

**Preparing young people for  
transitions to work:  
*What local employers are looking for***

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## Introduction

The Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network (OELLEN) is one of 31 Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) across Victoria whose mission it is to help improve education and employment outcomes for young people by brokering partnerships between schools, industry, private providers and community in order to build their capacity and raise aspirations across the region. OELLEN works with 200 employers, 45 secondary schools, TAFES, councils and local government in Melbourne's outer east. The OELLEN region is made up of three local government areas (LGA's): Maroondah City, Knox City and Yarra Ranges Shire. Through the Structured Work Place Learning (SWL) program and its partnership brokering work OELLEN has established strong connections with many employers in a variety of industries across the outer eastern region. The focus of this research was to draw on the insights these employers could provide on the skills, experiences they are looking for in young recruits and what matters to them in the recruitment process.

## Research aims and significance

The aim of this study was to gain a greater understanding of what local employers are looking for in recent school leavers when making hiring decisions. Career education is delivered in some form in all schools within the OELLEN catchment area and it was hoped that by understanding what employers are looking for the Outer Eastern LLEN would be even more able to support schools in tailoring the materials they deliver to students about life after school.

## Literature Review

### Career education best practices

The effectiveness of career education needs to be viewed within the context of a given school, considering such factors as ethnic makeup of the school and surrounds, location of the school, local resources and local, national and state economics at any given time (Ali, Yang, Button & McCoy, 2012). The more remote a school is, the greater the need for the school to assist students in overcoming the barriers of geographic isolation and limited occupational role models. Practical issues such as individual student needs and time constraints within the school also need to be considered when evaluating a career education program and the effectiveness of the associated initiatives (Ali, Yang, Button & McCoy, 2012).

According to the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) 2014 benchmarking resource, career education should now arm students with career management skills that will enable them to drive their own careers across their lifetime, not just guidance on how to make that first career decision. CICA also highlight the increasing need for students to develop general employability skills and the ability to adapt to changing workplaces. They consider these skills to be as, if not more, important to our future workforce than professional and technical skills.

The Victorian government has placed an increasing focus on career education through its recent paper “Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools: Connecting today’s learning with tomorrow’s jobs” (Department of Education and Training, 2019). In this paper they argue that quality career education increases student motivation and willingness to learn. As a result of this increased motivation students engage more proactively in their education and have higher rates of school completion (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

The Foundation for Young Australian’s (FYA) released research findings that depict seven job clusters that are prevalent within Australia: The Generators, The Artisans, The Carers, The Informers, The Coordinators, The Designers, The Technologists (2018). Within each cluster there are 10- 140 occupations that are linked by an overlap in the required skills in their job adverts. By focusing on the skills common to a job cluster it is argued that young people would place themselves in a good position to move into and across a variety of jobs within their area of interest. The FYA argue that career advisers could use this cluster model to articulate possible cluster based career progressions

to students. For example, a student interested in a career in the Artisans cluster could be encouraged to commence their career by building skills required by many artisan cluster jobs and then to consider the one or two additional skills they need to build to move up to other Artisan cluster occupations. Based on this model it is also suggested that students be encouraged to take part-time work while studying in entry level jobs aligned to the cluster they are interested in.

## The future - career education and post school transitions

Career educators will be increasingly called upon to build knowledge in diverse employment trends and career pathways (CICA, 2014). The need for more intensive counselling for students with special needs and collaboration with teaching staff to promote career pathways have also been identified as increasing expectations of career educators. Keeping the information imparted to students relevant to the changing work landscape and the student's local context will require career educators to collaborate with employers, industry, vocational training facilities, universities, parents and local community (CICA, 2014).

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council released to the media in August 2019 that they have commissioned a review of secondary schools pathways with the goal of understanding how students can be “supported to choose the best pathway into work, further education or training” (Education Council, 2019). One purpose of this review is to identify the skills and knowledge students need to make successful post school transitions. The perceptions of students, employers, vocational education providers and higher education providers will be captured in answering this question. The current OELLEN research provides some insight into employer expectations within the OELLEN region.

Recommendation 8 of the “Through Growth to Achievement- Report” of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools (Gonski, et al., 2018) is to strengthen school partnerships with industry and community as a means to enriching student learning. The report's findings support the idea that school and industry collaborations are an effective way to increase the relevance of learning. School-industry partnership brokers, such as the LLEN network, were highlighted in the “Through growth to achievement” report as being useful organisations to help build long lasting school and industry partnerships.

Australian students today are completing a senior secondary certificate and going on to further study in higher numbers than their counterparts at any other point in time over the last three decades. In 2017, 85% of students enrolled in a senior secondary certificate completed their course compared to 18% in 1988. The 2009 increase in the minimum school leaving age to 17 is partially responsible for this increase as are changing societal expectations and workforce requirements (Gonski et al. (2018). Across the country 44% of those who complete year 12 go on to university and

a further 15% enrol in some other form of training. Around one third of year 12 completers do not go on to any further formal education (Gonski, 2018).

### Industry review

Several studies have already begun to explore the current expectations held by employers of new candidates and recruits. One question canvassed is how important is relevant previous experience? Of the respondents in the Department of Employment, skills, small and family businesses, 2018 Survey of Employers recruitment experiences 34% stated that relevant previous experience was not essential to them when recruiting. Of the small businesses surveyed by the Department of jobs and small business 25% would consider an inexperienced applicant. This number rose to 33% when the job seeker had approached the employer directly using their own initiative.

Employability skills such as punctuality, professionalism, good communication, personal presentation and teamwork were prioritised over technical skills by 72% of responding employers in the Department of Employment, skills, small and family businesses 2018 Survey of Employers recruitment experiences.

The impact of resume format, presentation and content on the recruitment process is also of interest. Contributors to the Department of Employment's advice for young people factsheet (2015) indicated that the presence of errors and irrelevant content in resumes had a negative impact on an applicant's likelihood of success.

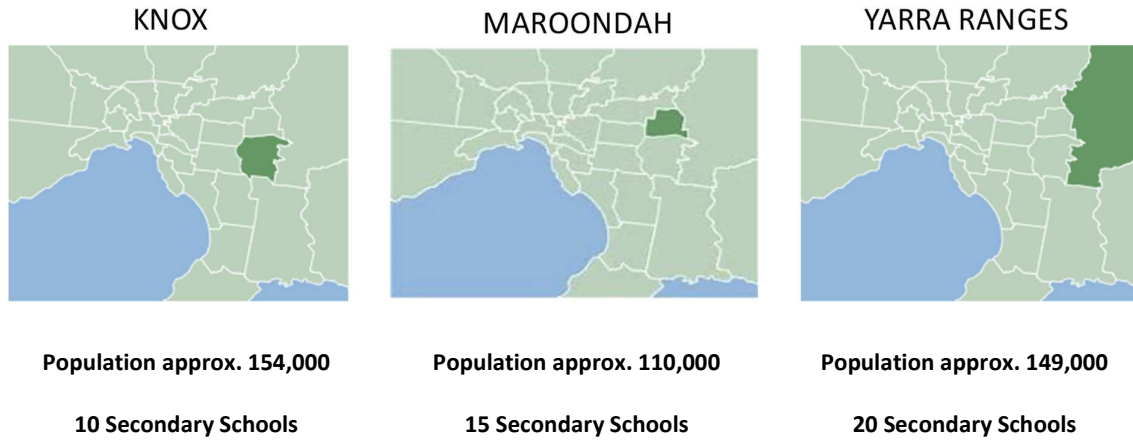
### Youth perspective

A study commissioned by job site Indeed of 2,395 people between the ages of 16 and 23 across Australia in December 2018 has shown that only 53% of respondents felt that their education had adequately prepared them for work and 20% stated that their education had not "at all" prepared them for work. The same study showed that 38% of young people entering the workforce prefer to look for work on online job sites and 34% were planning to seek employment through networking and word of mouth. An alarming 36% of the youth surveyed reported feeling overwhelmed, confused or fearful about making career decisions. The top concerns reported for these fears was not having enough relevant experience (32%), not being sure of what jobs were available (21%) and not being sure what jobs they were suited for (13%).



