
A snapshot of a selection of items added to VOCEDplus

APRIL 2018

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Demand is increasing for higher skilled workers as routine work declines

Developing the workforce for a digital future in Australia

Developing the workforce for a digital future: addressing critical issues and planning for action / Australian Industry Group.

Sydney, New South Wales: Australian Industry Group, 2018. 42 pages.

This report looks at what businesses need to do to prepare for the challenges of digital transformation. It includes advice for businesses planning for the future such as regular upskilling of their workforce to adapt to requirements of the digital economy and investment in research and development. The report argues that Australia's education and training system will need to build its capacity to meet the challenge of digital change. Recommendations made for education and training institutions include: (1) the vocational education and training (VET) sector needs to focus on higher level skills for enterprise systems and analytics, security and digital innovation; (2) education and training systems need to improve basic and advanced skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and with a new emphasis on the enterprise skills of creativity, complex problem solving and critical thinking; and (3) companies and workers need to be provided with greater opportunities for new skilling whenever required as a result of constant new technologies and change.

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The most urgent priority is to address declining levels of public investment in vocational education and training and associated cost shifting to students

Participation in tertiary education in Australia

Participation in tertiary education in Australia: modelling and scenario analysis / Peter Noonan and Sarah Pilcher.

Melbourne, Victoria: Mitchell Institute, Victoria University, 2018. 16 pages.

This paper shows projections of publicly-funded enrolments and participation rates of VET and higher education students using population estimates for previous years and projections up to 2031. It finds the VET sector is most at risk, with all scenarios presented in the paper showing lower participation rates in the future. The analysis outlined in this paper supports the case for a comprehensive, sustainable and long-term funding framework for VET and higher education in Australia - to meet the needs of the growing population and to support increased participation in its workforce. It is argued that a primary objective of that framework must be to ensure that participation in tertiary education in Australia grows rather than declines, and with better balance in participation between the higher education and VET sectors.

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One area which can hinder progression from vocational qualifications to higher education is a lack of clear progression routes for some degree programmes

Vocational routes into higher education in the UK

Vocation, vocation, vocation: the role of vocational routes into higher education / Nicole Gicheva and Kathryn Petrie.

London, England: Social Market Foundation, 2018. 37 pages.

This report examines the current role vocational education plays in preparing young people for higher education, and how students can be helped to pursue the most appropriate learning and career path. The authors' analysis reveals that vocational qualifications are particularly important among students with demographic characteristics often associated with greater disadvantage. This research identifies some of the existing challenges associated with the vocational route into higher education including qualification design, prior attainment and current progression routes. The report draws on insights from universities to assess how the vocational route is currently working and looks to identify what more can be done to make sure students succeed in their studies. The authors look towards the future to understand the risks and opportunities associated with the forthcoming changes to post-16 skills policy in the UK. Splitting the education system at Level 3 into an academic and a technical pathway may result in additional challenges for students wishing to enrol to a higher education course after studying a vocational qualification. At present, it is unclear how the new technical qualifications (T levels) will compete with their counterparts within the academic pathway (A levels and Applied Generals), and how universities will incorporate technical qualifications into their admission processes in the future.

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Production of high-quality transferable skills depends both on the appropriate architecture of the training system and training delivery

Developing skills transferability in Australia

Designing and delivering skills transferability and employment mobility: the challenges of a market-driven vocational education and training system / Victor Gekara and Darryn Snell.

Journal of vocational education and training, volume 70, number 1, March 2018, pages 107-129.

As job security declines and precarious employment arrangements become more prevalent, transferable skills have become vital for job seeking success. In recognition of this issue, many governments are seeking to redesign their training systems in ways that transferable skills become better emphasised. This paper examines the challenges of developing transferable skills among a nation's workforce and the tensions that can emerge between training design intentions and training delivery outcomes when training delivery is marketised. Australia, where incremental training sector reforms have occurred since the late 1980s, serves as the context for this study. While training design occurs through a tripartite process involving employer, government and union representatives, training delivery is now determined in an open, deregulated market environment. The authors' analysis reveals a complex underlying design with an in-built intention of developing widely transferable skills, yet there exists significant concern about the actual training outcomes. The authors conclude that in an environment where VET delivery is user-choice driven, with the aim of fulfilling specific employer skills needs, the quality, depth and breadth of transferable skills are compromised.

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It is recommended that the requirement for 10 per cent employer co-investment towards the cost of training apprentices should be removed with immediate effect to avoid employers disengaging from apprenticeships

The current design of US student loans creates significant problems, notably the difficulties many students face in repaying

Assessing the first year of the UK's apprenticeship levy

The great training robbery: assessing the first year of the apprenticeship levy / Tom Richmond.

London, England: Reform, 2018. 45 pages.

Now that the apprenticeship levy has completed its first full year of operation, this report reviews the available evidence to determine whether the levy will, as the UK government hopes, 'incentivise more employers to provide quality apprenticeships' and 'transform the lives of young people who secure them'. The report addresses the impact of the levy on the quantity and quality of apprenticeships, on employers and on apprenticeship training providers. The opening page of the government-sponsored Richard Review, published in 2012, observed that the growth in apprenticeship numbers in the preceding years had 'led us to stretch the definition of what an apprenticeship is too far and, as a consequence, we risk losing sight of the core features of what makes apprenticeships work, what makes them unique'. The report argues that, six years on, there is a real danger that the same mistakes could be made all over again. The evidence from the first year of the apprenticeship levy suggests that significant reforms are needed if the government is to deliver its aim of high-quality apprenticeships for young people at greater volume. At present, the levy is too complicated for employers, focused on too many inappropriate forms of training and as a result is unlikely to deliver value-for-money. A number of recommended changes are described in this report with the aim of benefitting apprentices, taxpayers and employers for many years to come.

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College loan systems in the US, Australia and England

Reflections on the US college loans system: lessons from Australia and England / Nicholas Barr, Bruce Chapman, Lorraine Dearden and Susan Dynarski.

Bonn, Germany: IZA, 2018. 36 pages.

There is wide agreement the US student loan system faces significant problems. Seven million borrowers are in default and many more experience non-repayment. The stress of repayments faced by many students results at least in part from the design of US student loans. Specifically, loans are organised like a mortgage, with fixed monthly repayments over a fixed period of time, creating a high repayment burden on borrowers with low income. This paper draws on the experience of the income-contingent loan (ICL) systems operating in England and Australia, in which monthly repayments are related to the borrower's monthly income. By design, those systems explicitly include insurance against problems of repayment during periods of low income. The authors discuss the design of this type of loan in detail.

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