

Career education:

Why are strong partnerships between schools and employers important?

The traditional concept of 'career' was progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organisation or profession. The notion was that students 'chose' a career which then unfolded in an orderly way.

For some time now, this traditional concept has been fragmenting. The pace of change, driven by technology and globalisation, means that organisations are constantly exposed to change and employers are therefore less willing to make long-term commitments to individuals. Where they do, it is in exchange for flexibility about the roles and tasks the individuals will perform.

Increasingly, security lies not in employment but in employability. Individuals who want to maintain their employability have to be willing to regularly learn new skills.

Employers are in a unique position to provide young people with the inspiration, knowledge, skills and motivation they need to transition successfully from education to employment. They also provide an authentic picture of work that schools can sometimes be challenged in conveying.

In fostering a positive working relationship, schools and employers need to identify what each other requires from the engagement.

Employers want a well-educated and employable workforce and schools want the aspiration, knowledge and 'reality checks' for students that employers provide. It can be a positive and mutually beneficial relationship if done well.

The Basics

- What are the objectives and outcomes from the engagement both parties are wanting?
- What is the format of the engagement – classroom visit, career expo, site visit, work placement etc?
- Employers are not teachers and should not be expected to be. How do you support effective delivery without overburdening the employer?
- Is everyone aware of the arrangements - When, where, how long, how many students, information technology and audio visual requirements?
- What evaluation and feedback methods have been put in place for both parties to determine if the agreed objectives and outcomes of the engagement have/or are being met?

Where to start

- In building relationships with employers, start with your own school community.
- School Board members and parents can also be employers or work in an organisation willing to engage with schools.
- Connect with industries that actively run programs for schools. Examples include TradeUP, Just Start IT, DataCom.
- Speak with your local Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It is imperative that schools build and nurture relationships with their local employers and that employers are willing to devote their time, knowledge and expertise in assisting young people develop their career management competencies which in turn leads to successful transitions.

