriate, because, in a university career service, the majority of the career information comes from recognised sources such as My Future, Graduate Careers Australia and employer groups. It is with these sources of information where the career information principles would of most use.

Limitations
The CICA instruments were designed for use across the full spectrum of career development services in Australia and the full range of career information, including first-line producers of such material. The Career Development Services instrument seems specifically designed for private practice providers, as it is this group whom, it seems, CICA particularly wants to undertake the self-audit against the standards. Consequently, the instruments do not account, for example, for career services that are hosted in large organisations or those that also provide a complementary employment service. Other issues arise with the instrument, such as the lack of focus on community engagement, service development and career development programs.

The Guidelines for Career Information Products was based on the US professional association model that attempts to introduce some regulation in a very commercial marketplace of career information products. In Australia, most career information products are government endorsed and therefore have already been scrutinised with a similar process: for example, the My Future products. Specific services will produce information that is targeted to their own institution or situation, so some regulation is required but this can be incorporated into the Career Development Services instrument.

Stage Two: Developing an Alternative Instrument
The source documents that were used as the basis for producing the Australian instruments have been used for their own purposes in their individual countries of origin but with minimal success, as they seem to be more focused on policy issues than service delivery issues.

In the UK, the ‘matrix standard’ is a national standard originally developed by the Department of Further Education and Science and the Guidance Council in consultation with information, advice and guidance (IAG) providers from a range of sectors, including higher education. It aims to assist services to identify and to follow best practice in the delivery of a service and its effective management (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, 2006).

The Quality and Accreditation Committee (QAC) of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS) worked to establish a process for introducing continuous quality improvement into its services. The matrix standards were adopted, developed and introduced, and all career services in the UK have been through the matrix standards review process and achieved matrix Accreditation. QAC also recommended that accreditation against the matrix standard should be a criterion for institutional membership of AGCAS. This has now been implemented and all higher education careers services are actively using matrix as the continuous quality improvement framework for their information, advice and guidance service delivery. The matrix system has now expanded to include all forms of career development services.

In brief, the matrix standard consists of eight elements, with four focusing on management and four on delivery:

1. people are made aware of the service and how to engage with it
2 people’s use of the service is defined and understood
3 people are provided with access to information and support in using it
4 people are supported in exploring options and making choices
5 service delivery is planned and maintained
6 staff competence and the support they are given are sufficient to deliver service
7 feedback on the quality of the service is obtained
8 continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring, evaluation and action.

These elements can also be represented in terms of six interrelated themes:

• planning
• marketing
• supporting clients
• resourcing
• feedback and evaluation
• quality improvement cycle: plan, do, check and act.

At a UK national level, with influence from European trends, there has been a move to develop performance indicators and undertake benchmarking across all levels of career guidance delivery (Hughes & Gratton, 2006). Similarly, in the USA there have been studies undertaken to compare career services (Engelland, Workman & Singh, 2000), along with other studies setting out to improve career services (Sampson, Peterson, Reardon & Lenz, 2000).

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) in the USA appointed a task force to review and revise the Professional Standards for College and University Career Services and the Professional Standards Evaluation Workbook. These had been developed with several aims:

1 to promote self-assessment and self-regulation
2 to honour uniqueness with the clients and location, local economic conditions, student characteristics, variety and quality of academic programs and university missions
3 to use a quantitative as well as qualitative approach
4 to lead to internal improvement
5 to encourage reliable data collection
6 to demonstrate external and internal accountability.

The Standards were written to reflect that different programs will be delivered by different services according to local institution needs and policies; to assess programs not individuals; and to reflect those dimensions of services that affect program performance and quality.

The Evaluation Workbook uses a four-point categorisation system:

• 1 = standard is not met at all or in any appreciable manner
• 2 = partially meets standard
• 3 = fully meets standard
• NE = not evaluated as standard does not apply to this institution or career service.

The Evaluation Workbook contains 31 sections that can be rated, if applicable to the service. Each section has a different number of items and these items tally to 290, if all apply. Because the maximum score for each item is 3, then the maximum score any service could obtain is 870, but only if all items applied to the service. A short description had been developed for each item to act as a guide for the assessment.

There have been a number of studies that have used this methodology to do specific comparison studies between universities and colleges (Bloom, 2009; National Association for Colleges and Employers, 2006, 2009–10; Ratcliffe, 2004). It would have been inappropriate to use this instrument for the UTS career services self-assessment because it was developed in the USA, was far too detailed and had not been benchmarked in Australia. But it does raise some important issues, including attempting to rate service delivery, accounting for the career service fit to the host organisation and providing a guide to improvement.

The consultant had previously developed a system for career service delivery in a university setting and had achieved recognition nationally and internationally for the system. Based on this system, five basic areas of university career service operation were developed (McCowan, 2008):

• management
• collaboration
• students—indirect
• students—direct
• growth.

These were expanded to 15 sections, which were extended to a further to 30 subsections. This closely reflected the 31 sections in the NACE instrument.
Case Study

After extensive consultation with the manager of Bond University Career Service and the manager and a senior staff member of the UTS Career Service, the initial instrument was modified to have 4 major areas with 15 sections and 31 subsections of service delivery.

The four major areas were these:
- management
- engagement
- career development programs and services
- service development.

The 31 subsections were compared against the matrix system from the UK, the CICA instrument, the NACE system and the Professional Standards for Australian Career Development practitioners. An example of this comparison is provided in Table 2.

In the NACE instrument, detailed description was provided for each item. A very brief version of this was developed for the UTS Career Service to trial. The NACE instrument also included a four-point scale, of which three items were scored. This is too coarse a measure to allow for movement over time or to allow for deeper exploration. The decision was to trial a 10-point scale.

Staff of the UTS career service re-rated themselves on this latest instrument as did the consultant. He also provided comments to support his rating using the 10-point scale. An example of one of the major areas, Engagement, is provided in Table 3.

An examination of the numerical ratings for the 31 sections was very useful in that it highlighted the sections with the highest ratings and the lowest ratings. There were five sections rated more highly by the consultant than the staff and there were five sections rated lower by the consultant than by the service staff. These findings were a source of both celebration and consideration for further action and the instrument was thought to have potential.

**Change of Terminology**

After consulting the literature relating to standards, it was decided to adopt the term 'benchmarking' because

### Table 2: Example of the Comparison Across Different Instruments or Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major area</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Matrix</th>
<th>NACE</th>
<th>CICA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Service planning</td>
<td>Fit to institution plans</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mission/goals/outcomes addressed</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional practice</td>
<td>Equity/diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service awareness of and promotion to</td>
<td>Students Institution Employers</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Graduate destination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>Facilitate feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act on feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_These findings were a source of both celebration and consideration for further action and the instrument was thought to have potential._

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of the inclusion of numerical scales and criteria against which best practice can be compared. Benchmarking can be thought of as the search for best practice that underpins enhanced performance (Camp, 1989). Boxwell (1994) identified benchmarking as the process of comparing one’s business processes and performance measures to industry best or best practices and is the measurement of the quality of an organisation’s policies, products, programs, strategies and their comparison using these measurements. Improvements come from the learning derived from the benchmarks.

There is no single benchmarking process that has been universally adopted but the acceptance of it as a concept has led to various methodologies emerging: for example, collaborative, technical and metric. Benchmarking has become a much used process in a world in which organisations want to be the most efficient or operating above the highest known standard for their particular industry (Mann & Grigg, 2004).

STAGE THREE: TRIALLING THE INSTRUMENT

After extensive consultation with the general manager of the Bond University Career Development Centre, and the manager and a senior staff member of the UTS career service, the trial instrument developed for the benchmarking exercise at UTS, was modified to have four major areas with 15 sections and 38 subsections of service delivery. The number of sub-areas was increased from 31 to 38 as it was thought that the trial instrument did not focus sufficiently on some key areas of service delivery. The 15 sections and subsequent 38 subsections are listed in Table 4.

Once the subsections were settled, a set of criteria was established for each subsection similar to the descriptive detail against each item in the NACE instrument. These set of criteria would focus on what would be needed to obtain a high rating (8, 9 or 10), a medium rating (4, 5, 6 or 7) and a low rating (1, 2 or 3). In this stage two consultants were used to make the process more robust. The consultants set about developing descriptors for each item or scale. There were three factors guiding their approach:

- what would a service be like that did not provide a satisfactory service for that item or scale
- what would a service be like that met basic standards for that item or scale
- what would a service be like that was among the best in Australia for delivering that item or scale.

By providing a numerical value for each sub-area, it enabled the service manager and staff to quickly see which areas were scored high, medium or low, and thus could be celebrated or improved. It also allowed for a review to be done, for example, 12 months later and a comparison to be made. But the use of the spread of numerical values from 1 to 10 proved to be too broad to enable accurate assessments using such minor differences between adjacent number (such as 6 and 7) and small increments such as these in ratings became too difficult to justify. Consequently a scale of 1 to 5 was adopted together with a ‘not applicable’ (NA) category.

Three descriptors (not satisfactory, basic, advanced) were written for each of the 38 items or scales (114 descriptors in total). These were trialled and rewritten a number of times. An academic with both research and managerial experience in the field of career development studies reviewed and commented on all the descriptors. In the light of his feedback, some item positions were changed and some descriptors were modified. An example of the descriptors for five sub-areas is provided in Table 5.

### Table 3: An Example of the Revised Instrument Used with the UTS Career Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major area</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Self-rating (1–10)</th>
<th>Consultant’s rating (1–10)</th>
<th>Consultant’s comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>External relations</td>
<td>14 Employers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 Agencies/institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University-wide</td>
<td>16 Academic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relations</td>
<td>17 Non-academic/student organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4: Sections and Subsections of the Benchmarking Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 Available resources</strong></td>
<td>1.1.1 Human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.2 Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.3 Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.4 Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 Service management</strong></td>
<td>1.2.1 Strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.2 Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.3 Technology management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.4 Staff management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.5 Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.6 Institutional recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3 Professional practice</strong></td>
<td>1.3.1 Equity/diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.2 Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.3 Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4 Service awareness of and promotion to</strong></td>
<td>1.4.1 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4.2 University staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4.3 Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5 Data management</strong></td>
<td>1.5.1 Graduate destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.6 Quality Assurance</strong></td>
<td>1.6.1 Facilitate feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.6.2 Act on feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1 External relations</strong></td>
<td>2.1.1 Prospective students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Professional associations/institutions/agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.3 Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2 University-wide relations</strong></td>
<td>2.2.1 Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Non-academic staff/students organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1 Career information</strong></td>
<td>3.1.1 Information production and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1.2 Information utilisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2 Employment services</strong></td>
<td>3.2.1 Just-in-time vacancy service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.2 Campus recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3 Career programs</strong></td>
<td>3.3.1 Targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3.2 Generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3.3 Faculty specific (including work-integrated learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4 Career assistance</strong></td>
<td>3.4.1 Enquiries/redirecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.4.2 Skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.5 Career counselling</strong></td>
<td>3.5.1 Exploring options and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5.2 Client rights/limits/referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1 Enquiry learning</strong></td>
<td>4.1.1 Research and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2 Point of difference</strong></td>
<td>4.2.1 Proactivity/innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.2 Agility/responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Engagement</td>
<td>2.1 External relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Prospectve students</td>
<td>There is no involvement with prospective students or their family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Professional Associations/ institutions/ agencies</td>
<td>Limited contact/collaboration is made with relevant associations/ other educational institutions and relevant community agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Employers</td>
<td>Little proactive contact is made with potential employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 University-wide relations</td>
<td>2.2.1 Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Non-academic staff/student organisations</td>
<td>Service staff do not work closely with non-academic staff/ student organisations on joint or contracted activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study

Process
The revised instrument was sent to the general manager of the Career Development Centre at Bond University three weeks before the visit by the two consultants: the manager of the UTS career service and the director of Cromach Careers. She was asked to undertake a self-assessment of the centre based on the views of nine key staff. The process adopted enabled each staff member to make an independent assessment; the assessments were averaged to provide an overall assessment for the centre. Although the self-assessment by the general manager was part of the centre’s staff average, a comparison was also made of her ratings with the centre’s staff average to identify any major discrepancies. The spread and compactness of the ratings for each scale were also identified. This data was revealed to the consultants during their visit.

The manager of the Career Development Centre provided the consultants with the university’s strategic plan, the centre’s strategic plan, an overview of the centre’s operations, resources and programs, and set up a schedule of interviews. Interviews were conducted by the consultants individually or together over two days to enable a good spread of significant people to be involved (for example, students who frequently used the service, students who infrequently used the service; academic and professional staff; faculty placement and industry liaison staff). The consultants used a structured interview process based on the assessment instrument categories but tailored to each group.

The two consultants rated the 38 subsections against the criteria on the 1–5 scale and reported on these points:
1. the six subsections that were rated highest by the centre’s staff
2. the three subsections rated lowest by the CDC staff and were less than adequate
3. the five subsections where there was a perceived difference between the manager’s ratings and the average CDC staff ratings
4. the four subsections where there was very strong agreement across the centre’s staff
5. the five subsections where there was a spread of different responses across the centre’s staff
6. the four subsections rated at 5 by the consultants
7. the seven subsections rated at 4 by the consultants
8. the three subsections rated at 2.5 by the consultants
9. the three subsections rated at 2 by the consultants
10. the areas of greatest difference between the staff average and the consultants’ average in terms of the consultants’ ratings (the consultants rated three higher and four lower).