## The OELLEN context

OELLEN works with 45 secondary schools across three local government areas (LGA's): City of Knox, Maroondah City Council and the Shire of Yarra Ranges.



There is quite significant diversity in the size and population of the schools within the OELLEN region.

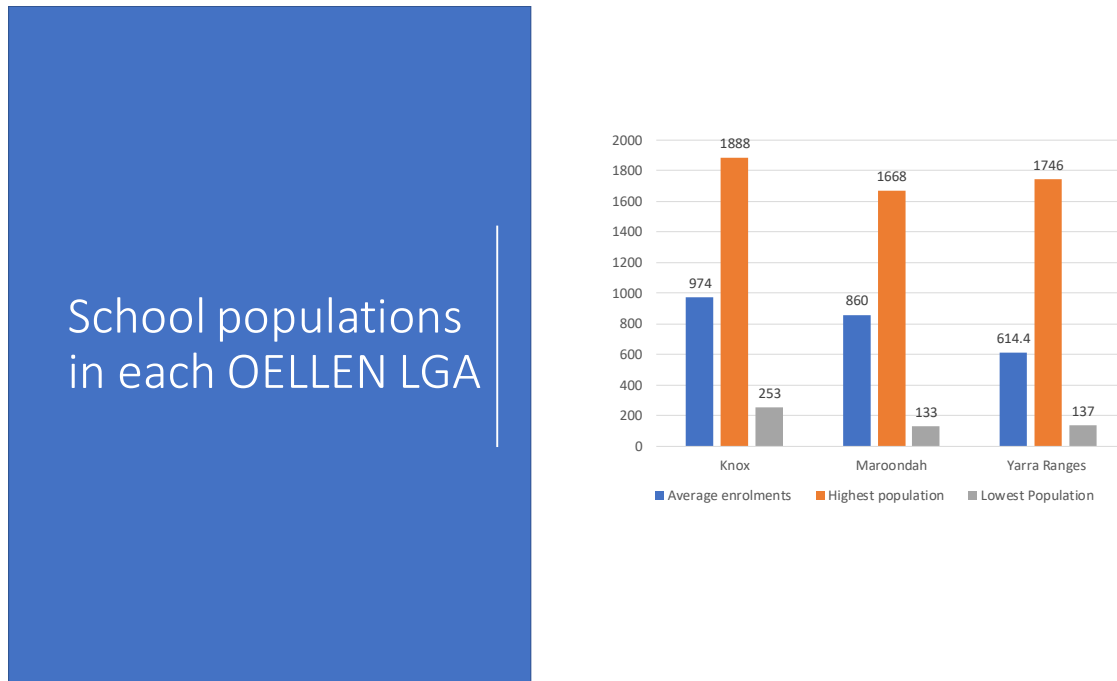


Figure 1.1 School populations in each OELLEN LGA  
(based on 2018 data from mySchools.gov.au)

The variation between schools in terms of population has many contributing factors including geographic and economic barriers to enrolment at some schools, community perception of schools, access to a higher quality education and/or availability of a broader range of subject choices.

### Post school destinations

While the overall percentage of OELLEN area students staying in some form of education post-secondary school is similar to the state average, the post school destinations of students in the three OELLEN LGA regions differ somewhat from the broader Victorian population. More OELLEN catchment students attend TAFE or equivalent institutions than other Victorian residents and fewer OELLEN catchment students attend university than the state average. Slightly higher numbers of post school leavers go into employment than the state average. Two of the OELLEN LGA's (Yarra Ranges and Knox) have lower percentages of school leavers unaccounted for in employment of education than the state average while the third LGA, Maroondah is 4% higher than the state average for school leavers in this category.

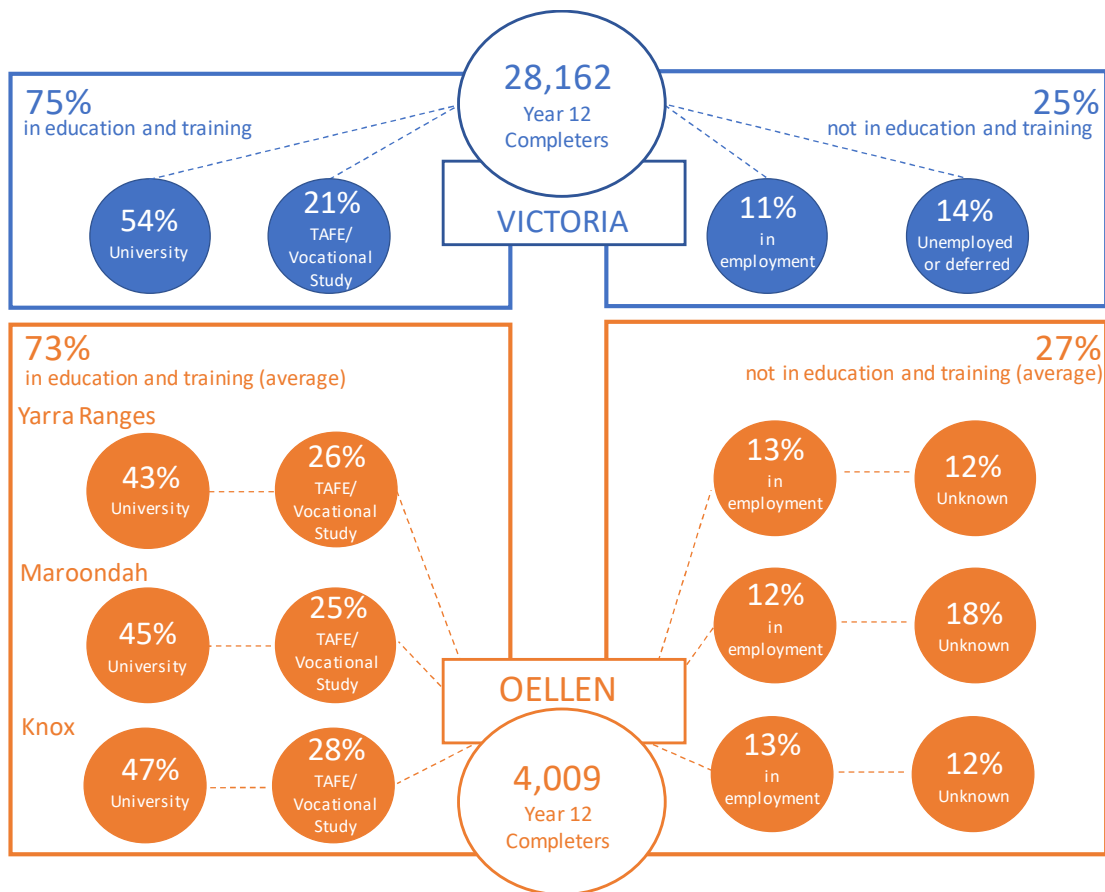


Figure 1.2 – 2017 Post school destinations in Victoria compared to the three OELLEN LGA's

(data drawn from OnTrack 2017 snapshot and MySchools.gov.au 2017 data)

Students in the City of Knox are completing VCAL certificates at slightly higher rates on average than their counterparts in Maroondah City Council or the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Of the three LGA's, students in the Yarra Ranges have the highest average completion rates for both VCE and VET (98.6% on average completion rate for both forms of certificate).

