

Informing post-school pathways: Investigating school students' authentic work experiences

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or NCVER

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Key messages

This project investigates how best to utilise school students' experiences in paid part-time work for the purposes of enhancing their understanding of work and working life and making decisions about post-school pathways.

- ✧ Paid work experiences provide a rich resource for school students, enabling them to consider the world of work and post-school pathways, including career planning. School students report that reflecting on their paid work is helpful in understanding the world of work, and also in making informed choices about:
 - ◆ working life
 - ◆ similarities and differences in work options
 - ◆ preferred kinds of work in post-school employment
 - ◆ their suitability for their preferred work options
 - ◆ their suitability for their preferred post-tertiary or higher education work options.
- ✧ Teachers in Australian schools have a vital role to play in ensuring that the full educational potential of their students' paid work is realised. The teacher's role includes providing classroom-based experiences such as individual and group reflection. Integrating students' paid work into the school curriculum could provide a vehicle for recognising and acknowledging workplace competence for vocational education courses within schools more readily than does the conventional work experience model of work placements.
- ✧ Using students' paid work experiences can reduce the requirements for school-organised work placements and the resources deployed to provide them.
- ✧ Careers advice schemes, such as the Australian National Industry Careers Advisers initiative, will benefit from integrating students' paid work experiences into their processes.

Executive summary

Aims of project

This project investigates how best to utilise school students' experiences in paid part-time work to enable them to have a better understanding of post-school pathways, as well as the ability to make wise decisions about these pathways. We regard these paid work experiences as being more 'authentic' and informative than school-organised work experiences, since paid work entails an employment arrangement, immersion in workplaces and the exercise of the obligations and requirements on the part of both employees and employers.

The specific questions addressed by the project were:

- ✧ In what ways can school students' engagement with paid work experiences assist them and their peers to understand work, working life and post-school pathways?
- ✧ What kinds of teaching practices might secure these outcomes?
- ✧ How can schools best organise experiences to inform students about work, working life and post-school options?

Background

Preparing young people for life, including working life beyond school, is an implicit goal of schooling. Many, perhaps most, Australian school students in Years 10, 11 and 12 engage in working life through their paid part-time work outside school hours. In addition, school students are increasingly being employed as school-based apprentices and trainees as part of their schooling program. These working-life experiences can be regarded as a resource that schools can utilise to assist students to prepare for and make decisions about their transition to work and working life. This can be achieved by using, as part of the school-based curriculum, these instances of 'authentic' working-life experiences in classroom-based activities to individually reflect and collectively discuss and appraise work, working life and post-school pathways. These paid work experiences can be maximised by extending students' understanding of the value of their part-time work and engaging them in reflective practices with those students who do not participate in paid work experiences.

The 'authenticity' of these experiences derives from their real-work context. As part of the workforce, students need to fulfil the requirements of employees and be subject to employment obligations. In this, they are distinct from school-organised work placements. In Queensland, employers taking school students on work placements are not required to provide 'real' work or payment for work experience. In Victoria, on the other hand, the employer offers the student a contribution to out-of-pocket expenses. However, this research proposes that the paid work experiences of Australian school students are different from and potentially superior to these school-organised work placements, because paid work expects both students and employers to recognise the rights and responsibilities of their employee-employer relationship. Furthermore, these work experiences are usually ongoing and of a longer duration than school-organised work placements.

Through their paid work, school students can gain impressions (individually and collectively) of the different kinds of work in their workplaces and how working life plays out for different kinds of

employees. The guided reflection of these experiences has rich educative potential for a critical and reflective understanding of work and working life. As a consequence, students will be assisted in making informed decisions about post-school pathways. It is important to recognise however that these work experiences should not be seen as exemplars but as instances of work and working life with the capacity to offer insights into the world of work.

While this innovation has an educative purpose, it also provides a practical solution to a shrinking pool of work placements, given the difficulties that many schools experience in providing and monitoring these placements. Classroom-based reflections on students' paid work experiences can become an educational resource—one that is freely available in Australian schools—and offer the prospect of considerable savings in school resources (for example, administrative and travel costs to support work placement programs). These resources can then be redirected to other means of preparing and supporting students for their post-school pathways. In this context these paid work experiences have the potential to provide a rich resource.

Procedures

The procedures for this study comprised four stages. First, schools were approached to elicit their participation in the project, to gain consent and to establish the research relationship. This first stage resulted in a total of ten classes and their teachers in six schools across two states (Queensland and Victoria) participating in the study. To assist the school environment in being supportive of the purpose of the study, preference was given to those schools with a track record in VET in Schools programs. Second, teachers and researchers in the six schools were to negotiate ways to meet the needs of particular classes and students in the implementation of classroom-based activities designed to assist students to reflect on their paid work experiences. This second stage was intended to encompass working with selected teachers to develop the necessary classroom-based activities to assist students to describe and understand their paid work, thus allowing them to reflect upon appropriate post-school pathways. Aspects to be considered during these discussions were the school's setting and location, student cohorts, and student readiness. A framework for describing the students' work was adapted from earlier studies and comprised categories of work activities and interactions. Teachers were encouraged to tailor this to their students' needs and competence.