A summary set of findings was produced that included both 10 commendations and 10 considerations for further action. A draft report was provided to the general manager of the Career Development Centre for comment, discussion and adjustment. The final report was provided officially for the general manager of the centre to distribute to key people across the university and to use as a stimulus for future staff development activities.

Stage Four: Integration
The consultants undertook a review of the process and as a result made minor adjustments to the instruments. One of the 38 subsections was seen to have two different aspects that were difficult to rate together. Consequently, the subsection was subdivided into two separate items with the consequence that there are now 39 subsections in the instrument.

The processes of the audit and consultation were reviewed and considered to be robust, with the exception that there was not enough time to absorb all the documents and activities of the services before the interviews and focus groups were held. Consequently, it was recommended that three days be allowed for the process. The use of the 1 to 5 scale was seen to be appropriate with the exception that the descriptors should be presented for the scores 1, 3 and 5 rather than for 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, so that all people rating the service can more meaningfully spread their scores over the full 5-point scale.

Conclusion
As one part of its push for professional standards in the career industry, CICA developed a set of guidelines, later guiding principles, against which a career development service could audit itself. An Australian university career service attempted to use the guiding principles to audit itself. A process was established that included a self-audit and an audit by an experienced independent consultant after a review of relevant documents, and the conduct of a set of key interviews and focus groups.

The guidelines provided some insights but did not recognise a raft of activities undertaken by the service and the fact that the service was located within a
large educational institution. After consulting similar processes used by professional associations in the USA and the UK and a schema used in an Australian career service, an alternative instrument was developed and trialled. Because of the use of criteria and measures, the process was renamed as a benchmarking process. The benchmarking process showed great promise.

After more detailed consultation with relevant experts, this benchmarking instrument was modified and piloted with another university career service and a more deliberate set of processes were developed and followed. This proved to be a very useful process. The same basic instrument and similar processes could be developed to assist services in educational institutions in other sectors to undertake benchmarking activity with some confidence.

REFERENCES

Case Study

AUTHORS

Col McCowan is a registered psychologist, teacher and counsellor who has held a range of positions related to career development in government, industry and higher education, including as a practitioner, training officer, resource developer, senior policy officer, company director, project manager, and manager of a university career and employment service. He has authored or co-authored three publications, is on the Editorial Board of the AJCD, and has been a consultant in Bhutan and Oman for organisations such as UNDP, UNESCO and Asia Development Bank. He has won a number of personal and service awards at a national level, culminating in being awarded, in 2007, an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to the career industry in Australia.

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Malcolm McKenzie has had over 30 years experience working in the areas of career education and career development with secondary and tertiary students. He has had a number of journal articles published and is the co-author of three books on career development. He is currently the manager of the UTS Careers Service, a position he has held since 1995. Until recently he was a director of Graduate Careers Australia. Malcolm holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Education degrees from the University of New South Wales.
IS ADULT READING A GUIDE TO EDUCATIONAL–VOCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT?

James A. Athanasou
Private practice

Reading is theorised as a key aspect of one’s educational and vocational adjustment. The reading scores on the Wide-Range Achievement Test 3 of 465 adult vocational assessment clients were examined. Reading varied across a range of social factors and the overall results were consistent with earlier studies, especially the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. More than 50% of the sample had a US reading grade equivalent of Year 7 or below. While the median reading scores increased with educational level, there was substantial variation within groups. The results emphasised that people with widely varying skill levels can constitute an occupation. This variation has implications for the provision of any career guidance based on trait-factor concepts. Reading scores showed a small but statistically significant relationship with the return to work after injury. It is proposed that reading could be conceived as a foundation for career development.

There is actually very little published on the reading ability of working adults in Australia but modern governments show an enduring interest. They approach it in connection with developing human capital and determining its links to social and economic characteristics of the population. This is a macro-level perspective related to the skill levels of a nation rather than the career development of an individual.

Since 1996, reading has been assessed as part of an international study through the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2008) that is conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, literacy was viewed as a comprehensive set of skills involving the ability to use and comprehend printed information. The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey assessed prose literacy and document literacy, as well as numeracy and the ability to solve problems using real-life tasks. Scores were grouped into five skill levels: the combined levels 4 and 5 are the highest and level 3 is the minimum required competency for everyday life. The proportion of Australians who scored at level 1 or 2 (below minimum competence) was 46% for prose literacy and 47% for document literacy.
The findings of this national survey were also relevant from a career or employment perspective. There was a strong association between educational attainment and literacy: 64% with a post-school qualification achieved level 3 or above; employed persons had a higher proportion with scores of level 3 or above compared with those who were unemployed or not in the labour force; and reading levels were linked with the median income: the median for combined levels 4 and 5 was $890; $695 for level 3; and $504 for combined levels 1 and 2.

This link between occupational achievement and reading levels is well documented. For example, Hauser, Edley, Koenig and Elliott (2005) examined data from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey in the USA. They reported the mean quantitative score for occupational categories that contained at least 30 respondents. They concluded:

[the] opportunities to enter into white-collar, higher paying occupations increase as literacy skills increase. That is, for those at higher literacy levels, opportunities are readily accessible; for those at lower levels of literacy, the opportunities to obtain higher paying jobs are more limited. (2005, p. 101)

Reading—especially adult reading in a working population—is the central topic of this article but the field of career guidance does not exhibit a substantive body of theory or research in relation to reading. The basic skills of the world-of-work, such as reading or spelling or arithmetic, do not rate any substantial mention in modern career theories (see for example, Skorikov & Patton, 2007).

Reading is far less controversial than most career constructs—almost mundane by comparison. Yet it is a core skill and considered by most people as almost fundamental for operating in a developed economy. It is seen as an essential outcome of modern schooling (dare one say its raison d’être) and the most widely accepted cornerstone for most educational—vocational progress. Its omission from career guidance practice is a little puzzling but it may occur because achievement above the minimum levels of reading is now so prevalent in developed nations that it does not merit consideration except in obvious cases. In other words, almost everyone can read at an adequate level, so why bother. It is almost like asking: ‘can the client breathe?’

Moreover, educational qualifications tend to be used as the broad indicator of achievement.

Although minimal standards are fairly universal, most laypeople would still expect that reading ability does vary across individuals and across occupational groups. For instance, one might assume that reading competence is higher among doctors compared with labourers. One reason for this expectation is that reading achievement mediates progression to the higher levels of education and training. In other words, many subjects at school as well as courses in post-compulsory education and training depend directly or indirectly on the ability to read. In addition, some occupations encourage a higher component of reading.

At the same time as acknowledging that occupations vary in reading ability, we would all recognise that there might be exceptions to the rule. Some people without qualifications or in lower skill level occupations might well have extremely high reading skills and some graduates or professionals might not be as proficient as others in reading skills. That is, we would expect to see some variation in groups but overall there would still be a general expectation that increased educational achievement is accompanied by higher levels of reading.

The assessment of adult reading is important from a guidance perspective because it can identify unrecognised educational potential. For one reason or another, a person’s scholastic aptitude may not have been fully used in their occupation. On the other hand, there would also be some adults whose aspirations might well exceed their current capacity. It is not appropriate to limit someone’s opportunities but it could be important to say that maybe the chances of coping with a particular course might be too much right now. This prognostic use of reading has been highlighted in early studies. For example, Gottfredson, Finucci and Childs (1984) noted the long-term effects of a reading disability.

This importance of reading as a long-term predictor of occupational achievement is probably underestimated. Athanasou (2001) examined data for a representative sample (1436 men; 1273 women) from the 1970 Youth in Transition study cohort, who were
first tested as part of the Australian Studies of School Performance in 1980 at around 10 years of age. A follow-up mail survey was used to obtain the occupation of those who were working in 1991. Educational and occupational achievements were related to gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographical location (rurality), completion of the highest level of secondary schooling, vocational interests in secondary school and even the levels of literacy and numeracy in primary school. The last part of that sentence is important and easily overlooked—literacy at age 10 was a predictor of educational–vocational achievement in one’s early 20s (some 11 to 14 years later)!

In this study I examine the topic of reading in a working population within a narrow focus. I examine its dimensions across a range of factors but particularly with reference to occupations. I report only on the reading skill component of literacy although I recognise that there are other features of literacy but the assessment of these was beyond my circumstances and resources. Reading skill is examined as a predictor of educational or occupational status and also as an indicator of the potential to return to work. The study was based on the results of clients from my practice, which specialises in those who had suffered a work or motor vehicle or some other form of injury for which they would be compensated. They were undertaking a vocational assessment that included an assessment of reading amongst a battery of other tests, such as physical skills, mental status and career interests. In this study reading was viewed as an indicator of educational achievement and potential. It was expected that there would be some type of occupational gradation in reading, that reading was linked with educational qualifications and possibly the potential to return to work after an injury.

**Method**

The participants in this study (N = 465) comprised clients attending for a medico-legal vocational assessment as a result of an injury and compensation claim. They ranged in age from 14 to 79 years (median = 36 years) and comprised 328 males, 136 females and 1 not recorded. The higher proportion of males is a function of their increased rate of workplace accidents and other risk-taking behaviours. The median period of time since injury and the assessment was three years and ranged from 0 to 21 years. The long time-lag occurred in those cases where the injury occurred as an infant and the final claim depended upon the effects of the accident at maturity. No claim is made that the sample is random. A copy of the entire database is available from the author upon request.

**Instrument and Procedure**

The *Wide Range Achievement Test* (WRAT3) (Wilkinson, 1993) provides an assessment of educational achievement of the basic skills (reading, spelling, arithmetic). This assessment was developed from a US cohort but has also found application in Australia. It is considered to substantially depend on cultural and educational experiences. The word-knowledge component can be used as a screening test where a rapid measure of verbal skills is required. Development, reliability and validity data are provided in the manual. Parallel form correlations of Reading (0.92) support its reliability and the WRAT3 has correlated moderately well with the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (0.66).

A key component of WRAT3 is the word-reading test, which comprises 42 words and 15 letters. The reading component of WRAT3 is not a holistic assessment of literacy, as it was designed to minimise the effects of comprehension. This assessment of reading determines the ability to recognise and decode words rather than the ability to infer meaning from words. Results may be reported as raw scores, standard scores, percentiles or grade scores. In this article, the raw scores are preferred but the US grade equivalent scores are also used as a benchmark.

The WRAT3 was administered individually. This took around 2–3 minutes and the only variation from the standard assessment was that it was discontinued when someone indicated that they were unable to read the subsequent words or when it was becoming evident that they were struggling, usually after 5–10 consecutive failures. This was done so as not to influence the motivation or self-esteem of those clients who were not able to cope.

**Analysis**

Descriptive statistics as well as comparisons between groups are reported in the results section. The scores were also converted to US grade equivalents.
RESULTS

General Findings

The overall performance on the reading assessment varied substantially from a low of 2 to a maximum of 57 ($M = 40.95; SD = 7.20; 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.65$). As expected with any large sample the results were fairly normally distributed (see Figure 1a) but the actual grade equivalents have a different distribution. They indicate that substantial numbers of the working population have low levels of reading ability (see Figure 1b).

Educational Differences

The correlation between the years of schooling completed and the reading scores was moderate ($r = 0.336$) and indicated that these two factors were related, albeit imperfectly (see Figure 2).

The mean reading scores of the different educational groups increased from those with no educational qualifications through to those with certificates, diplomas and degrees. These differences were statistically significant ($F(4,443) = 12.5, \ p<0.001$). Nonetheless, there was considerable overlap in the range of scores (see Table 1 and Figure 3).

Occupational Differences

There were differences in the reading scores of occupational groups but, again, there was substantial overlap. Overall, the labourer group registered the lowest reading scores. The differences illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 4 are affected by the small sample size in some groups. One reason for the inequality in size of the groups is that there are different accident rates across occupations and demographic groups.

One aspect of the results that might be highlighted is the variation within specific occupations. This is documented in Table 3 for those occupations with two or more people in the group. At best it is only a partial indicator of the variation but emphasises that people with widely varying skill levels can constitute an occupation (Table 3 excludes those not in the labour force at the time of the accident, for example, people engaged in home duties or people not actively seeking work).

Return to Work and Reading Scores

There was a difference in the reading scores between those who never worked after an injury, those who returned to work and those who returned to work for a while but were not working at the time of assessment. Of course this is a crude measure and the relevant time frames would also play a part, let alone the type of injury, but there appeared to be a linear increase (see Table 4 and Figure 5) with the potential to return to work. Although the differences between groups were statistically significant ($F(2,382) = 5.02, \ p<0.01$) the effect size (eta-squared = 0.02) was small.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There is a dearth of information on the reading achievement of working adults and this study is an
Table 1: Mean and Median Differences of Readings Scores across Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Grade equivalent</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45.6 (6.3)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Years 9–12</td>
<td>30–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43.8 (7.5)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Years 9–12</td>
<td>27–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate or trade</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>42.7 (5.62)</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>Years 9–12</td>
<td>27–53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41.7 (6.8)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Years 9–12</td>
<td>28–52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>38.9 (7.4)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>2–55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualification was not provided for 17 participants; grade equivalent of median score.