Average Year 12 senior certificate completions in percentages for each OELLEN Local Government Area (LGA) for 2018

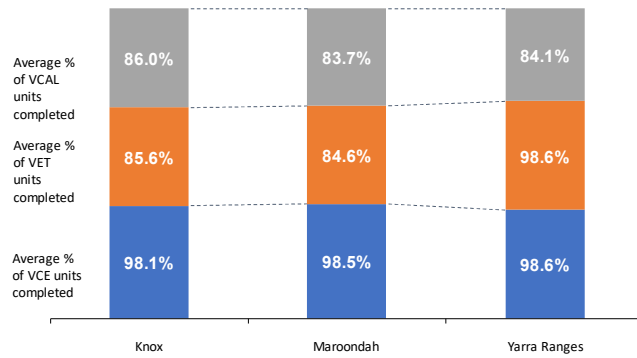


Figure 1.3 Average completion rates for each type of senior secondary certificate for each OELLEN LGA

Percentage of VCE students applying for tertiary places in 2018 from each OELLEN LGA

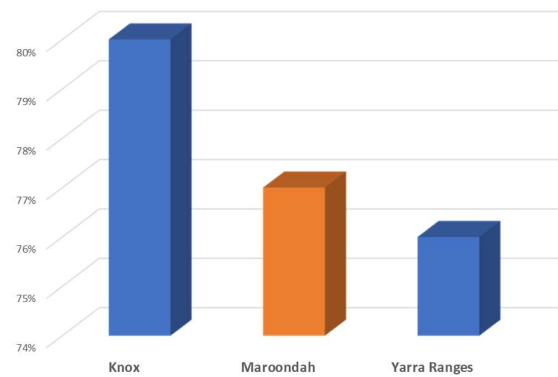


Figure 1.4 – 2018 Tertiary applications by OELLEN LGA

Knox had the highest percentage of students applying for tertiary education out of the three OELLEN LGA's.

## Scope and Procedures

Local industry employers who were already engaged with OELLEN through their involvement in the provision of Structured Workplace Learning were invited to participate in our survey. Larger local employers were also contacted and invited to participate to capture insights from organizations that employ large numbers of people in the region. 20 businesses were approached, and 13 surveys were completed across the industry areas of:

- Engineering
- Healthcare/Aged Care
- Hospitality
- Robotics
- Horticulture
- Utilities
- Hospitality

- Child Care
- Retail
- Local Gov

Surveys were conducted over the phone.

No incentives were offered to participate in the study.

Data was stored on the OELLEN network S drive in our secure office.

### Ethical Considerations

This research was developed with full consideration of the values of respect, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence outlined in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). All interviews were conducted with the utmost respect for participants and their stories. We believe that this research has merit and that gaining an understanding of employer expectations of young employees can provide useful insights to guide the delivery of career education in local schools. The goal of this research is to improve outcomes for students. If at any point had the researchers felt that participants were in any way distressed by their involvement in this study, they would have been given the opportunity to take a break from the interview or cease their involvement entirely. The needs of the participants always came first.

In line with the AASW Code of Ethics guidelines for obtaining informed consent (2010) no participant was in any way be coerced into consenting to participate.

### Method

Discussions with industry employers were structured around a ten-question survey with open and closed questions. Scales were used in some questions to gauge the frequency of certain tasks and to rank the importance of a set of skills to an employer. See Appendix 1: Industry survey.

## Data

### Data collection Instruments

Industry survey questions were developed in consultation with OELLEN staff. Previous research reports on Australia employer expectations were used as inspiration for some questions so that the OELLEN could validate if the local employer expectations mirrored those of their national peers.

- Department of Employment; Australian Government. (2015). Looking for a job? Employers' advice for young people.
- Department of Employment, skills, small and family businesses; Australian Government. (2018). 2018 Survey of Employers Recruitment Experiences.
- Department of Jobs and Small Business; Australian Government. (2018). Recruitment characteristics of small businesses.
- Indeed. (2018). Youth attitudes to work: The future of work according to young people.

## Results

### Industry Insights

Industry employees involved in recruitment decisions for their companies were asked ten questions to gain an insight into recruitment processes and expectations of young job seekers in the outer eastern areas of Melbourne. The results of this survey are shown below.