During the third stage, ten classes of students in the selected six schools were involved in the implementation of the research project. Four metropolitan schools in Queensland and two in regional Victoria participated. One Queensland metropolitan school began the classroom activities in the final term of 2004, with the remaining five schools in Queensland and Victoria participating in the first half of 2005. Stage four involved progressively gathering and analysing the data and writing the report.

Findings

The findings can be categorised according to the following key areas:

- ✧ negotiating the procedures established by the research
- ✧ understanding work
- ✧ understanding future pathways
- ✧ reflecting upon work and post-school pathways.

The findings also address the teachers' roles in the process and advance considerations for vocational education and schooling.

Negotiating the procedures

From the pilot study, a set of classroom resources was created and basically adopted unaltered by all the participating schools. They were, however, implemented in quite different ways by each school, which led to distinct sets of classroom experiences. In some instances, students and sometimes teachers struggled with the classroom-based activities. The variation in experiences arose from:

- ✧ the capabilities of the teacher involved
- ✧ the interest and readiness of students
- ✧ the resources for and status of work experience and vocational education programs within the school.

This initial finding is noteworthy as it highlights the centrality of the teacher's role and the school's commitment to supporting them in vocational education and training (VET) initiatives.

Understanding work

Through classroom activities, the students were able to engage in and present critical, although sometimes not particularly considered, analyses of their work experiences. Crucial features identified included:

- ✧ the contrast between the conditions and roles of part-time workers and those of full-time workers
- ✧ the unrewarding and unattractive nature of menial work
- ✧ the nature of discretionary work roles (where they act autonomously or semi-autonomously)
- ✧ differences in work roles
- ✧ concepts about and appraisals of team work
- ✧ the standing of workers and their treatment (for example, by customers and management)
- ✧ the requirements for work performance.

These findings support the claim that workplace experiences derived from authentic employment relationships provide a richer base for experiencing and considering work and working life than do school-organised work placements. The extent to which classroom activities can produce educationally worthwhile reflections on work experiences depends on the work by teachers, the depth of their understanding, and their capability to facilitate this within the classrooms.

Understanding future pathways

Through their reflections on their paid work experience, students identified that they had learnt about:

- ✧ working life
- ✧ different kinds of work—their differences and similarities
- ✧ the kinds of work they do not want to engage in post-school
- ✧ the kinds of work they want to engage in post-school
- ✧ their preferred work options
- ✧ their preferences for a post-tertiary or university-prepared occupation
- ✧ the relevance of school-based learning for preparing students for the work to which they aspire.

In all, they indicated that reflecting on and discussing their part-time employment in classroom-based activities provided opportunities for considering options for working life, for identifying employment preferences and, in some instances, for the need for investing greater effort at school, or in tertiary or higher education to ensure the realisation of their working life goals.

Reflecting on work and post-school pathways

Overall, students reported that reflecting on their part-time employment had been useful. Clearly, they enjoyed discussing their work experiences and the opportunity to share experiences and insights in ways rarely provided in the classroom or workplace. In addition, the discussion of this topic in class provided insights for those not yet employed. Even students who struggled to present their ideas in a written form provided responses supporting the conclusion of most students: that their paid part-time work was the best way of understanding work and post-school pathways. There were also suggestions about improving other ways of learning about occupations. These included advice from teachers, industry speakers and careers advisors, and access to electronic resources and agencies whose role it was to provide information on forms of employment. Although these other resources could provide a welcome complement, school students consistently claimed that their paid employment offered the most effective educational resource—and one that is freely available in most Year 11 and 12 classrooms in Australian schools. With minimal re-organisation of school programs, these class activities could be accommodated by both teachers and high school students to enable reflection on the world of work beyond school.

Teachers' roles

While students bring their experiences of paid work to classroom activities, teachers are required to provide classroom-based experiences to enable individual and group reflection on paid work experiences, thus assisting students to realise the full potential of those experiences. In this context it was clear that teachers needed the capacity to:

- ✧ adapt and utilise resources to meet students' needs
- ✧ facilitate student learning (that is, draw upon learners' experiences)
- ✧ manage the teaching/learning process to promote students taking up productive critical reflection
- ✧ understand the potential of thinking about work
- ✧ expand students' views about learning and educational goals.

Levels of teacher competence in their roles in this area of learning and innovation determined the usefulness of the outcomes. Not all teachers possessed this expertise or were able to provide effective guided reflective experiences. These considerations seem particularly relevant to other initiatives aimed at improving information for school students about post-school options (for example, career guidance).