Table 2: Mean and Median Differences of Readings Scores across Occupational Groups (N = 285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major occupational groups</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Grade equivalent</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.5 (4.4)</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>41–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. professionals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47.2 (4.3)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>33–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44.3 (4.3)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>39–55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44.3 (4.7)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>36–53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42.3 (4.6)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>32–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40.3 (6.1)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>19–52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate production, transport</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39.6 (6.8)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>26–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.2 (8.0)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>2–50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excludes unemployed, those not in the labour force and those not classified; Grade equivalent of median score.
attempt to rectify that situation for career development practitioners and researchers. It documents the reading achievement levels of selected occupations and the results also portrayed a link with the potential to return to work. One practical contribution of the study is that it provides a description of reading levels for a working rather than a student population. Even a cursory search will reveal that most published reports in careers journals deal with college students and they are hardly representative of the Australian working population.

Quite varied levels of reading were observed in this sample and many working adults had low grade-equivalents of reading. Reading had a low correlation with the number of years of schooling and some 42% of the sample had a reading grade of Year 7 or below. The median reading score increased with the level of educational qualification but in some cases it was still low, even among those clients with degrees or in professions. For those without a qualification the median was 39 (grade equivalent = junior secondary) compared with a median of 47 (grade equivalent = middle secondary) for those with a degree. But the most salient feature was the overlap in reading ability between these disparate groups. The range for those without a post-school qualification was 2–55 whereas the range for those with a degree was 30–57. Clearly some people without a qualification had a better reading level than those with a degree.

Occupational differences mirrored those for education. High levels of reading were observed within all major occupational groups. In other words, there were some people in each major group who had quite high scores. For instance, some labourers had scores well in excess of those who were classed as professional. More to the point, many talented individuals may be in occupations for which they are not suited, maybe through misinformation, social or economic disadvantage or poor guidance. Career development practitioners may use Table 3 with grade equivalents to enhance vocational exploration and to indicate to clients that, with their high level of reading, it may be the case that they have many more opportunities than initially realised.

The reading scores within each of the major occupational groups such as professionals, associate professionals, sales, clerical service, trades, production–transport and labourers were varied. The median level increased in line with the skill level and in line with general expectations. For instance the median level for labourers was 39 (Year 7 standard) whereas for professionals it was 48.5 (Tertiary or above Year 12). But the median can hide as much as it reveals. It is a measure of location and does not indicate diversity. Why is there such variation in occupational groups? One reason is that the occupational groups of the government statistician contain a diversity of occupations with a variety of educational qualifications and other skill levels. For instance, professionals can include occupations such as arts, media, sales, nursing, information and communications network and support, or air and marine transport. One might assume naively that all professionals in Australia have degrees but 27.6% of professionals have an advanced diploma or certificate. For all intents and purposes, one might assume that labourers, for instance, are unqualified but 51 100 out of 1.14 million labourers in Australia have degrees and 8700 labourers even have
Table 3: The Range of Readings Scores Within an Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Reading scores</th>
<th>Grade equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boilermaker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45–46</td>
<td>Middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46–48</td>
<td>Middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34–44</td>
<td>Year 4 to secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37–51</td>
<td>Year 6 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-care assistant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35–54</td>
<td>Year 5 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26–45</td>
<td>Year 2 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43–53</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concretor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28–48</td>
<td>Year 2 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36–49</td>
<td>Year 5 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36–43</td>
<td>Year 5 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled nurse aide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42–50</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmhand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32–48</td>
<td>Year 4 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formworker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27–44</td>
<td>Year 2 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyprocker</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27–35</td>
<td>Year 2 to year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-care worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32–34</td>
<td>Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital assistant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30–44</td>
<td>Year 3 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchenhand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33–47</td>
<td>Year 4 to upper secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27–50</td>
<td>Year 2 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine operator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32–35</td>
<td>Year 4 to year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23–31</td>
<td>Year 1 to year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38–44</td>
<td>Year 6 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor mechanic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36–50</td>
<td>Year 5 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41–47</td>
<td>Year 8 to upper secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42–54</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing assistant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42–44</td>
<td>Middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26–44</td>
<td>Year 2 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal carer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45–50</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19–30</td>
<td>Year 1 to year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process worker</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25–42</td>
<td>Year 2 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential care assistant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41–44</td>
<td>Year 8 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39–45</td>
<td>Year 7 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41–48</td>
<td>Year 8 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop employee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39–48</td>
<td>Year 7 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spraypainter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>Year 4 to year 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemason</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2–49</td>
<td>Year 2 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storeperson</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34–41</td>
<td>Year 4 to year 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46–57</td>
<td>Middle secondary to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45–46</td>
<td>Middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33–49</td>
<td>Year 4 to tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardsman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36–41</td>
<td>Year 5 to year 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37–52</td>
<td>Year 6 to middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window cleaner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44–46</td>
<td>Middle secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yardman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37–38</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
postgraduate degrees (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, p. 19). Clearly, a large number of people stray into occupations from varied backgrounds. This is not wrong if it is fulfilling for the individual but such diversity must make the evaluation of reading scores in such a large occupational group quite tenuous.

Notwithstanding this diversity of the major occupational groups, the reading scores of specific occupations were also quite heterogeneous in nature. It may reflect the fact that people in an occupation are not internally consistent in every respect to ability. While an occupation is an association based on common characteristics of the work, the actual skill levels within an occupation will vary. An occupational title is also a summary term that can mask many sub-specialties. For instance, nursing or teaching might be considered as occupations with a common core but the qualifications and skill levels within those two occupations could vary quite dramatically depending on the type of teaching or nursing, let alone the personal competence of some teachers or nurses. As a result, the reading scores of nurses and teachers in this study varied from middle secondary level to tertiary level. Such disparity within single occupations must be difficult to conceptualise for someone who is exploring the requirements of career options.

There are some limitations of this study that need to be emphasised. The first is that the sample is large but not representative. Although it is a reasonably sized group, especially for a working population, no claim has been made that this is a random sample. Moreover, many occupations were not covered. Secondly, there is the problem of the post-dated assessment of reading. The occupation that was recorded for adults was generally the occupation at the time of injury and it was linked with the current assessment of reading. The median time since injury was three years and the study was based on the reasonable assumption that adult reading does not fluctuate widely (even in many cases of head injury). Thirdly it may be argued that word knowledge in WRAT3 is an inaccurate measure of reading. But the overall findings are consistent with the nationwide Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, which examined prose and document literacy in a comprehensive and holistic fashion using real-world tasks. A further limitation is that WRAT3 has now been superseded by a fourth edition but the reporting of results in grade levels offsets some of this change. There is also the issue of reliability, which is hardly ever acknowledged in most published studies. I have assumed that the reliability coefficients cited in the manual for the WRAT3 reading test would apply to the participants in this study but, as in most reports, this assumption has not been tested. The only justification for not undertaking a test-retest study is that there are resource and time constraints in private practice. One final limitation that is not mentioned in most studies is that the findings were based on a group and there is no justifiable basis for inference to an individual or generalisation to a specific client. This issue of the generalisability of results haunts most career research.

A broader theoretical issue arising from this study is the contribution of reading to occupational achievement. It is not clear to what extent reading precedes occupational choice, accompanies one’s career or is a consequence of one’s occupation. It may be the case that reading is affected or improved or even diminished in some occupations but this was not tested by these findings. One scenario for consideration is that reading represents the overall level of educational achievement even from an early age and in doing so it either opens up opportunities or closes educational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major rehabilitation groups</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Grade equivalent</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not worked</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>39.6 (7.2)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>24–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>returned to work, now not working</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>40.6 (8.4)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>2–55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>returned to work</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>42.5 (5.6)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Year 9–12</td>
<td>25–53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excludes those not classified, such as students or in training; grade equivalent of median score.
avenues to students. As a result certain occupational options are well and truly constrained from an early point in one’s educational career. Subsequent life experiences can overcome some of these limitations and this may account for some of the variability within as well as between occupational groups.

**References**


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James Athanasou has retired from the University of Technology, Sydney and has continued his work as a psychologist in private practice, specialising in the vocational assessment of people with injuries since 1981. Jim is co-editor of the *International Handbook of Career Guidance* and editor of *Adult Educational Psychology* and *Adult Education and Training*. He is author of *Evaluating Career Education and Guidance*, co-author of *A Teacher’s Guide to Educational Assessment* and developed the original *Career Interest Test* used by www.myfuture.edu.au. His most recent work was as co-author of five books for primary and secondary students on the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy NAPLAN-style Tests.

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**Australian Journal of Career Development Volume 20, Number 2, Winter 2011** 23
**Theory and Practice**

This section is designed as a brief professional review of the article. It provides relevant study questions and answers for readers to test their knowledge of the article.

What is the value of assessing reading for vocational guidance?

*Answer:* It is a useful predictor of educational and vocational potential, allowing people to explore a wider range of possible occupational destinations.

What caveat might be applied to the results on reading across occupations or educational levels?

*Answer:* Reading shows considerable variation within specific occupations or educational levels. It emphasises that people with widely varying skill levels can constitute an occupation or obtain educational qualifications. Furthermore, the correlation between the years of schooling completed and the reading scores was only moderate ($r = 0.336$) and indicated that these two factors were related, albeit imperfectly. This means that educational achievement is not a proxy measure for reading capability.

What was the relationship between levels of reading achievement and potential return to work following an injury?

*Answer:* There was a linear increase in the reading scores of those who never worked following an injury, those who returned to work for a while but were not working at the time of assessment and those who returned to work. The differences between groups were statistically significant but the effect size was small.
LIFE-CAREER RE-ENGAGEMENT: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COUNSELLING PEOPLE IN RETIREMENT TRANSITION—PART I

CHARLES P. CHEN
University of Toronto

New ideas and perspectives are needed to form effective counselling strategies and approaches in an effort to promote and enhance the psychological well-being of individuals in retirement transition. This article suggests that counselling in this context can be considered a special helping intervention for life-career development aiming at helping clients to explore and to acquire a sense of renewed vocation in the retirement phase of their lives. In keeping with this intent, the article proposes the new conceptual framework of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) by expanding on the work of Donald Super (1957, 1990).

There has been a fast increase of the retiring population in Western society as workers of the baby boomer generation are reaching their age of retirement (Gendell & Siegel, 1992; Reitzes & Mutran, 2004; Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996). This trend has begun to and will continue to have considerable impact on a range of diverse sociocultural, political, economic, demographic, and other related macro- and micro-societal development issues (Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece & Patterson, 1997). These issues pose very complex and dynamic questions that require much attention from policy-makers in different levels of governments. These issues also call for creative and constructive responses from scholars and practitioners in an array of social sciences fields such as sociology, economics, cultural anthropology and psychology. One of the critical issues worthy of attention is how to maintain and enhance the psychological well-being of individuals in retirement transition (Reitzes, Mutran & Fernandez, 1996; Schlossberg, 2004; Warr, Butcher, Robertson & Callinan, 2004). Although there has been considerable interest in and around the issue of
retirement in a professional helping context (Greller & Stroh, 1995; Jensen-Scott, 1993; Tinsley & Bigler, 2002; Wells & Kendig, 1999), it is still an area that needs much more attention given the growing significance of retirement transition in an ageing, post-industrial Western society.

It is beyond the scope of this article to cover all the major variables associated with psychological well-being in the retirement transition process. Rather, the article attempts to look at the issue from the particular angle of counselling psychology: that is, to conceptualise and form a counselling strategy to help clients deal more effectively with some psychological dynamics they experience in the process of retirement transition. With this intent, the article presents the idea of the retirement transition as a renewed experience of life-career development. This renewed experience focuses on understanding, probing and strengthening the intrinsic potential of a retiree so that such potential can be used as resources that will enrich the individual’s coping experience during the retirement transition process. The article takes the primary stand that retirement adjustment counselling becomes more constructive and holistic if it is considered a special form of life-career development counselling that aims to help clients explore and acquire new options in the retirement phase of their lives. This special form of life-career exploration will continue as long as one’s life journey continues. To form such an argument, this article proposes a new concept of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) by expanding on the work of Donald Super (1957, 1990).

**Rationale: From Disengagement to Re-engagement**

By briefly reviewing the original perspective concerning retirement in Super’s (1957, 1990) theory, we can attempt to provide the rationale for suggesting a new conceptual framework of life-career re-engagement (LCRE). From there, we can propose the key conceptual tenets that form the framework of LCRE.

**Disengagement: A Reflection on Super’s Model**

Considering retirement transition part of an integral life-career development experience from the angle of vocational and career psychology, Donald Super’s (1990) ‘life-career rainbow’ is certainly a comprehensive theoretical model too indispensable to be missed. Super was the first pioneering theorist to combine an individual’s personal or social life and their vocational life into an integrated developmental process. According to Super (1990), this life-career developmental process comprises stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. These stages depict one’s life-career experiences and their related tasks through the entire life span, from seeking for entry (exploration) to seeking for exit (disengagement). Of particular note in the life-career rainbow model is the role of retiree at the ending stage of one’s paid working life journey. Initially, this stage was labelled as the stage of ‘decline’ (Super, 1957) but was later replaced by the current term, ‘disengagement’ (Super, 1990). The concept of disengagement, as will be illustrated in the following discussion, remains a logical notion in individuals’ life-career course in the contemporary post-industrial Western society. Yet, the concept may need some expansion and revision so that it will reflect more closely the current reality of human needs, especially individuals’ psychological needs in the retirement transition process. This revisit of and attempt to expand on Super’s model seems pertinent given what was presented or not presented in Super’s original assumption about the retirement or disengagement stage.