## Q 1. What are your experiences in employing young people straight out of school?

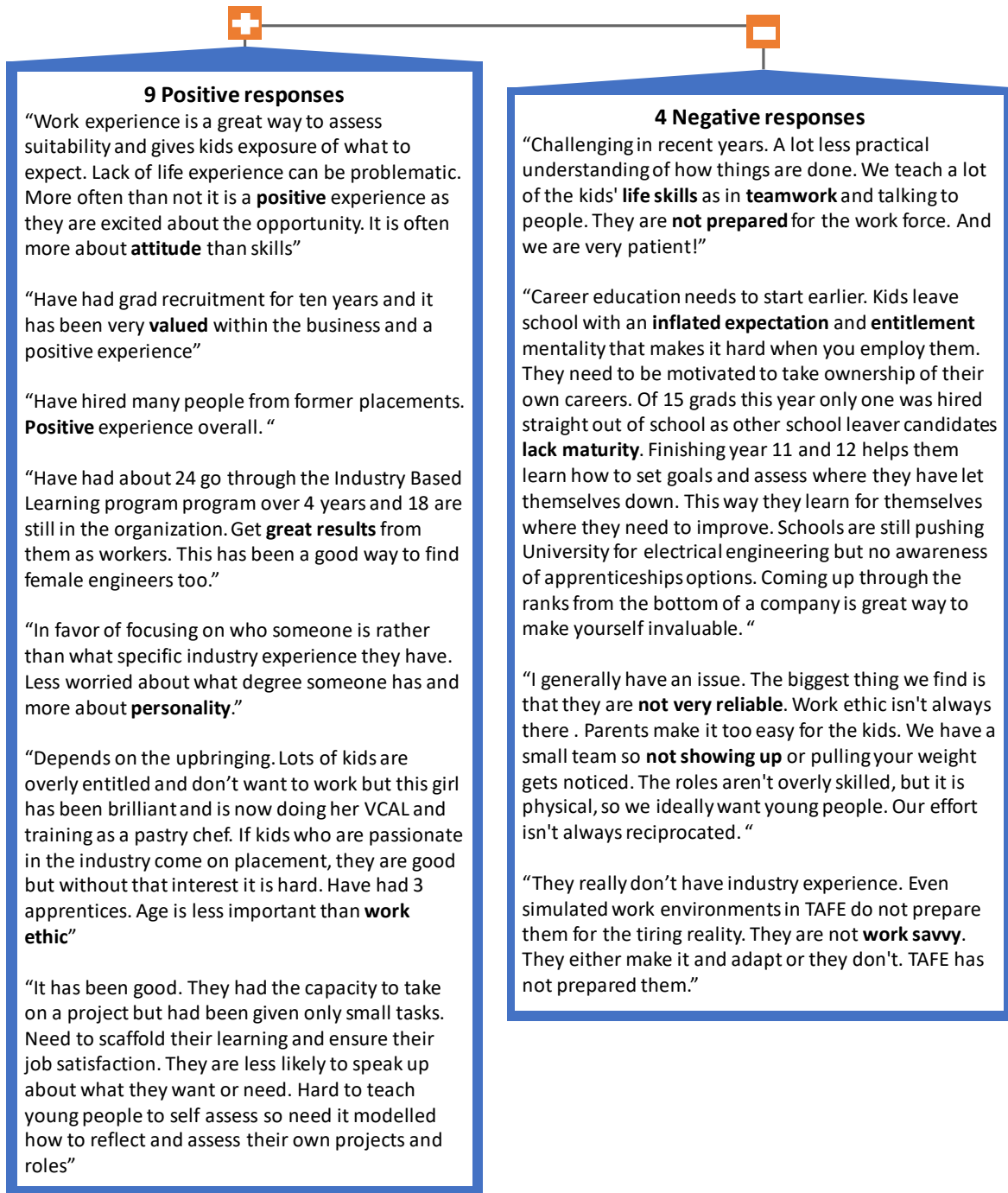


Figure 2.1 Industry experiences of employing young people

Overall the responses from industry about their experiences of employing young people were positive. Even when employers held reservations about young people’s work ethic they were swayed

positively by individual experiences. Voicing a strong interest in the field was one great way to increase your chance of being the successful applicant. Having a strong work ethic, a positive can-do attitude and a good approach to working all came up repeatedly as traits that could overcome inexperience in the recruitment process.

Employers who had a negative experience to date were focussed on five major issues:

- Life skills/maturity
- Experience of the workplace
- Realistic expectations
- Reliability
- Work ethic

Employers reported having to spend significant time coaching young staff on how to appropriately interact with customers and how to work with their colleagues. They linked this issue to a lack of independence and maturity in young employees and to a lack of experience in the workplace. By lack of experience they did not mean skills-based experience but rather that young candidates had often not been exposed to the work hours and expectations associated with full time work. If a young employee had not had a part time job while at school, employers reported issues with timeliness and reliability due to a lack of previous exposure to these expectations. Young employees were also noted to come to work with unrealistic expectations around the type of work and responsibility they would be exposed to initially and often without realistic expectations for the hours of operation and duration of the workday in that specific industry. i.e. bakers start early. It pays to take the time to understand the industry you are applying for before jumping in.

#### **Recommendation**

- 1.1 The benefit of part time work experience or participation in community or sporting clubs while in school should be emphasised to students as a way to demonstrate work-ethic, reliability and exposure to the realities of the workplace
- 1.2 Career education should focus on relevant expectations of varying industries
- 1.3 Career education should emphasise the importance of timeliness and reliability



## Q2. How do local industry recruit?

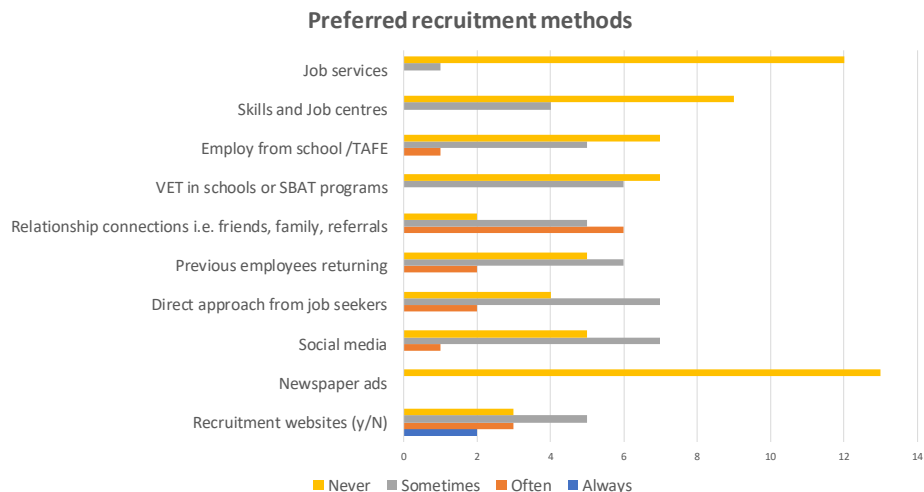


Figure 2.2 Local recruitment practices

Local industry utilises a wide variety of recruitment methods when hiring. Newspaper ads appear to be a thing of the past with no local employers utilising them. This contradicts 2018 data from the Department of Employment, skills, small and family business factsheet “what are employers looking for” that showed 11% of jobs still being advertised in newspapers. Family and friendship referrals are still widely trusted as a means for finding the right candidate. As expected, many jobs are advertised on online recruitment sites such as Seek and Indeed, however some industries avoid such sites as they recruit through their own organisations websites or have exclusive arrangements for recruitment with training groups. The 2018 study commissioned by Indeed, referenced earlier, stated that 38% of young people entering the workforce prefer to look for work on online job sites and 34% were planning to seek employment through networking and word of mouth. These strategies appear appropriately aligned to the recruitment practices of local employers.

Social media is seeing an increase in occasional use although several employers noted that they were overwhelmed with candidates who they ultimately found to be of a lower calibre and suitability than candidates found through other channels. Most employers looked very favourably on candidates who approached them directly, even when there was not an advertised position at the time. Taking the initiative and coming in independently was seen as a very positive indicator of future work ethic and many employers kept these resumes on file for the future. This is aligned to the data from the Department of Jobs and Small Business survey where 33% of surveyed businesses said they would consider inexperienced staff when the job seeker had approached the employer directly using their own initiative.

## Recommendation

- 1.4 Career education should ensure students are aware of all methods of locating a job opportunity and encourage them to not focus on only one method