According to Super, one’s career development reaches its end-phase as one enters into a retirement stage. While many other roles in the life-career rainbow, such as child, student and worker, are considered a mode of engagement, the role of a retiree is regarded as a mode of disengagement. This implies that individuals at this stage will withdraw or exit from the active functioning in the paid vocational aspects of their lives. Compared to many other life roles in the previous stages, the role of retiree was given less attention in Super’s model. This is understandable because, from a traditional viewpoint, retirement is about resting, relaxation and leisure. It is about going down the slope rather than climbing up the hill in one’s life-career journey. Individuals are supposed to have finished their career developmental tasks once they enter the retirement stage of their lives, suggesting that career development does not play much of a role in the retirement stage. Super’s (1957, 1990) life-career rainbow model has always been widely regarded as the most comprehensive, holistic and humanistic theoretical framework that integrates life and career.
in vocational and career psychology (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Sharf, 2010; Zunker, 2006). Yet its comprehension and scope on the retirement experience remain to be further expanded and enriched.

Calling for such a conceptual expansion seems pertinent while Super’s model is comprehended in the current social and societal context. On one hand, Super’s assumption still holds substantial merit with respect to the commonly perceived biological timeline for retirement. In the current world of work in North America, for example, age 65 is still the ‘physiological passport’ of retirement for many workers, especially those workers in the public sector and large organisations in private industry (Settersten & Hagestad, 1996). In other words, age 65 is recognised by many as the most proper chronological age line for dividing one’s working life from retirement life (Joulain, Mullet, Lecomte & Prevost, 2000). This prototype of retirement age is thus still relevant and perhaps necessary in our society. On the other hand, the notion of disengagement appears insufficient enough to reflect the complex and diverse reality of retirement in our world today. This is because to use such a perception in describing and understanding the term ‘retirement’ seems to be too narrow and sometimes out of the context of many retirees’ enriched life-career development attempts and related experiences in constructing their retirement lives (Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996). As the content of retirement life has become richer, one’s exit from a paid worker’s role does not necessarily mean a disengagement from one’s continuing experience of life-career development in a broader sense (Herr, Cramer & Niles, 2004).

The rapid social, cultural, political, economic and technological changes of the past two decades have had a tremendous impact on the post-industrial work world in the West. Along with many ongoing changes in the world of work, the many aspects associated with the phenomenon of retirement have also evolved and shifted from the retirement paradigm of the past (Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece & Patterson, 1997). Thus, there is a need to reconceptualise and comprehend the psychology of retirement with a renewed perspective—a perspective that will truly reflect the psychosocial and physical needs of people in the retirement transition in both current post-industrial Western society and beyond. Perhaps lying at the core of such a need is the development of a more integral concept, with its associated coping mechanisms, that is relevant to dealing with the range of complex, dynamic and unique developmental issues of individuals in retirement transition. An attempt to expand on Super’s original concept concerning one’s role and function in the retirement phase of life experience therefore appears to be a worthwhile effort.

**Life-Career Re-engagement: A Conceptual Expansion of Super’s Model**

The proposed new concept of ‘life-career re-engagement (LCRE)’ is inspired by Super’s (1990) theory of life-career rainbow. Furthermore, the perspective of LCRE intends to enrich Super’s model by drawing attention to three closely connected points that may contribute to providing a more flexible, colourful, productive and, most of all, meaningful comprehension of the retirement experience. These points try to make an argument calling for developing and expanding substantially on what was presented by Super (1957, 1990). The central rationale for such a proposal is that individuals’ life-career courses are always developmental in nature, a fundamental philosophical cornerstone that originally formed Super’s life-career rainbow framework. In the developmental path, individuals’ life-career experience has considerably changed its content and meaning in post-industrial Western society. Along with the ongoing changes in the current world of work, new circumstances and human needs have emerged. These situations and needs warrant serious consideration, necessitating a more holistic and comprehensive perspective to understand a person’s retirement experience in his or her life-career journey. Guided by such a conceptual rationale, the LCRE concept aims to present a sense of openness and creativity in continuing the process of personal development and growth in one’s retirement experience. In this sense, retirement is seen as a new phase for life-career engagement (Adams, 1999; Amundson, 2009; Moen, Fields, Heather & Hofmeister, 2000).
First, the LCRE concept is based on the premise that the notion of ‘re-engagement’ poses a proactive stance: that is, a forward-looking attitude and a sense of renewal (Amundson, 2009; Gelatt, 1996). It indicates the continuation of one’s life-career developmental tasks, albeit perhaps in some different forms and contexts. The change from ‘disengagement’ to ‘re-engagement’ signifies a fundamental shift in conceptualising the phenomenon of retirement. It proposes that retirement is not considered a ‘winding down’ part at the end of one’s career development pathway but rather the fresh new start of another life-career developmental stage in one’s total life. In this perspective, life in retirement is about pursuing a sense of vocation, meaning, creativity and being engaged in activities that provide one with new fulfilment and enjoyment (Cochran, 1990, 1997). This is to postulate that, in entering the retirement stage, individuals can choose to construct a new career experience if they wish to (Savickas, 2002). The construction of this unique experience is intended to open up new doors and windows so that individuals in retirement transition can find new opportunities to continue their self-growth with greater personal preference and liberty. In this sense, retirement can be perceived as another new phase of life-career development, forming a ‘retirement career’ that manifests a combination of new meaning, ideas, perspectives, interests, plans, projects and activities in life.

Second, the LCRE concept points to the rich opportunities for self-exploration and self-enhancement. As a developmental process, the retirement life experience is always evolving and progressing. Retirement does not mean a static mode of lifestyle that will only last a short period of time before one’s life journey ends. Rather, retirement can mean a lengthy and colourful life experience that has great potential for personal change and transformation (Hansen, 2002; Schlossberg, 2004). This argument becomes especially pertinent given the significant advancement of medical and health sciences, which have substantially increased the overall life span of humans over the last century and significantly improved the physical health of older adults in Western society. The longer the retirement stage lasts, the more possibilities there are for development and change in a retiree’s life experiences. Similar to one’s pre-retirement life-career experience, one’s experience in the retirement phase can always be recycled for new development (Super, 1990). This implies that there is always room to revise what has been done, while framing and reframing new projects in one’s retirement life experience. This developmental nature of the process forms the foundation for creativity, action and, ultimately, a sense of human agency in making new and meaningful things happen (Bandura, 2001; Cochran 1990, 1997; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002).

Third, the LCRE concept promotes and reinforces the continuation of the life role interaction and integration in the retirement phase. Parallel to the developmental process, the role of the retiree becomes dynamic, complex and multifaceted under different circumstances. The experience of retirement thus reflects a general life stage or life space (Super, 1990) in which many different roles may be played. These roles may often interact and coexist, presenting a complex profile of a retiree who very often combines a series of life roles at this particular life stage. For example, a retiree can mean a worker who has retired from her previous occupation as a schoolteacher, yet is working as a part-time librarian in a local community library. In the meantime, she is also a very active member of a professional association, an active volunteer and citizen in the local community, a loving parent and grandparent and, of course, a woman of leisure who is involved in a range of pastimes, sports and other leisure activities. As such, her life role in her retirement phase can be dynamic and multifaceted. It remains open and changeable as she prioritises her goals and plans, making the life-career roles more complementary and supplementary in a given context. Changes and shifts can often mean reassessing and adjusting existing roles, and developing and creating new roles that will respond to the emerging needs and challenges in one’s personal growth during the retirement stage.

Collectively, these three aspects – a proactive stance; self exploration and self-enhancement; and life role interaction and integration – seem to provide a sound rationale for proposing the LCRE perspective in the context of retirement transition. The essence of the LCRE concept rests on the belief that retirement can become an extended, refreshed and unique experience of life-career development if one intends it to be so. In line with this concept, the scope of life in retirement has become more broadened than ever before. Both the content of a retirement life and the role of a retiree need to be redefined and widened. Shifting away from
a traditional and static prototype, life development during the retirement stage now encompasses many more new dynamics that will generate new possibilities, challenges and opportunities for the retired people and people in retirement transition. To deal with an array of interrelated intra-personal, interpersonal and environmental dynamics in the retirement experience, it is imperative to understand the changing contexts in which different types of retirement experiences occur.

It is of particular importance that comprehension of the contextual nature of various retirement experiences focuses on the combined notion of ‘life-career’. Several authors have noted the centrality of considering a person’s vocational life as part of his or her integral personal and social life (Crites, 1981; Hansen, 1997; Miller-Tiedeman, 1999; Patton & McMahon, 1999; Super, 1990). A common phenomenon in career counselling is that very often clients present working life issues along with various issues in other aspects of their personal life. Personal issues and career issues intertwine; they coexist. Drawing attention to life-career integration appears to be a particularly relevant aspect in managing one’s retirement career or life-career re-engagement in the retirement stage. This is because the transitional experiences in the re-engagement stage require the retiree to adjust to a range of new roles that combine the personal, social and vocational dimensions of one’s life. A focus on how to understand these intertwined life-career roles and their related expectations and needs remain the core of helping clients in their retirement transition stage (Chen, 2001; Krumboltz, 1993).

**Concluding Thoughts**

Inspired by Super’s (1957, 1990) theoretical model of the life-career rainbow, this analytical discussion has attempted to propose the new concept of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) for counselling clients in retirement transition. The centrality and meaningfulness of the LCRE conceptual framework lies with its optimal view on human growth and development during one’s post–working life or later-life experiences. The value of proposing such a new concept is that it departs significantly from the traditional comprehension of life experiences in the retirement stage. Instead of perceiving a person’s life-career experience in the traditional frame of ‘decline’ or ‘disengagement’, the LCRE perspective argues that there is great potential for a person’s life-career development as he or she enters into the retirement stage of life.

From this perspective, retirement merely opens new possibilities and opportunities for personal growth and enrichment, leading to a new and unique phase of life-career enhancement: that is, a life-career development experience with greater personal liberty in one’s life journey. In this sense, life-career development should continue as long as one’s life continues, albeit the fact that the form, style and other characteristics of life-career development at this re-engagement stage may not resemble exactly those reflected in one’s pre-retirement working life. Regardless of such differences, the goal and intention of LCRE remains the same as that of the pre-retirement life-career development: to strive for a more meaningful and productive living experience to enhance one’s quality of life and personal well-being.

**References**


Why is the notion of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) worthy of attention in vocational and career psychology?

Answer: The traditional view of retirement as a disengagement from the work force does not necessarily match the experiences of retirees in our contemporary world. With increasing life spans and the practice of early retirement, many people retire in good health and with interests in pursuing a new form of self-satisfying work.

What is the conceptual framework for the newly proposed concept of life-career re-engagement (LCRE)?

Answer: Life-career re-engagement proposes that the way career counsellors conceive of retirement needs to be expanded to match the experiences of retirees in our postmodern and post-industrial era.

Today, a comprehensive view that includes an open and constructive relationship to one’s life-careers is appropriate for many during the retirement phase of life.

What are the main contents of life-career re-engagement (LCRE)?

Answer: First, life-career re-engagement views retirement looking forwards rather than looking back. Retirement is seen as a fresh new start rather than a winding down. Second, life-career re-engagement emphasises the opportunity for self-exploration and self-enhancement through the process of career re-engagement. Third, life-career re-engagement promotes the development of a dynamic life role. Here, the retiree is assisted in adjusting to a range of new roles that combine personal, social and vocational dimensions.
New ideas and perspectives are needed to form effective counselling strategies and approaches in an effort to promote and enhance the psychological well-being of individuals in retirement transition. This article is the second of two co-published articles. The first, ‘Life-career re-engagement: A new conceptual framework for counselling people in retirement transition,’ proposed the new conceptual framework of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) by expanding on the work of Donald Super (1957, 1990). In this second article, counselling considerations that are guided by and supportive of the concept of LCRE are discussed, along with implications for helping intervention. Three essential factors of retirement transition are considered, the importance of contextualising the experiences of retirees is emphasised and issues around identity, personal interests and lifelong learning are explored.
context of retirement transition is the purpose of this article. The meaningfulness of the LCRE concept rests on its forward-looking and constructive perspective in viewing one’s great potential that can be explored, used and enriched during our later life experiences. In light of the meaningfulness of the LCRE concept, this article presents several counselling considerations that may help people in their retirement transitions. These considerations are inspired by and support the LCRE concept. They aim to show how the LCRE concept may be translated into a helping practice.

The term ‘retirement transition’ here refers to a very general and loosely defined life-career stage. It may include individuals who are in the process of leaving their regular working lives and moving towards a retirement life. It may also mean people who have just made the physical transfer from the role of a paid worker to the role of a retiree. Furthermore, the term could include the retired workers who have been experiencing their retirement career for quite some time, and are continuing their transitional experiences in the re-engagement stage (Kim & Moen, 2001). As such, individuals’ experiences, expectations and other needs may vary because of the different sub-stages they are in, making the LCRE counselling in the retirement transition a very situational and individual-oriented helping and coping intervention.

Counsellors who work with clients in this situation should not only possess the knowledge and skill for useful intervention but also be very sensitive to the psychological state and other specific needs of each retiree client. The counsellor should take a comprehensive helping perspective: that is, LCRE counselling integrates a complexity of life-career transition issues in the helping process. A helping approach guided by the developmental principle often needs to go hand in hand with remedial intervention mechanisms. There is also a need to combine various personal, social and career issues, while helping the client develop new plans and initiatives in the re-engagement stage. This is because a range of complex personal needs and issues can often surface as the re-engagement tasks emerge. The following discussion, being sensitive to this complex life-career interaction, proposes several general considerations in facilitating clients to continue their personal growth and develop their retirement careers in the life-career re-engagement stage.

### Considering Essential Influencing Factors

An array of complex variables may have substantial impact on one’s experience of the retirement phase of life (Reitzes & Mutran, 2004; Sharpley & Layton, 1998). Three of these factors—financial circumstances, health and age—deserve particular attention while helping retirees to plan and to participate in their life-career re-engagement activities. Counselling intervention that intends to facilitate life-career re-engagement should always take into account these three variables because of their essential influences in individuals’ experiences of retirement transition. Although the three factors are primarily tangible and physiological in nature, they often have direct and close association with a person’s psychological state of well-being in adjusting to the experience of life-career re-engagement (Glass & Kilpatrick, 1998; Marshall, Clarke & Ballantyne, 2001; Mein, Ferrie & Stansfeld, 1998; Sharpley & Layton, 1998).

#### Financial Circumstances

The availability of adequate financial resources is considered a basic foundation for LCRE (Glass & Kilpatrick, 1998; Lum & Lightfoot, 2003). Counselling for LCRE presupposes that the retiree client has some reasonable and adequate financial support for a stable living in the retirement stage. Without the financial resources—such as a pension plan, retirement savings or other resources for financial support—a retiree’s liberty in planning and executing a LCRE project can often be restricted or even hampered. The core of LCRE is about finding and immersing oneself in a life-career mission from which one can truly gain a sense of satisfaction including interest, enjoyment, passion, meaning and calling. While the LCRE tasks may yield financial rewards such as a regular or irregular financial income, the retiree should not be confined by the monetary incentive in pursuing these LCRE tasks. This means that a monetary reward may be regarded as, and included in, the LCRE tasks as part of a person’s interest and passion, but not mainly for reasons of his or her financial survival. The purpose and its related dynamics may shift substantially in the
LCRE tasks if retirees feel compelled to set financial reward as the priority due to their immediate needs. For example, retirees may want to gain financial reward so that they will be able to afford a lifestyle or maintain the standard of living that is equivalent to that of their pre-retirement financial condition.

To help a client form a viable action plan for LCRE, his or her financial circumstances have to be given serious consideration. Retirees with more adequate financial resources have more freedom to form and to act on their re-engagement initiatives. Yet, the financial component becomes a vital part in planning LCRE tasks for retirees with more imperative financial needs. Consider the case of Samantha, who enjoyed her career as a human resources specialist in a large organisation for 14 years before her recent retirement. While Samantha welcomed her retirement, she also realised that her current pension income was equivalent to half of her pre-retirement earnings. To plan LCRE tasks in this context meant Samantha had to prioritise a range of monetary and non-monetary needs.

Samantha saw retirement as a great opportunity to pursue her long-time interest in drawing. Given her pension income, Samantha also felt that her financial well-being would be enhanced if her passion for drawing and her previous professional expertise in human resources could yield some occasional financial gains. In the immediate future, a combined priority emerges in Samantha’s LCRE agenda. She intended to enrol in the computer-based drawing courses at her local community college on a part-time basis. This training in applied fine arts would help Samantha improve her drawing skills. She also intended to contact a range of publishers to whom she would promote herself as an amateur illustrator. The more skilful she becomes in drawing, the more chances for her to have her work accepted by various magazines and books for a moderate profit. In the meantime, Samantha planned to set up a consulting business with flexible hours that serves companies by conducting external evaluations of human resources and that helps individuals to refine their résumés for vocational advancement. As such, Samantha is able to incorporate her background skills, learning curiosity and passion, personal interest and financial expectations into a feasible and comprehensive LCRE project.

The counselling process must always be cognisant of each client’s financial needs, and be prepared to integrate such needs and expectations into the formation of the LCRE tasks. As illustrated in Samantha’s case, the key issue in this helping context is to facilitate the client to prioritise a range of monetary and non-monetary needs and expectations. Based on that, the counsellor can help the client take a more balanced approach in taking into account both the financial needs and other needs in planning the LCRE projects, trying to make financial and non-financial needs supplementary and complementary to each other. Consequently, both categories of needs can be integrated in a constructive manner via a process of positive compromise and reconciliation (Chen, 2004). While it is not realistic to meet all the expectations, both the financial and the non-financial needs will possibly be balanced and satisfied to some degree.

Health

The intention of opening up a brand new life-career development experience at the retirement phase, or to participate in the ‘re-engagement’ activities, is based on a basic assumption that the retiree is in good health (Holmes & Dorfman, 2000; Mein, Ferrie & Stansfeld, 1998). This means that the individual is physically well to continue a range of alternative activities that he or she desires to pursue. Some retirement may be initiated entirely due to a health reason (Choi, 2003). For example, an administrative worker takes early retirement in his 50s because of the onset of cardiac illness. Other retirement may be triggered partly by a health reason, and partly by other reasons. This leads to an interaction between an external circumstance and an existing personal health concern, accelerating the timing of the retirement to take place (Isaksson & Johansson, 2000). For example, a downsizing airline company decided to offer its employees an early retirement package and an aeroplane engineer who has arthritis decided to take the package. The opportunity provided by the company in conjunction with the engineer’s health condition sparked the decision, which he felt was a good way to exit his paid working life.

In either of these scenarios, health should be given serious consideration, although the level of such consideration may vary from one case to another. Health should be one of the key factors in planning and organising a retirement life (Marshall, Clarke & Ballantyne, 2001). Some plans may have to be abandoned. Other interests may have to be compromised somewhat, while still other new projects
might be launched. Consider the case of Bob, the airliner engineer who took early retirement in the previous example. Although Bob has a strong interest in carpentry, he realised that carpentry was not a feasible option for his LCRE project because his arthritis prevented him from lifting heavy items. As the reasons behind his interest were clarified in the counselling process, it appeared that Bob enjoyed the creativity involved in building wooden furniture and the sense of completion he felt due to the practicality of the final product. Another option that may accommodate these interests is light woodwork. With light woodwork, Bob might receive the same sense of creativity and completion while still being engaged in woodwork, although the finished products in light woodwork are often small artefacts that may not have the same utility value as large pieces of furniture. Accordingly, the counsellor helped Bob to explore other possibilities that might also generate similar feelings of creativity and completion. As a result, Bob considered including photography and writing as tentative options in his LCRE tasks. Although these two options were new to Bob, they might satisfy his need to learn, to be creative and to yield concrete results.

The designing principle that guides the LCRE plans, as illustrated in Bob’s case, is to be realistic and flexible about activities that one is able to do as well as those one should avoid doing. While adequately dealing with their own health concerns and physical well-being needs, retiree clients can still become engaged in a range of meaningful projects that they want to pursue in the re-engagement stage. What is central here is that the counselling interventions facilitate clients in making the necessary adjustments to meet their health needs through the LCRE experiences.

Age
Age is definitely a physical variable that can have a critical impact on one’s life. Although the traditional age line for the mandatory retirement—for example, age 65—may not present a convincing reason for many individuals who have reached this retirement age, it does, nevertheless, reflect a generally justifiable rationale for retirement. The rationale here is to take into consideration the physiological development of a person: namely, the age variable in human development (Langer, 2001; Mein, Ferrie & Stansfeld, 1998). It is a natural law that all species on Earth have to enter a physically declining stage as they age. Human beings are no exception in this regard. Age and health are very often two closely related variables; they coexist and correlate, affecting a person’s state of being, especially when one enters the retirement phase of life. In this sense, using a certain age (such as 65) as a general dividing line to reflect a physical phase of one’s life has its rational grounds (Joulain, Mullet, Lecomte & Prevost, 2000).

Counselling clients for LCRE should take age into account. The centrality for the helping intervention is to deal with age in a constructive and realistic manner. The client comes to realise the reality that age could put limits on some of the things he or she is interested in doing. The client should thus learn to adjust interests and to pursue other plans in the same general interest domain that are more relevant to his or her age. In the meantime, it is very important that the counsellor helps the client adopt a comprehensive and positive sense on ageing: chronological age is also a resilient variable that varies from one individual to another. Age should not, and will not, be a barrier, but an asset, in the re-engagement effort. For example, at age 70 one can go back to school to pursue an academic life, either to fulfil the quest of a lifelong dream (for example, to earn a degree) or to satisfy one’s curiosity of gaining new knowledge and skills. Likewise, a retiree of this age may choose to take up a craft and sell the end-products over the internet. In a variety of similar contexts, age with life experiences can actually become invaluable assets for one’s new vocation in the re-engagement stage. The counselling process helps the client to recognise age-related limits, while drawing attention to the great potential and strengths an older age may bring to one’s life-career development in the re-engagement stage. Clients are encouraged and empowered to become more capable of using these age-related advantages in their lives. Of course, for individuals who are not hampered by health problems yet have become retirees at a
younger age (for example, in their late 50s), the age factor may not need to be given much consideration in planning and projecting the LCRE tasks. Under such circumstance, age is by and large a non-issue in the counselling intervention process.

**Contextualising Experience**

As illustrated in the previous discussion, retirement adjustment is a very dynamic, complex and unique personal experience. While many retirees may have some commonly shared experience in this phase of their lives, each of them also brings his or her individual needs, concerns and issues into this experience. To form an effective helping approach, the counsellor should draw attention to each client’s particular situation in this transitional experience. The psychological dynamics of each retiree client should be described and understood within the macro- and micro-contexts of the client (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009). This requires that the counsellor avoid simplifying and overgeneralising a retirement experience by depending too much on the perceived general stages the client has been and is going through, such as those illustrated in life transition theories (Bridges, 1994; Hopson & Adams, 1977; Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman, 1995).

The counsellor should be aware of the fact that life transition theoretical models may provide useful references to comprehend the experience of the retirement transition but that each client’s unique background information and psychological state can add to, alter or modify a ‘would-be’ retirement transition experience in a significant manner. The general assumptions about the retirement experience should never be taken for granted. Any presuppositions and hypotheses of the client’s psychological state should remain tentative and open. In doing so, the counsellor shows great respect for the client’s subjective world view and experiences. The counsellor works closely with the client to integrate the client’s unique individual dynamics into the whole picture. The client’s contextual experience thus demonstrates a personal profile that manifests a series of his or her unique attributes to the retirement state, including difficulties, challenges, concerns, needs, strengths and potentials.

In line with the principle of the contextualist explanation of life career development (Young, Valach & Collin, 2002), the notion of context seems to provide a necessary prerequisite for helping individuals in the retirement transition. The contextualist helping framework suggests a situational, circumstantial and very individualised approach to work with each client on his or her specific issues and needs. Counselling can be seen as an individual learning process that facilitates each client to adjust to the LCRE experience. This helping frame is parallel to the concept of ‘individual learning plan’ proposed by the more traditional helping models in career counselling intervention (Gysbers & Moore, 1987), and the emerging theories such as the cognitive information processing career theory (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson & Lenz, 2004). The core philosophy of the individual learning process here emphasises the necessity in focusing on the unique context of each client. Following this principle, the helping process is open and receptive to a variety of interventions that are relevant to each client.

**Negotiating Identity**

Regardless of the various dynamics involved in a retirement transition, one of the key issues that the retiree client faces is dealing with a new self-identity. Although a person in an involuntary retirement may experience more difficulties than a person in voluntary retirement, the retirees in both contexts have to encounter the challenge of role change from a paid worker to a retiree (Adams, Prescher, Beehr & Lepisto, 2002; Jonsson, Borell & Sadlo, 2000; Reitzes, Mutran & Fernandez, 1996; Rosenkoetter & Garris, 2001). This role change certainly requires a significant change of one’s life contents in a variety of ways. For example, routines of going to work are replaced by life activities that are not considered as part of one’s working life. Such physical changes often bring to the person a sudden sense of unfamiliarity, being unsettled and even isolated. Two metaphors are illustrative in describing how retiring individuals feel. Some feel the transition is like the sudden arrival of a hot summer during winter, while others see the new retirement lifestyle as similar to the ‘culture shock’ one faces in a foreign environment.

Regardless of the various dynamics involved in a retirement transition, one of the key issues that the retiree client faces is dealing with a new self-identity.
Lying at the core of the physical role change here—that is, from a worker to a retiree—is the essential issue of knowing oneself in the transition experience (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009). Counselling aims to help clients to negotiate the connections between their life-career roles in the past, present and future. The emotions and understanding associated with the paid worker role need to be acknowledged and clarified. Based on that, the counsellor assists clients to make a constructive transition to the new roles in the re-engagement stage. Clients are encouraged to explore and understand the personal meanings associated with retirement life. Meaning-oriented personal constructs—such as values, expectations, desires and interests—are clarified to form a conceptual foundation for the plans and projects they may consider pursuing in the re-engagement stage. Clients come to realise that, through self-talk and self-exploration, they able to negotiate and to find a new and integral self in this new phase of life-career development. A distinct advantage of role negotiation in the retirement transition is the great liberty one has with respect to time and space. Clients are not pressed with time to come up with immediate solutions. First, clients have the freedom to focus more on plans and projects that are truly meaningful to them. Second, roles and plans for LCRE can be recycled. This is likely to provide the opportunity for refinement, leading to a more interesting and meaningful LCRE experience, which in turn, will enrich the life content in the re-engagement stage.