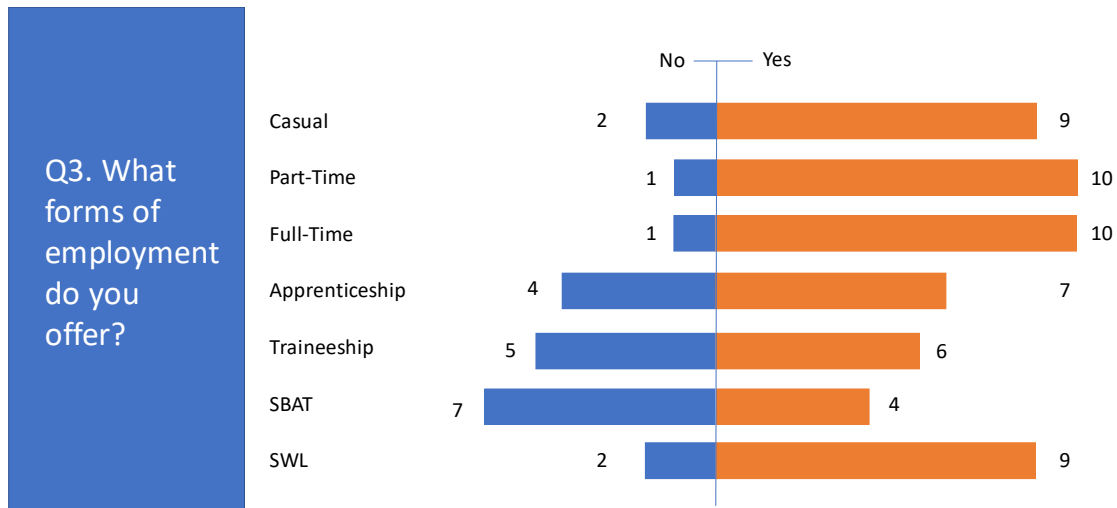


Figure 2.3 Forms of employment available locally

Most employers surveyed offered options for part-time, full-time and casual employment. Where it was industry appropriate, apprenticeships, traineeships and structured workplace learning in conjunction with a senior secondary certificate such as VET or VCAL were also available. Reasons for not providing apprenticeships included a lack of candidates and difficulties in finding TAFE courses tailored to the industry needs. The least offered form of employment in the businesses surveyed was School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT). This was in part due to a lack of awareness of the SBAT program and partly due to concerns about taking on high school students for long periods because of the level of supervision required.

Q4. Which of the following programs in schools are you familiar with?

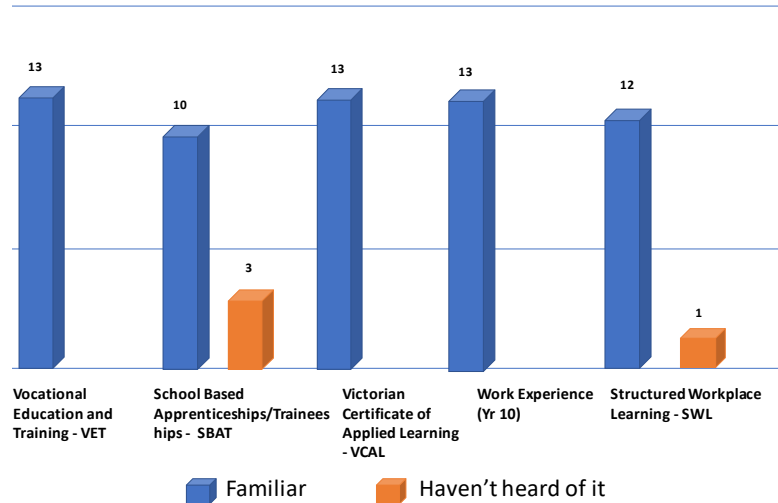


Figure 2.4 Industry awareness of school-based programs

Employers had heard of, or were very familiar with, most of the school-based programs surveyed. The program with the least visibility amongst employers was the School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT).

Q 5. Does the commencement or completion of a VET in schools program alter how you view an application for employment?

**4 Positive responses**

"I would rather hire someone who has completed a VCAL or VET program"  
 "It shows initiative and would add to the overall picture as would a part time job or extracurricular"



**7 Neutral Responses**

"More looking for right fit for culture"  
 "A lot will still depend on how the kid presents themselves. It helps to have hands on experience, but presentation is more important."  
 "Attitude is more important than any particular academic achievement anyway"



**1 Negative response**

"It is negative if they have a cert but no experience. It effects the pay but they have no experience"



Figure 2.5 Industry perceptions of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools

OELN was interested to understand how the commencement or completion of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools program impacted on the perception of a young person's job

application. Most responses were either positive or ambivalent to the inclusion of a VET in schools' program on a resume. Positive responses focussed on the initiative involved in undertaking such a program. Neutral responses came from employers who were more interested in a candidate's attitude and how they presented themselves. The one negative comment received was concerned with a perceived lack of hands on experience being obtained in VET courses coupled with the required pay increase associated with holding a VET certificate. They felt that they would have to pay a premium for a candidate that in their experience was not actually more equipped to complete the tasks required of them.

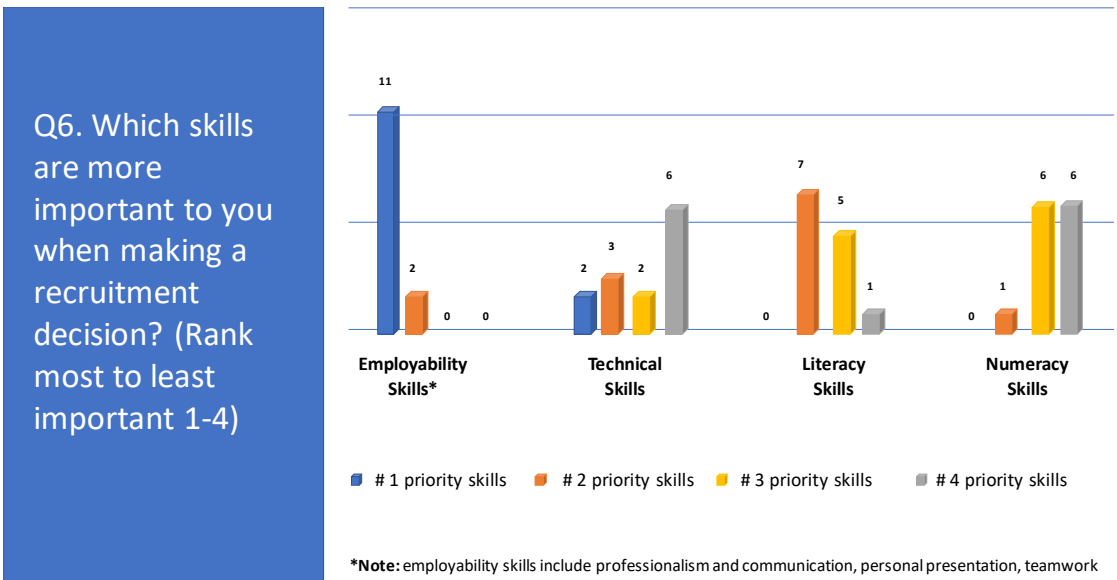


Figure 2.6 Overall industry prioritisation of skills for employment

When assessing which skill type was most important to employers the decision was very easy for the majority. Employability skills such as communication, teamwork, personal presentation and reliability were nominated readily by 11 respondents. If employability skills are valued so highly within industry, it is useful to consider how students may build these skills before they leave school. Anecdotal research data suggests that most workers learn many of their transferable employability skills such as teamwork and communication on the job (Sanguinetti, 2004). This reinforces the importance of part time work or volunteering while studying.

Only two employers noted Technical skills relevant to their industry as the most important skill in a young candidate (Hospitality and Engineering industries). Most employers commented that technical skills became increasingly important as your career developed but had realistic expectations of what

young people could have developed at this stage in their lives. They also noted that a lack of technical skills provided a great 'blank slate' for them to train up in the way that suited them. This contradicts the fears of young people as captured in the "Youth attitudes to work" study commissioned by Indeed in 2018 where 32% of young people surveyed feared not having enough relevant experience.

Prioritising the remaining skills options proved much more difficult. Literacy skills was the next most important for the majority followed by numeracy and finally technical skills. Businesses that placed value on numeracy skills were in the retail, engineering and horticulture fields and even ~~then~~, they typically prioritised literacy skills over numeracy. Again, this data supports the findings of the Department of Employment, skills, small and family businesses 2018 Survey of Employers recruitment experiences where employability skills were prioritised over technical skills by 72% of responding employers.

#### Recommendation

1.5 Employability skills should be emphasised in career education and post school transition materials

Tips to build employability skills include:

- group based projects to foster teamwork skills
- written assignments and working in customer service to foster communication skills
- learning about problem solving techniques to foster independence  
([www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au))

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1.6 Career educators need to be informed of local job opportunities and skill shortages, career pathways (including apprenticeships/traineeships) and the diversity of recruitment channels utilised locally

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1.7 Conduct further research into the most effective ways to build and foster employability skills in high school students

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Q6. Which skills are more important to you when making a recruitment decision? (Rank most to least important 1-4)

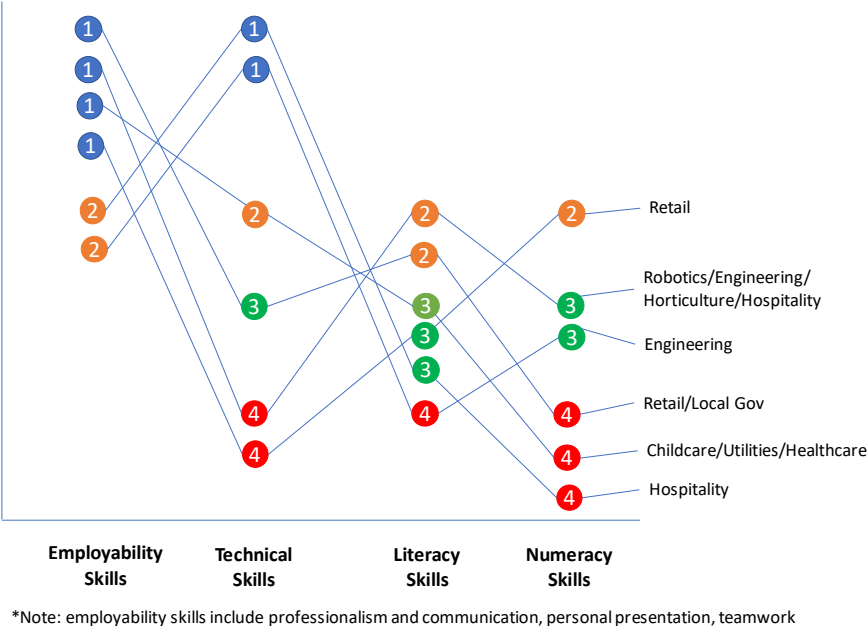


Figure 2.7 Industry prioritisation of skills for employment (clustered by industry)

The graph above shows by industry which order of priority was assigned to each skill type.

Q7. What employability skills would you like to see applicants leave school with? (Top 3)

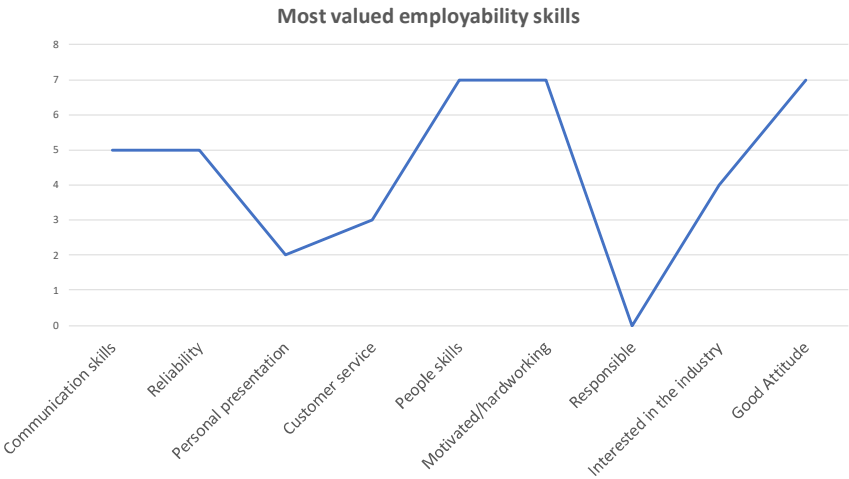


Figure 2.8 Industry preferences for employability skills

All employers surveyed acknowledged that all the employability skills we discussed with them were of great value, however when asked to identify which three from our list were the most sort after in their business, we saw several clear winners. Having strong people skills, being motivated and hardworking and having a good attitude topped the results. Employers gauged people skills and attitude by their initial interactions with candidates. Motivation and work ethic were often

measured by participation in part-time work and membership of sporting or extra-curricular clubs over extended periods of time. Demonstrating an interest in their industry was also a very popular response. Employers felt assured that a candidate with a passion for their industry would put in the effort to learn a role and would be reliable and likely to stay with their business. While responsibility appears from the data to not be valued, many employers were quick to point out that they did not highlight this option as they assume that being motivated and having a good attitude will inherently lead to you being responsible. Likewise, communication skills appear more valued than customer service skills however employers commented that good customer service flows from good communication skills and the communication skills have implications for staff and boss interactions as well.

#### **Recommendation**

1.8 Career education should explore what makes up a “good attitude” and strategies for demonstrating positive attitude in the recruitment process, including:

- How to demonstrate a positive attitude in a cover letter and resume
- How to convey a positive attitude in an interview

(<https://www.careers.govt.nz/articles/how-do-you-show-your-positive-attitude-to-employers/>)

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1.9 People skills and communication skills can be actively taught through focussing on the micro skills of listening, asking open and closed questions and rapport building. Further research into communication skill building tools that schools can use is recommended

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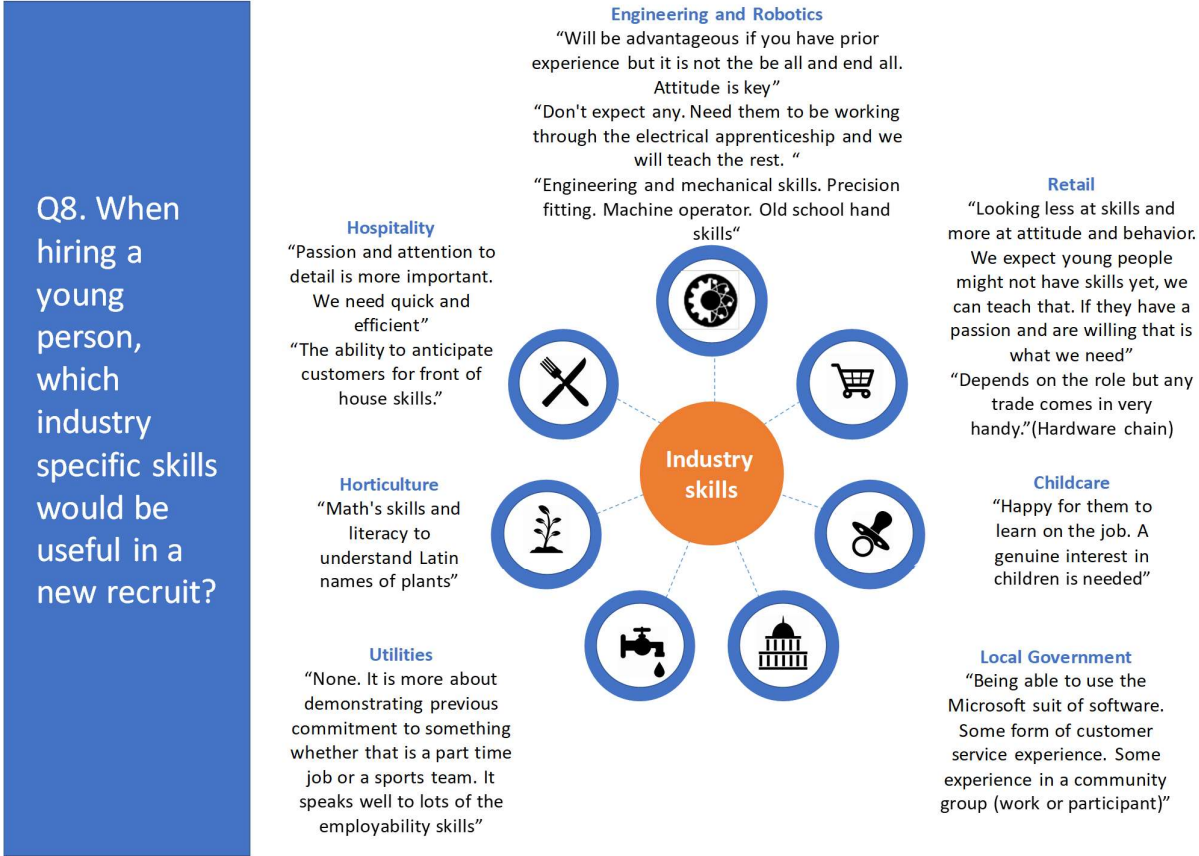