**Developing Interests**

Life career development in the re-engagement stage is a very special form of personal growth. The success of this personal growth relies heavily on an ongoing optimal sense and positive attitude towards one’s everyday living experience. As previously discussed, physical health is of course one of the key factors that is worthy of serious attention. In the meantime, it is equally, if not more, important that the retiree’s psychological welfare continues to develop and grow in a constructive and healthy manner. It is this healthy and forward-looking state of mind that provides the best resources for LCRE. One who desires to explore opportunities for re-engagement is always the one who maintains a strong interest in life experiences (Kim & Feldman, 2000). A key task for counselling retiree clients, thus, is to help them to continue exploring areas of new interests and, through such interests, to enjoy a sense of growth, meaningfulness, satisfaction and fulfilment in the re-engagement process.

The notion of ‘interest’ here is a broadly defined and inclusive construct. It encompasses a wide range of prospects related to one’s thoughts, feelings and activities. For example, to form a varied retirement life, one may decide to continue a professional life or a second career that will use one’s existing knowledge and expertise inherited from a previous career and professional experience. A retiree may also consider pursuing a brand-new ‘second career’ that is largely an unknown, yet fits with an existing interest in developing new initiatives in life. Furthermore, a retiree may want to go back to school to pursue a scholarly interest that he or she has not had the opportunity to act on previously. Other retirees may want to be involved in some volunteering projects that make them feel that they ‘matter’ to others, and contribute to the welfare of the community and society. It is of note that developing various new interests in leisure activities is also of critical importance. According to Super (1990), leisure is one of the key components in a holistic life-career development experience. Nevertheless, some retirees may find it extremely challenging to consider leisure as part of the whole picture of their lives, because they did not have much opportunity to develop and enjoy leisure interests while concentrating too much time and energy on their previous vocational lives (Sterns & Gray, 1999).

The counselling intervention can facilitate clients to increase their awareness of the importance of interest development at the re-engagement stage. The counsellor helps clients to reflect on a variety of activities that they have been involved thus far in their life, using these reflective thoughts as the basis for interest development. Clients are also encouraged to use self-imagination to trigger possible interests that might be potentially meaningful to them in the re-engagement experience. In addition to facilitating clients to be actively engaged in such brainstorming and self-exploration, the counsellor can help clients to acquire more effective ways in finding and forming such interests that can be vital to LCRE. First, interests can be narrowed down and prioritised. Second, some planning may be needed to experiment with newly developed interests. Third, the interests can be naturally integrated into various LCRE projects and experiences. The increased interests will likely enrich
the re-engagement tasks and the re-engagement tasks will reinforce and broaden clients’ interests, forming a more constructive and optimal circle of personal development and growth in the LCRE stage.

**Enhancing Lifelong Learning**
The notion of lifelong learning is a broad concept that can link all relevant helping aspects in counselling clients in the retirement transition. From a macro-perspective in viewing the coping experiences in the retirement stage, we can summarise by saying that nearly all the helping philosophies and intervention considerations can be perceived as a form of learning. For example, a great deal of learning occurs when clients negotiate with the new roles they have to play, leading to the formation of a new self-identity in the re-engagement process. Similarly, clients definitely have to learn new ideas and ways of doing things in developing and expanding their interests—a learning effort that is essential for individuals to continue their life-career journeys in the re-engagement stage. Promoting and facilitating the principle of lifelong learning therefore tends to be a vital construct that serves as the backbone of any helping approaches for individuals undertaking the re-engagement process (Simson, Thompson & Wilson, 2001).

To incorporate the philosophy of lifelong learning into the counselling practice, the counsellor helps clients to adopt a more comprehensive view of the notion of lifelong learning (Miller-Tiedeman, 1999; Patton & McMahon, 1999). Clients come to realise that such learning is an ongoing accumulation of a wide range of experiences. Learning also encompasses a wide variety of rich contents that connect to various aspects of one’s life. Most of these aspects, whether positive or negative, are intertwined, generating a multifaceted impact on one’s life-career development in the re-engagement stage. Learning thus comprises an essential variable in one’s growing experiences. The counselling encounter itself represents a learning experience, and aims to improve and reinforce this experience (Krumboltz, 1994, 1996; Law, 1996). As exemplified in the earlier cases of Samantha and Bob, the central function of LCRE counselling is to empower clients to continue to expand on their lifelong learning experiences. More specifically, the counsellor can draw attention to several points for enhancing learning in the helping and coping process.

First, clients are encouraged to reflect upon their past learning experience in a broad scope. Lessons learned from informal learning contexts may be worthy of much attention, because these learning experiences can often be transferable to a variety of areas in the re-engagement stage. For example, clients may find that aspects of their previous paid work experiences can be helpful to projects and activities in the re-engagement process.

Second, the focus of learning in the counselling process is more present- and future-oriented. The reflections on the past are intended to stimulate insights for the present and future. The learning experience from the past becomes important only because it enriches one’s learning in the present and future. In other words, it helps one to know how things can be done in a better way here and now.

Third, the learning goals and objectives must be geared closely with each client’s individual needs and situation. The counsellor can help clients to develop new interests while gaining new learning experiences. The development of new interests provides more incentives for learning new things and, in turn, the new learning experience can reinforce the existing interests, and yield new interests in the re-engagement experience.

Fourth, the learning strategies should remain flexible and personal. The learning pace, tasks and contents should vary from person to person. It is of vital importance that the counsellor should help clients to design learning tasks that are achievable. This will provide clients with a sense of accomplishment, encouraging them to continue to engage themselves in the new learning tasks that are required to implement and fine-tune the LCRE initiatives and projects.

Fifth, a key theme that links all the learning tasks is the notion of creativity. The client is encouraged to go above and beyond the conventional way of thinking while exploring new possibilities in retirement transition. An increased sense of creativity brings about freshness to one’s life, leading to curiosity about and an effort to open new doors and windows in one’s
retirement experiences. Consequently, this creative learning experience fosters a more constructive and meaningful way of living for life-career re-engagement.

Concluding Thoughts
Counselling considerations guided by and supportive of the principle of LCRE aim to help retiree clients accomplish more effectively the goal of positive living. While such considerations are framed in the context of counselling intervention, they can be heuristic and beneficial to other individuals who are engaged in the retirement transition experience and who are eager to gain self-helping insights and strategies in enhancing the quality of their retirement lives.

In closing, it is important to recognise that the LCRE practice is subject to various socioeconomic and personal constraints. The new concept of LCRE is only intended for those retirees who have the resources to explore and undertake the LCRE tasks. This is because not all individuals in the retirement stage will actually have the liberty to be as engaged in the LCRE as they desire. For example, the suggested framework of LCRE may be irrelevant for millions of workers who cannot count on their pensions or who may see their social security benefits drastically reduced so that they must continue to work beyond the age they had planned. Under such circumstances, the continuation of one’s working life may be a forced reality for financial survival rather than an optimal choice. Accordingly, the current framework of LCRE does not consider the issue of how these individuals can be helped to experience a sense of renewal and engagement in their life-career development. To help these individuals search for meaning and purpose in their working lives remains a significant and challenging task. The LCRE model will need to be expanded substantively to include promoting the vocational and personal well-being of these individuals. Alternatively, other conceptual and theoretical frameworks may also be developed to deal with the needs and expectations of these individuals. It is hoped that the current LCRE conceptual framework will provide food for thought in generating helping models towards this direction.

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AUTHOR

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

This section is designed as a brief professional review of the article. It provides relevant study questions and answers for readers to test their knowledge of the article.

How can the life-career re-engagement (LCRE) framework be applied to career development interventions?
Answer: Career development interventions guided by the perspective of life-career re-engagement (LCRE) focus on contextualising the experience of the retiree, negotiating new self-identity, developing personal interests and enhancing lifelong learning. The purpose is to create the most positive life-career re-engagement experience possible.

What are the essential factors that influence life-career re-engagement (LCRE)?
Answer: The financial circumstances, health and age of the retiree must be taken into consideration when working from the perspective of life-career re-engagement. The details surrounding each of these factors are necessary in order to properly contextualise the experience of the retiree.

How can a career counsellor empower the client through life-career re-engagement (LCRE)?
Answer: By aiding clients to engage with their ongoing lifelong learning. This includes strategies such as reflecting on past learning, making connections to the present and future, gearing learning goals and objectives to client’s individual needs, keeping learning strategies flexible, personal and achievable, and encouraging creativity.
Master’s degree by coursework students have been identified as a ‘forgotten’ cohort by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Careers and Employment service. Traditionally, these students have been included in undergraduate career development activities. Master’s degree students are arguably a specialised group due to the advanced learning implicit in many of their degrees. A brief survey was designed to better understand how to assist QUT master’s degree students with career development activities. Students were emailed an invitation to complete a brief online survey, asking for their assistance in planning appropriate career development activities for their cohort. Questions included reasons for undertaking a master’s degree and preferred topics and times for career development activities. A total of 615 students completed the survey. This brief report presents the results of the survey and highlights suggestions for career development practitioners and services.
career development learning for students in general (Bridgstock, 2009) and, in particular, postgraduate students (Higher Education Careers Services Unit, 2004). As part of an ongoing commitment to assessing the career development needs of its students and designing appropriate career development for various student cohorts, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Careers and Employment service conducted a short initial survey of enrolled coursework masters students to gauge their perspectives on their career development needs. The results of the survey will inform future activities targeting this cohort.

QUT is a multi-campus university located in Brisbane, Australia. The university has seven faculties (Built Environment and Engineering; Business; Creative Industries; Education; Health; Law; Science and Technology) comprising 48 discipline specific schools (for example, the Faculty of Health includes nursing, psychology, optometry and other disciplines). Each of these schools offers a variety of coursework masters’ degrees, designed to provide specialist qualifications in a particular area or for students to obtain a postgraduate degree in a new area of study. In 2010, QUT had approximately 42 000 students with nearly 5000 students enrolled in masters’ degrees by coursework. The largest number of coursework master’s degree students is enrolled within the Business faculty and the smallest number within Creative Industries.

The Careers and Employment service is a central university service that provides individual career counselling, generic and faculty-specific workshops and seminars, online and hard copy resources, employer presentations and information and regular emails to students regarding career-related information. The primary focus of the service has been on the undergraduate student body and, more recently, postgraduate research students. Master’s degree students attend workshops provided by the service. Their feedback has indicated that they feel activities are targeted at undergraduate students.

Table 1: Demographic Information about Survey Participants (N = 615)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently employed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, how many hours a week do you work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 40</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently working in your chosen profession?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to assist these students, a small survey was conducted to gain information that would allow the design and conduct of appropriate activities. This brief research report presents the results of this survey and discusses the implications for the provision of career development learning to these students.

**Method**

**Design and Procedure**

This cross-sectional study was conducted midway through second semester, 2010. Students were sent an email inviting them to complete a short survey the results of which would assist in planning career development activities. The email contained a link to an online survey site SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com.au).

**Participants**

A total of 615 (290 males, 47.15%; 321 females, 52.2%; 4 did not answer, 0.06%) coursework master’s degree students aged between 20 and 63 years completed an online survey. Participants were drawn from all faculties and schools across the university. All participants were anonymous and no identifying data was collected throughout the survey.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were enrolled part-time and were employed. A large number of students were working more than 40 hours a week while enrolled in their degree. The gender break-up, age and enrolment status of respondents are in line with university data.

**Measures**

The survey comprised 15 questions covering demographics, enrolment and employment status, reasons for undertaking a master’s degree, preferences for career development activities, suggested times for activities and other comments.

Participants indicated their primary reason for undertaking a master’s degree by selecting one of five predetermined categories:
- to upgrade my workplace skills
- to change careers
- to meet a job requirement
- to undertake research
- other.

Respondents who selected ‘other’ completed an open-ended response.

In order to gauge interest in career development learning, participants indicated whether or not they would be interested in taking part in any career development learning by answering one dichotomous question: yes or no. Those participants who answered ‘yes’ then completed questions on the type of career development learning that they thought would be useful by selecting as many options as required from five predetermined categories:
- résumé writing skills
- interview skills
- job application skills
- skills in effectively marketing themselves to employers
- skills to communicate effectively in the workplace.

This question was also followed by an open-ended response for other suggestions. Participants were also asked to nominate their preferred time for workshops and seminars by selecting one of four options: weekday mornings, weekday afternoons, after 5 p.m. and weekends.

**Results**

**Primary Reason for Undertaking a Master’s Degree**

Table 2 reports participants’ responses to their reason for undertaking a master’s degree. As shown, the majority selected one of the pre-determined reasons for degree commencement. The most frequently selected item was upgrading workplace skills followed by changing careers. Participants who selected ‘other’ were able to provide open-ended responses; categorical analysis of these responses revealed that the most common reason was for better career options, with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer options</th>
<th>Response (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To upgrade my workplace skills</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To change careers</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet a job requirement</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To undertake research</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: participants were able to nominate multiple categories.
pursuing a personal interest the next most common. Overall, these results indicate that the majority of respondents viewed a master’s degree as a way of obtaining skills in a specific area to enhance their future career direction.

**Career Development Activities**

In all, 67.5% participants reported an interest in participating in career development activities. These participants then nominated which of five predetermined workshops would be useful for career development learning. As shown in Table 3, the most highly selected choice was skills in how to effectively market themselves to employers. There were similar response rates for interview skills, effective communication skills and job application skills. ‘Résumé writing skills’ were the least preferred option.

Participants were also able to write suggestions for career development learning in an open-ended response. These responses were then categorised, with the most commonly suggested topics being job search skills, networking skills and opportunities, and personal or workplace skills such as teamwork and stress management.

Most participants reported that after-hours activities would be the most suitable for them to attend. Equal numbers of respondents (39.8%) selected after 5 p.m. and on weekends as suitable, followed by weekday afternoons (27.5%) and weekday mornings (24.2%).