Figure 2.9 Technical skills of relevance to industry

Technical skills were rated as less important than our other three skill groups and many employers struggled to name any industry specific skills they expected from a young recruit. Some employers were able to offer some skills or traits that would be advantageous in their field. Attention to detail was important in the hospitality field and engineering businesses naturally value mechanical and tool skills. A retail business selling hardware was keen for candidates with previous trades experience and unsurprisingly it is an asset to like children if embarking on a career in childcare. If entering an office environment such as local government then it is beneficial to be familiar with basic office software. This supported the findings of the Department of Employment, skills, small and family businesses, 2018 Survey of Employers recruitment experiences where 34% of responding employers stated that relevant previous experience was not essential to them when recruiting.

**Recommendation**

1.10 Career education should encourage students to think about the skills required in the field they are applying for and tailor their resume to highlight them



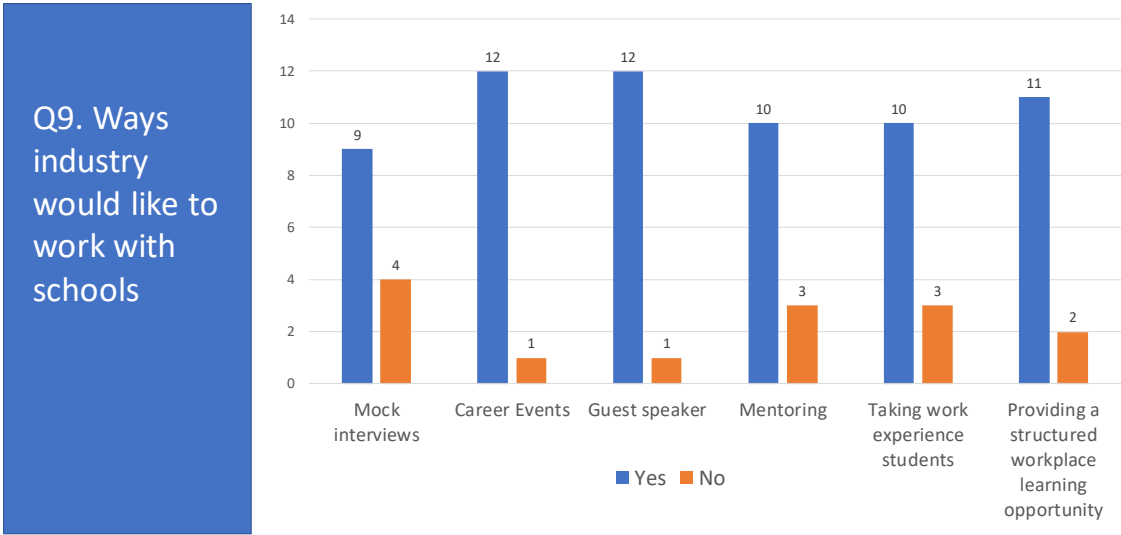


Figure 2.10 Industry preferences for school engagement

Local industry is very supportive of young people and their career education. Several employers commented that they feel a civil obligation to help young people in their community make a smooth transition from school to work and are happy to engage with schools to help facilitate this. Time constraints were cited as the primary barrier to participating in career education activities at schools.

**Recommendation**

1.11 Relationships with many local businesses should be fostered so that the time commitments to school engagement are spread over more businesses and one or two businesses are not at risk or burn out.

**Q10. How much impact does a young applicants resume format, presentation and content have on you when recruiting?**

“More focused on the face to face meeting” - **Retail**

“For a younger person as long as they tell us a bit about themselves and their brief job experience. Their goals and aspirations is important content. Cultural fit is hugely important” - **Robotics**

“Not as significant as everyone thinks. It needs to be structured and you would hope spelling etc. has been checked. It is valuable as it is a chance to share what you've done. A good cover letter is way more important. Tell us why you are interested in this role i.e. I like what I hear of the culture, I like working in a team etc. Resumes should be brief, not 20 pages!” - **Utilities**

“I don't take notice of presentation or spelling. Keep it short and sweet. Directly indicate that you have something I need here. Not interested in a life history. Tailor it to the job. Just hand resume to staff and ask it to be handed over with what type of work they are looking for. Stopping us on work is frustrating” - **Hospitality**

“Minor. Not fussed at all. If kids are into biology or have hands on experience on there that is way more important”- **Horticulture**

“I can look past a lot if they look like they have made an effort. It doesn't have to be perfect. There are lots of supports for this like job skills center so reach out. Formatting is impactful and you can see when someone has tried”- **Local Government**

“With grad program with 1000's of applicants we don't over focus on formatting however if there is a glaring error or addressed to the wrong company it stands out poorly and makes you question their attention to detail. Plays a part but not a deal breaker”- **Engineering**

“If they can't use appropriate grammar and spelling it reflects a lack of care taken in the application and I worry that would translate later to work ethic”- **Childcare**

“Big impact. I am the first to see them. I like it to be well structured and neat as this shows respect for the position”- **Healthcare**

“If they have jumped industry a lot or has big gaps there are alarm bells. All I'm interested in is do they live close, do they have transport or a way to get here. What have they done at school and work wise. We go more on the face to face feel”- **Textiles**

“Huge. Resume is the most important document you have to show your dedication and attention to detail. I really dislike when people are late or unprepared for an interview. Be well dressed. Have the right body language. Resume = first impression. Need to put yourself in the recruiters shoes.” - **Engineering**

“Spelling mistakes or if the over letter hasn't been updated to the role this shows a lack of attention to detail. It should be brief”- **Hospitality**

**Not so important**

**VS**

**First impressions count**

Figure 2.11 Resume relevance in the recruitment process

The importance of a well-structured and industry targeted resume varied significantly between our survey respondents. While some businesses place very little emphasis on an error free, modern and industry specific resume, for other businesses a resume is a critical component in the recruitment

process. The Department of Employment's advice for young people factsheet (2015) agreed with some of our respondents that the presence of errors and irrelevant content in resumes had a negative impact on an applicant's likelihood of success.

Preferences were not consistent across multiple respondents from a one industry; therefore, it is not possible to generalise about employment fields where it is acceptable to spend less time on your resume. Preferences related to resume format and calibre appear to be a very personal and subjective thing and it seems wise to err on the side of caution and invest the time in developing a well-structured and succinct resume. Employers on both sides of the fence acknowledged that there are many free resources online and in person such as skills and jobs centres that can assist in resume writing so there really is no excuse for not having an unprofessional resume. Those who valued resumes more highly viewed the time taken to check for errors and customise your resume as an indicator of attention to detail and an eagerness for the role.

#### **Recommendation**

1.12 Resume writing should remain a focus of career education.

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## Discussion

This research articulates that employers have mostly positive experiences of employing young people and realistic expectations of the experience a young applicant can bring to a role. This research has identified a strong desire from industry employers in the outer eastern region of Melbourne for strong employability skills in young job applicants. This echoes national data that employers increasingly value employability skills above other industry specific or literacy and numeracy skills. Anecdotal data suggests that many young people are leaving school underprepared in the employability skills that employers are looking for and that more could be done in secondary school to prepare students to transition to the workplace. Recommendations are offered for specific areas of enhancement in career education programs across the region. The research also highlights the diverse methods of recruitment being utilised across varying industries in the region and the need for students to be educated in all avenues to finding employment to increase their chances of success. Research data shows that, contrary to the common notion of a gig-based employment landscape, employers are still offering all forms of employment including casual work, part-time and full-time opportunities. This research also maps out ways in which industry employers are willing to engage with schools in career education and makes recommendations about sharing the workload across multiple employers to recognise time poor businesses. Lastly, this research has highlighted

that while there are employers who place less emphasis on resume format and content than has historically been the case, it is still prudent to invest time in teaching resume writing to students.

## Recommendations

Recommendations	
1.1	The benefit of part time work experience or participation in community or sporting clubs while in school should be emphasised to students as a way to demonstrate work-ethic, reliability and exposure to the realities of the workplace
1.2	Career education should focus on relevant expectations of varying industries
1.3	Career education should emphasise the importance of timeliness and reliability
1.4	Career education should ensure students are aware of all methods of locating a job opportunity and encourage them to not focus on only one method
1.5	Employability skills should be emphasised in career education and post school transition materials Tips to build employability skills include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• group based projects to foster teamwork skills</li><li>• written assignments and working in customer service to foster communication skills</li><li>• learning about problem solving techniques to foster independence</li></ul> ( <a href="http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au">www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au</a> )
1.6	Career educators need to be informed of local job opportunities and skill shortages, career pathways (including apprenticeships/traineeships) and the diversity of recruitment channels utilised locally
1.7	Conduct further research into the most effective ways to build and foster employability skills in high school students
1.8	Career education should explore what makes up a “good attitude” and strategies for demonstrating positive attitude in the recruitment process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to demonstrate a positive attitude in a cover letter and resume</li><li>• How to convey a positive attitude in an interview</li></ul> ( <a href="https://www.careers.govt.nz/articles/how-do-you-show-your-positive-attitude-to-employers/">https://www.careers.govt.nz/articles/how-do-you-show-your-positive-attitude-to-employers/</a> )
1.9	People skills and communication skills can be actively taught through focussing on the micro skills of listening, asking open and closed questions and rapport building. Further research into communication skill building tools that schools can use is recommended
1.10	Career education should encourage students to think about the skills required in the field they are applying for and tailor their resume to highlight them

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1.11 Relationships with many local businesses should be fostered so that the time commitments to school engagement are spread over more businesses and one or two businesses are not at risk or burn out.

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1.12 Resume writing should remain a focus of career education.

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### Limitations

Most of the employers who were surveyed have an existing relationship with the OELLEN through participation in the Structured Workplace Learning Program (SWL) and/or involvement in career events. This demonstrates a prior willingness to engage in school and industry collaborations and a general interest in supporting students and young job seekers which may limit the generalizability of their responses to the broader employer market.

## About the researcher

I am a third year Master of Social Work (Professional Qualifying) student at Charles Sturt University. I hold a Bachelor of Behavioral Science (BBS) from La Trobe University and a Post Graduate Diploma in Psychology from Deakin University.

I have previously conducted two major research projects as part of my psychology studies. The first piece of research focused on verb acquisition in two and three-year-old children and took the form of a play-based language assessment followed by a quantitative statistical analysis. The second piece of research was titled "Differential rates of fatal child abuse in step and genetic families". This research was conducted via paper-based parenting surveys exploring forms of parental discipline employed in different families.

In addition to my previous research experience I have completed an internship and associated training in the administration of psychometric assessments and job candidate interviewing at Personnel Decisions International.

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## Appendix 1: Industry survey

1. What are your experiences in employing young people straight out of school?	
#	Response (free text)
1	
2	

2. What methods of recruitment do you use and with what frequency do you utilise them?										
#	Recruitment websites (Y/N)	Recruitment websites (freq)	News paper ads	News paper ads	social media	social media	direct approach from job seekers	direct approach from job seekers	previous employees returning	previous employees returning
1	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always

2. What methods of recruitment do you use and with what frequency do you utilise them?										
#	relationship connection s i.e. friends, family, referrals	relationship connection s i.e. friends, family, referrals	VET in schools or SBAT programs	VET in schools or SBAT programs	Employ from school /TAFE	Employ from school /TAFE	Skills and Job centres	Skills and Job centres	Job services (Job active)	Job services
1	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always	Y/N	Never Sometimes Often Always

3. What forms of employment do you offer?							
#	Casual	Part-time	Full-time	Apprenticeship	Traineeship	SBAT	Do you take students on a SWL placement?
1	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N

4. Which of the following programs in schools are you familiar with?					
#	Vocational Education and Training - VET	School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships - SBAT	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning - VCAL	Work Experience (Yr 10)	Structured Workplace Learning – SWL
1	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N

5. Does the commencement or completion of a VET in schools program alter how you view an application for employment?	
#	Response (free text)
1	

6. Which skills are more important to you when making a recruitment decision? (Rank most to least important 1-4)				
#	Employability skills i.e. professionalism and communication, personal presentation, teamwork	Technical abilities	Literacy	Numeracy
1				

7. What employability skills would you like to see applicants leave school with? (tick the most important three to you)					
#	Communication skills	Reliability	Personal presentation	Customer service	People skills
1					

7. What employability skills would you like to see applicants leave school with? (tick the most important three to you)					
#	Communication skills	Reliability	Personal presentation	Customer service	People skills
1					

7. What employability skills would you like to see applicants leave school with? (tick the most important three to you)				
#	Motivated/hardworking	Responsible	Interested in the industry	Good Attitude
1				

8. When hiring a young person, which industry specific skills would be useful in a recruit?	
#	Response
1	

9. Would you like the opportunity to engage with schools? If so, what types of engagement would you be interested in?		

#	Yes or no?	Mock interviews	Career Events	Guest speaker	Mentoring	Taking work experience students	Providing a structured workplace learning opportunity	Other
1								

10. How much impact does a young applicants' resume format, presentation and content have on you when recruiting?

#	Response
1	