**Discussion**

This small study sought to obtain information to assist the QUT Careers and Employment service to understand what career development learning may be beneficial to current master’s degree by coursework students. Although the sample in this study was a relatively small population of the coursework masters students at QUT, the information gained provides a foundation for planning future activities and gives an indication of the career development learning needs of this particular cohort.

There were a number of results that indicate that master’s degree students may have differing career development learning needs from undergraduates. For instance, results indicated that the majority of master’s degree students were already employed with a reasonable proportion working more than 40 hours a week and many already working in their chosen career. These findings may reflect why the most commonly reported reason for participants undertaking their master’s degree was to upgrade workplace skills. One implication of these results may be that these students believe they do not require career development learning as they have already gone through this process. In contrast, other students reported completing a master’s degree in order to change career and to improve their career outcomes. These results suggest that many of the students in this cohort already possess some level of workplace skills and, thus, may require different career development learning from undergraduate students who have not been employed previously or who have limited professional employment (Higher Education Careers Services Unit, 2004).

Overall, there was a good level of interest among the master’s degree student cohort in attending career development activities. The most frequently nominated career development learning required was skills in how to effectively market themselves to employers, suggesting that students are unsure how to translate their university learning into employment capabilities. Thus, helping masters students to consider what they are learning over and above an undergraduate degree (for example, a higher level of knowledge) and personal qualities demonstrated by completing postgraduate study (for example, commitment, time management) may be beneficial. Within the open-ended responses, networking skills and networking events were nominated as desired career development learning.

Résumé writing was the least popular of suggested career development learning activities, though still

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Participants’ Preferred Career Development Workshop Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills on how to effectively market yourself to employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to communicate effectively in the workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job application skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résumé writing skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: participants were able to nominate multiple categories
frequently chosen (45.6). Interestingly, other aspects of the job search process—for example, interview skills—were more frequently nominated. It may be that helping students to articulate their skills and to market their master’s degrees are more desirable than generic résumé-writing information. Additionally, helping master’s degree students to confidently discuss the benefits of their higher degree at interview appears warranted.

Finally, the majority of students requested that career development learning be held in the evenings or on weekends, times that are outside the usual hours for QUT Careers and Employment. This finding highlights the need for careers services to be flexible in the provision of career development learning and other activities to maximise students’ access and benefits. The implications of this finding may be that staff may have to routinely work outside usual office hours and that flexible working arrangements may need to be actively promoted. Although the service had already commenced scheduling evening workshops before the conduct of this survey, these workshops were generally seen as an ‘added extra’ and were poorly attended by undergraduate students, although this may be due to lack of awareness among the student body. Results of this survey suggest that evening and weekend activities may need to become part of usual practice particularly for the master’s degree student cohort.

In response to the results of this survey, the QUT postgraduate careers service designed and facilitated a specific workshop for master’s degree by coursework students entitled ‘Marketing your masters’. This interactive workshop covered 10 marketing principles that students could apply to their degrees. Participants worked in groups and independently to discover their particular skills and how to apply marketing principles to their job search and applications. Feedback from participants was very positive as the workshop focused on what makes master’s degree graduates different from undergraduates and how to identify and to explain these differences to employers. Other workshops specifically targeting master’s degree students are also being designed. These workshops will be most likely held in the evenings as per respondents’ suggestions. There has also been interest from various faculties regarding workshops specifically for their master’s degree students.

This survey was conducted to enable the QUT Careers and Employment service to better design career development learning for master’s degree by coursework students. As these students appear to be an overlooked group (Higher Education Careers Services Unit, 2004), a strength of the survey is that it sought to identify those activities that master’s degree students believe would be beneficial to them.

There were a number of limitations to the survey that should be noted. Data was of a categorical nature, providing descriptive information. While this information was considered sufficient to meet the purposes of the survey, it did not allow statistical analyses, such as correlations, to identify if certain cohorts of master’s degree students view particular types of career development learning as more useful than others. For instance, it may be that students undertaking a master’s degree to change careers may prefer networking events. Further research using scaled items may provide useful information that would allow a better understanding of the needs of this cohort. Additionally, asking past master’s degree graduates about their views on what career development learning would have been beneficial to them during their degree may be warranted, as current students may not be aware of what career development learning they may need.

In conclusion, this initial investigation of career development learning for master’s degree students has provided the QUT Careers and Employment service with a foundation to prepare specific career development learning for these students. Additionally, the survey has opened discussion within the service and university sectors about how to best provide ongoing service for this group. Continued monitoring of the success of new initiatives, the efficacy of workshops and trialling a variety of timeslots for activities will enable better practice to be developed.

REFERENCES


**AUTHORS**

Dr Shari Walsh has been employed as the postgraduate career counsellor with QUT Careers and Employment service since February 2008. She is a registered psychologist and completed her PhD in the School of Psychology and Counselling at QUT in 2009. Shari is passionate about assisting postgraduate students to understand their potential and to actively develop their careers. Shari’s research interests include self and identity, the efficacy of career development activities, and employment outcomes and trajectories of postgraduate students.

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Kelly Tucker is currently in the process of completing her master’s degree in organisational psychology after completing both a postgraduate diploma of psychology at Bond University and a bachelor’s degree in applied psychology at QUT. She is a provisionally registered psychologist who currently works at both Griffith University and QUT as a tutor. She has previously worked in drug and alcohol rehabilitation, international student welfare and career counsellor roles. Kelly is most passionate about organisational psychology, specifically the impact of personality in the workforce, but she also has a keen interest in providing support and guidance to students in order to facilitate career development and life satisfaction.
PRACTICE APPLICATION BRIEF

SIMULATING BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS USING SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION SOFTWARE: ELLUMINATE LIVE

MARIA SPONZA
Deakin University

This practice application brief reviews the preparation, implementation and evaluation of running behavioural interviews online. In a collaborative program between the School of Information Technology and the Careers and Employment service at Deakin University in Australia, students demonstrated their ability to articulate their generic employability skills within a simulated interview environment using Elluminate Live® (www.elluminate.com) (or eLive at Deakin University), a ‘real-time’ communication application. This program was piloted with final-year undergraduate information technology students who were completing a professional practice unit that is delivered wholly online. Computing students experience difficulty in articulating their skills (Coldwell, Craig, Goold & Sponza, 2011), something that is vital in the interview process when providing responses to employers’ selection criteria. This brief details the application of eLive as an authentic learning opportunity given to information technology students to prepare them for employment within their industry. The online format provides an opportunity for students to become familiar with employer recruitment practices, including telephone screening or call-conferencing when applying for local or international job vacancies.

THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

There is evidence that career development learning and employability are enhanced through participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities (Yorke & Knight, 2006). The contextualisation of behavioural interview skills within the framework of a final-year professional practice unit provides just-in-time information to students when they are most receptive to benefit from it.

IT Practice is offered as a compulsory final-year unit within the Bachelor of Information Technology at Deakin University. It is offered wholly online with no face-to-face contact between teaching staff and students. The aim of the unit is to prepare students for work as IT professionals using the umbrella of a fictitious virtual company. There are four modules in the unit: Employment; Teams; Projects; and Ethics for IT Professionals. Each module has equal weight for assessment purposes. Within the IT Employment module, students apply for a graduate position with the fictitious virtual company and prepare a cover letter and résumé. Careers and Employment service staff collaborated with the School of Information Technology for the interview activity within the Employment module of the unit. The interview activity was piloted in the second trimester of the university’s teaching calendar with a small group of 75 students.

Using eLive

ELive is a synchronous communication and collaboration tool that is used at Deakin University to support teaching and learning in various forms, including ‘drop-in’ sessions, tutorials, live or pre-recorded lectures.

ELive software allows users to talk online in real time with or without video; chat using online text without interrupting the flow of conversation; use survey or polling as checks for understanding of content; use emoticons to register feelings; to set up
break-out rooms for smaller group work and to share presentations, applications or documents during the tutorial or lecture.

Implementation
A position description was made available to students via Deakin Studies Online (DSO) with selection criteria heavily weighted towards the generic employability skills such as teamwork and communication (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002). It was decided that careers service staff would be supported during the eLive sessions by either the Unit Chair or faculty tutors who dealt with any technical issues. Behavioural interview resources were supplied by careers staff; interview videos were also available for access as preparatory work on Deakin Studies Online. Students were instructed that the STAR (situation, task, action and result) technique for answering behavioural questions was required. A list of behavioural questions categorised under key skill headings was given to students as careers service staff wished to focus on assisting students with applying the technique to their examples.

A minimal number of marks (5% of total unit) were allocated for assessment of the interview and a marking template was developed by the Unit Chair. Staff and students self-selected a session time and date. This information was made available to careers staff as a spreadsheet to allow them to pre-allocate questions and later submit marks. Nine sessions, each of one hour’s duration, were spread over three days and offered in early morning, day or evening. The group size was limited to a maximum of nine students to allow time for a practice question and an assessed question, and for feedback to be given to each student. It was decided not to include video options on this occasion due to students’ varying internet connections. Although eLive allows up to six simultaneous speakers, it was decided that, due to audio distortion and speaker overlap, the single-speaker option would be selected.

To resolve any technical issues, students were instructed to access the eLive set-up site provided by the university before attending their interview session. This site provided guidelines on setting up and testing their computer, microphone and speakers or headset.

Challenges
Careers service staff found that, in some sessions, nearly 40% of students had not read or reviewed the preparatory material (as revealed by using the polling option in eLive). In some sessions it was also obvious which students had not completed the preliminary audio and microphone checks before beginning the eLive session, thus delaying the interview session. In those rare instances where audio issues could not be resolved, the chat window was used for students to text responses. It takes some time to become familiar with the eLive environment, especially when using the single-speaker option where the microphone icon must be activated to speak and deactivated on completion of one’s turn. Students at the start of the session would forget to turn the microphone off, leading to distortion issues when another speaker’s turn arose. Moderators have the ability to control participant access or removal of functionality privileges in eLive, and can deactivate the microphone for a participant if necessary.

The STAR technique for answering behavioural interviews was not always used during the practice question as a consequence of students not having read the preparatory material. There was a noticeable improvement in the quality and content of answers when the second, assessed, question was asked, as students had an opportunity to listen to their own and others’ feedback supplied by the careers service staff member. Students experienced difficulty in selecting appropriate examples to use during their responses but careers staff find this evident in the face-to-face environment and it was not considered to be a consequence of the online format. Some careers service staff commented that it was difficult to listen to answers and to assess responses according to the marking criteria. It is suggested that streamlining the marking template from five criteria to three would assist careers service staff in the multi-tasking process of both listening to the student’s response and assessing their answer.

Behavioural interviews rely on not just the content of answers but also personal presentation and a confident attitude that cannot be captured in the online environment. These aspects could perhaps be aided by using the video option in eLive, but would be dependent on the technical infrastructure students have available.

‘Careers service staff found that, in some sessions, nearly 40% of students had not read or reviewed the preparatory material.’
OUTCOMES
The attendance rate of the students was high (over 80%). Given that there are often competing demands on a student’s time and the activity was worth just a few marks (5% of the total assessment for the unit), this was unexpected. Students found offering an interview session using eLive ‘something different’ and certainly faculty and careers service staff were accommodating of students, providing a wide range of day and time options to maximise attendance. It was particularly encouraging to hear the improvement in student responses in the short time available due to prompt feedback and the students’ active engagement in the activity. For some students, the higher expectations and more professional approach required to adequately answer behavioural-type interview questions for transition into the workplace was quite revealing. These interview sessions were also followed up with an assessment task for the IT Employment module where a ‘Personal Reflection and Action Plan’, focusing on skill deficits and actions to resolve them, was completed.

Although students reported feeling ‘nervous’ about the interview process they also provided the following feedback: ‘great practice tool’; ‘I don’t work much so every experience I get helps me . . .’; ‘good practice but face to face interviews more relaxing’. Careers service staff were also able to promote their services and other career development workshops run on campuses to those students requiring or seeking extra assistance.

DISCUSSION
The prerequisite reading material for behavioural interviews has already been reviewed to include activities where students can apply their learning to their personal circumstances rather than just reading the information provided. It is further envisaged that running some optional eLive sessions before the interview workshops could serve the dual purposes of both being a trial run for resolving any technical issues with the software as well as allowing students to practise sourcing and articulating their answers using the STAR technique. It may well be that careers service staff will need assistance with the online pedagogy and instructional design of resources for this environment. Other possibilities include recording eLive sessions as resource material to provide an exemplar of how the session is run and the standard of response required. The feasibility of this will need to be investigated as eLive sessions are not able to be edited. One possibility is to record scripted interviews and provide these to students as best practice exemplars.

It could be argued that online interviews without the use of video provide an incomplete picture of the candidate as the use of body language and personal presentation is not evaluated. Online interviews allow the interviewer to concentrate on the content of answers together with intonations of voice as cues for other personal attributes such as enthusiasm and confidence. But, in reality, phone interviews are not uncommon, so not having an image of the candidate is not an abnormal situation. A formal evaluation process will be devised for future offerings of these online interviews to measure how useful the eLive sessions were for students rather than relying on anecdotal evidence.

It is hoped that the range of times (early morning, day and evening) and days presented to students provided them with a high degree of flexibility and was, in part at least, responsible for the high attendance rate. This hypothesis will be evaluated in the future, when IT Practice is next offered. In the first trimester in 2011 it is envisaged that there will be at least twice the number of students enrolled (approximately 170) in this unit. At the moment online interviews is an initiative with one school of a faculty but, should the service prove popular, serious consideration will need to be given to adequate staffing or to training a bank of careers service staff in eLive.

CONCLUSION
The full functionality of eLive was not used in the behavioural interview sessions. Careers service staff can see much scope for facilitating career development learning by using application sharing and PowerPoint presentations in an interactive environment with students: for instance, when writing résumés and cover letters. The eLive software provides a flexible teaching environment, as staff are able to access
and facilitate sessions out of normal business hours. Deakin has a large number of off-campus students, so eLive sessions have the capacity to not only be an outreach tool but also one where both off-campus and on-campus students can engage with each other. The eLive sessions allowed careers staff to extend their services to students, to provide students with practice in answering behavioural interview questions and to provide students with feedback, just as in a face-to-face environment, but in the context of an assessed component of the curriculum within a core unit of their degree.

**REFERENCES**


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Maria Sponza is Careers Educator at Deakin University, Melbourne, Burwood campus. Maria has a background in career counselling and career education in higher education, and previously worked in the training sector. She is advancing technology-enhanced career education in the curriculum.

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At the recent launch of National Career Development Week, at the North Melbourne Institute of TAFE, Eddie McGuire spoke to several hundred young people about taking control of their future. Growing up in the working class suburb of Broadmeadows, he encouraged hard work but said ‘don’t let the critics stop you from realising your dreams and fulfilling your passion in work’. He followed on with great advice from United States President, Theodore Roosevelt, to explain what it means to have a go:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Roosevelt said this a little over 100 years ago and it is just as relevant today. At the event, we conducted a brief survey of the participants and students were asked the question ‘what do you consider is the greatest challenge for people in your community to get the life they love?’ An astounding 55% said motivation. The next most popular response (16%) indicated opportunities.

No wonder access to high quality career development practitioners is important.

Positive Signs of Commitment: Professional Standards Across States and Territories

The reality in Australia today is that where a young person lives and the school they attend impacts on whether they get support from a qualified professional career development practitioner or an untrained person. Their chances for receiving higher quality careers advice improves if the careers adviser is also a member of a Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) member association.

There is however evidence, albeit mixed, that states and territories are acting to move towards greater commitment to ensuring that more young people have access to career services delivered by qualified career practitioners. In New South Wales if a person appointed to the role of careers adviser is unqualified, then as part of their contract of agreement they are provided with funding to undertake a Graduate Certificate in Careers Education. In effect New South Wales has mandated a minimum level of qualifications that are consistent and aligned with the CICA Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners.

In Western Australia the Department of Training and Workforce Development have advised that the minimum level of qualification for staff delivering career services is the Certificate IV in Career Development, which is at the associate level and below the requirements for a professional career development practitioner. However, as they note, in reality most of the practitioners employed have post-graduate career...
At My Desk

qualifications (post-graduate certificate, diploma or masters) or are working towards finishing them. A Certificate IV is the mandated minimum qualification for career practitioners. In Tasmania there is no requirement for pathway planners or career advisers in college or polytechnics to have a career development qualification, although some do.

In South Australia it is noted that Career Development Services, provided through South Australia Works, is not restricted to young people and is predominantly available for those who are unemployed. The TAFE staff who act as a first point of contact will be required to have a minimum Certificate IV in Career Development. Most have already completed this qualification. In the Northern Territory there is no minimum career development qualification mandated for career practitioners in schools or staff teaching career development subjects such as the Personal Learning Plan. Most teaching staff delivering this program don’t have any career development qualifications but there is an indication that a range of professional development is available.

The Victorian Government has not mandated minimum qualifications for career development work but many practitioners meet the standards. The Government has also introduced four improved career development services including a careers curriculum. In addition, the Victorian Government is investing in improving the number of careers practitioners who have specialised qualifications with 96 grants being made per year over 4 years. This is a significant upskilling program.

CICA Member Associations are a Key Driver in Delivering Quality Improvement in Career Development to the Nation

CICA member associations and organisations include:

- National Organisations
  - Career Development Association of Australia Inc. (CDAA) represents private practitioners working in private practice as well as in education, employment services, human resources, rehabilitation, government and community organisations and a range of other members (many CDAA members also hold membership in other CICA Member Associations)
  - National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services (Aust) Inc. (NAGCAS) represents career practitioners in higher education

- National Athlete Career and Education Program (NACE) represents career practitioners working with elite athletes and their coaches
- Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia Inc. (RCAA) represents career practitioners specialising in rehabilitation counselling
- Graduate Careers Australia Ltd (GCA) provides career information services to university career services.

- State and Territory Organisations
  These organisations represent school careers advisors in government and non-government schools and, in some cases, other career practitioners or guidance officers working in related or other fields.
  - Australian Capital Territory Career Education Association Inc. (ACTCEA)
  - Careers Advisers Association of New South Wales Inc. (CAANSW)
  - Career Education Association of Victoria Inc. (CEAV)
  - Career Education Association of Western Australia Inc. (CEAWA)
  - Career Educators Association of Northern Territory Inc. (CEANT)
  - Queensland Association of Student Advisers Inc. (QASA)
  - Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association Inc. (QGCA).

Over the next few months these associations will provide:

- An update on implementation of Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners, including evidence that auditing and recording is in place for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Evidence of individual compliance including advice that members need to achieve minimum levels of CPD in 2011
- Advice on the associations’ strategy for auditing of membership in 2012 (e.g. 5% of members to be audited in 2012)
- Input into a review of Professional Standards in early 2012.

Course Endorsement

CICA is endorsing (and continuing to endorse) career development courses at higher education institutions against the Professional Standards. To date the
University of Southern Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Edith Cowan University, Auckland University of Technology, James Cook University and the Australian Catholic University have committed to work with CICA to improve standards. This represents over two-thirds of Australian career development courses.

Future Sustainability of CICA
The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is the national peak body representing the broad range of organisations and associations involved in providing career development services and programs throughout Australia.

The formation of CICA in 2000 came about as a response to a need for national leadership in the career development field in Australia. This leadership could not be any one organisation because of the variety of constituents each body represents.

As a peak body, CICA provides a single voice on all career development issues on behalf of the careers industry, and is the only industry body concerned specifically with work and learning transitions. Broadly, CICA focuses on quality assurance and contributes to systemic improvements in the quality of, and access to, career services for the benefit of all Australians across the lifespan and to the achievement of national policy priority outcomes.

For almost a decade the Commonwealth Government has partnered with CICA to develop and improve career development practice, services and information to the benefit of all Australians.

This partnership has enabled CICA to progress the professionalisation of career development practice in Australia and to develop, on behalf of the Commonwealth, a quality assurance model for the career industry. Over the past three years CICA has gained commitment from over 4000 career practitioners to adhere to an ethical code of practice, to undertake continuing professional development and to agree to a minimum qualification standard.

CICA’s quality assurance model is recognised internationally as best practice for the career industry. As CICA reduces its reliance on government funding its sustainability will focus on quality improvement across the careers industry. In the near future CICA will be trialling a range of services to support this agenda and partner with governments, non-government organisations and the private sector on projects that deliver quality improvement in the careers sector.

CONTACT Peter Tatham with news entries for this section by 18 July for the spring issue at <peter@tatham.com.au>. Entries should be no longer than 100 words, and may be edited for space issues.
BOOK REVIEW

DEVELOPING SELF IN WORK AND CAREER: CONCEPTS, CASES, AND CONTEXTS

ISBN 978-1-433808-61-6

The notion of self has a well-established place within the conceptual and empirical literature of the career development field. The edited work by Hartung and Subich (2011) is a comprehensive statement on self as it pertains to the field of career development. In addition to the contribution of the editors Hartung and Subich, the book comprises chapters by leading and emerging scholars in the field: Savickas; Rottinghaus and Van Esbroeck; Vondracek and Porfeli; Lent and Fouad; Collin and Guichard; Zytkowski and D’Archiardi-Ressler; Sullivan; Borgen and Betz; Phillips; Heppner and Fu; Leong, Hardin and Gupta; Blustein, Coutinho, Murphy, Backus and Catraio.

This book is organised into three sections, extending from foundation frameworks (that is, constructivist person–environment fit, developmental, social cognitive and social constructionist) through to conceptually associated methods of practice. The section devoted to methods of practice is entirely accessible and chapters should be informative to practitioners. An important feature of this book is that self is not treated as a purely psychological construct. Instead, in the final section of this book self is situated in context of gender, culture and social class.

Although the breadth and quality of the material presented is superbly informative, some chapters include material that is already well rehearsed in the career development literature—so much so that the informed reader will easily recognise the concepts as nothing new. In such cases, it might have been appropriate to articulate recent conceptual and empirical advances rather than rehearse what is already well articulated elsewhere. Furthermore, the section devoted to methods of practice should have included an example of the social constructivist approach to interventions, although, the chapter by Collin and Guichard, given in the ‘Foundation’ section, does present a useful model for intervention in the conceptual vein of social constructionism. Nonetheless, for a reader who is new to the field, the chapters present clear and succinct statements of the essentials in terms of broad themes and specific issues as they relate to the notion of self.

As one would expect with such an outstanding array of authors, the chapters are carefully crafted, clearly written, relatively short and neatly organised. A useful index effectively guides the reader to segments of interest. Indeed, for the busy reader, this book is a welcome relief from the heavy reading of other works in the field.

On the whole, this is an outstanding book for scholars and practitioners of career development. It is an ideal reference text and a supplementary text for postgraduate studies. Its accessibility also means that it may serve scholars and practitioners in other fields in which self forms an important dimension of enquiry and practice. To conclude, Hartung and Subich deserve praise and thanks for bringing this book to fruition. The field is richer and more informed as a result.

Dr Peter McIlveen
Editor
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Australian Council for Educational Research
The Australian Journal of Career Development is a refereed, professional journal focusing on current theory, practice and policy relating to the career development and work education field. The journal provides a national forum for sharing, disseminating and debating current careers research, practice and policy.

The audience for the journal includes professionals in educational and academic settings, community and government agencies, business and industrial settings. Therefore, topics should be presented with implications for practice. Authors of research reports and theoretical discussions should relate their conclusions to the realm of practical applications.

General Principles
Material will be considered for submission if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

• it expands the body of knowledge of the discipline of career development
• it informs in a manner that will develop a reader’s professional understanding or help in their understanding of career development
• it provides guidance in professional practice
• it raises philosophical questions related to the field of career development
• it opens a new frontier of knowledge and ideas related to professional practice.

Peer-Reviewed Submissions to the Journal

1 Case Studies
Case studies concerning innovative programs and individual work may be submitted. They should be both descriptive and analytical, providing the merits and shortcomings of the situation. Concise presentations are preferred.

2 Articles
Research articles are invited dealing with career development, planning, guidance and education, labour market and training issues, vocational education and training, occupational information, career management policy, practice and programs. Normally they should be a maximum of 4500 words.

3 Research Reports
Recently completed research relevant to careers practitioners is invited. This provides scope for shorter research reports and dissemination of findings and outcomes.

Authors of case studies, articles or research reports must also submit a short Theory and Practice section following the conclusion section of their manuscript. This will contain around 3-5 questions and answers from the paper for practitioners and will highlight the professional practice implications of the paper.

Non-Reviewed Submissions to the Journal

1 Practice Application Brief
This section comprises a review and summary of practical applications and techniques in the area of career development, guidance, placement or counselling services. It offers a concise, coherent and easy-to-read summary of a relevant topic for practitioners.

2 Reviews
Books, reports, packages, computer programs or any other material relevant to career practitioners are reviewed in this section.

3 Careers Forum
This is the place in the Journal for news, trends and comments on relevant issues to stimulate discussion and debate. Comments may relate to material in earlier editions of the Journal or to issues you are facing in your day-to-day work. Brief reports of relevant conferences, seminars and events may also be included.

Manuscript Standards
All submissions are required in MS Word format (.doc or .docx). Copy should be typed double-spaced. Submission as an email attachment is preferred and will expedite the review process.

Case Study, Article and Research Report submissions should be preceded by an abstract of 100-150 words. Tables should be typed on separate pages with approximate location indicated in the text.

References are given at the end of the text and only references cited in the text should appear in the reference list. Spelling should conform to the Macquarie Dictionary and language should be gender inclusive. Authors should keep a copy, as manuscripts will not be returned. More detailed information on style can be found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). If you have any queries, contact the Editor.

Biographical Information
Upon advice of acceptance for publication, each final manuscript should be accompanied by: (a) a brief biographical note about the author(s) and a black-white high-resolution passport-sized photograph as a .jpg file.

Effect Size, Confidence Intervals
The Australian Journal of Career Development has adopted editorial policies requiring effect size and confidence interval reporting for statistical analyses (see the American Psychological Association’s Publication Manual, 6th ed.).

Peer-Review of Case Studies, Articles and Research Reports
Manuscripts are evaluated by a blind reviewing system in which the author’s identity is anonymous to the referees and vice versa. Therefore, there should be a separate cover page showing the title of the manuscript, author/s names, their academic position or employment title, the address of institution/s and the date the manuscript is submitted. The first page of the manuscript should be anonymous, including the title of the manuscript but omitting the authors’ names and affiliations.

Artwork
Materials need to be of high quality with good resolution to allow for reproduction in printing: .jpg file format is preferred.

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Manuscripts may be submitted as an e-mail attachment to the Editor:

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Col. McCowan OAM and Malcolm McKenzie

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PRACTICE APPLICATION BRIEF
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Maria Sponza