Lessons for vocational education and schooling

In all of the schools, the teachers used the pre-prepared materials supplied by the researchers with little or no modification. While this was successful in some schools, in others it led to unsatisfactory outcomes for both students and teachers: the uncritical and unadapted use of externally derived materials was problematic. Teachers need the support of school resources, including the capacity to adapt materials and educational resources, such as the learning guides and other non-endorsed resources supporting training packages. These materials need to be adapted to meet the requirements and capabilities of particular student groups. However, teachers' reluctance to trust and engage those outside the school (for example, researchers) who have specific knowledge and who can provide expertise not available in the school is a shortcoming that reflects the 'closed culture' of schooling.

The diversity of teachers' levels of competence in the areas of work and vocational education was surprising. Furthermore, schools' espoused track record with VET was not a predictor of positive educational experiences. Even in schools committed to VET in Schools programs, arrangements for vocational and workplace-based experiences appeared marginal, unsupported and unmanaged. Clearly, additional demands have been placed on both schools and students with: take-up of

school-based apprenticeships; VET in Schools programs, as well as part-time employment after school and weekends; and the ongoing pursuit of academic qualifications for entry into higher education programs.

Some schools claimed that vocational education was already an integral part of their operation. However, this did not guarantee effective and well-managed school-based activities associated with and providing opportunities for understanding work, working life and post-school pathways. Central to the success of vocational education programs in schools were the focus given to the vocational program, allocation of adequate resources and appropriate programming. The research also found that the demands placed upon students and teachers should be more balanced to permit the additional activities required for vocational education in schools to be accommodated.

Background to study

Educational purposes and post-school pathways

An implicit goal of schooling is assisting students' success in life beyond school. However, in recent times the focus on managing school-to-work transitions or pathways has become quite sharp. Ryan (1999) suggests that this interest is a result of 'significant transition problems in all economies', albeit taking different forms from country to country. For instance, he contrasts the 'structural youth joblessness in United States with cyclical high unemployment in Germany and Japan' (1999, p.2). Countries with modern societies and complex economies with quite diverse educational systems and structures emphasise the importance of effective school-to-work transition.

In their review of education-to-work transitions, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2000 cited in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2005) identified three principal pathways through upper secondary education to work or tertiary study. These are:

- ✧ *General education pathway*: these pathways have as their principal purpose the preparation of young people for tertiary (college/university) study.
- ✧ *School-based vocational pathways*: in almost all cases, these have as their principal goal the provision of upper-secondary level occupational qualifications followed by labour market entry. The majority of student time is spent in school-based facilities.
- ✧ *Apprenticeship-type vocational pathways*: these have as their objective the provision of an occupational qualification. Young people in apprenticeship-type pathways normally spend the majority of their time in the workplace (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2005).

Students in many countries, including Australia, participate in all three pathways and, in the case of Australia, quite often, all simultaneously.

Table 1 presents data on the relative levels of participation across each pathway for school leavers in their first year after leaving compulsory education.

However, the patterns of participation across the three pathways differ across countries. Ryan (1999) claims that these pathways between school and work have often grown historically, and in ad hoc ways. Nevertheless, these data, now a little out of date and under-representative of the increasing levels of participation in apprenticeship and school-based vocational pathways by Australian high school students since 2000, provide instructive comparisons with other countries.

Among the advanced economies, Australia stands with Canada as having the highest percentage of students in the general education pathways, even higher than the United States and Japan. Of course, different countries have particular definitions for sectors of their education systems and their purposes. For instance, Australia is regarded as having a vocationally oriented general education curriculum even without vocational education. Yet, the data here suggest that, overwhelmingly, Australian students in their post-compulsory years (that is, Years 11 and 12) are engaged in general education provisions.

Table 1: Education-to-work transitions—OECD countries

Country	Compulsory school graduates in pathway %		
	Apprenticeship-type	School-based vocational	General education
Australia	3	2	94
Austria	41	37	22
Canada	1	5	94
Denmark	44	14	42
Finland	5	47	48
Japan	NA	26	74
Norway	25	27	48
Portugal	4	32	64
Sweden	N	60	40
Switzerland	60	9	31
United Kingdom	24	33	43
United States	N	12	88
Belgium	3	65	32
France	11	43	46
Germany	52	24	24
Greece	N	32	68
Ireland	5	15	80
Italy	NA	72	28
Korea	NA	42	58
Netherlands	23	47	30
New Zealand	8	30	62
Poland	M	69	31
Spain	2	37	61

Note: NA = not applicable; M = data not available; N = negligible or zero.

Source: Canada Human Resources and Skills Development (2005) based on OECD (2000)

McKenzie (2001) reports that, although the participation of Year 11 and 12 students in work experience and work-related programs has grown in schools (from 7% in 1995 to 19% in 1999), it involves only a minority of students. By 2005, there had been an increase in work-related programs in schools. Since 2003, the growth has been rapid, with 48% of all senior students enrolled in recognised vocational education and training (VET) subjects or courses. Options outside these data are the array of engagements with workplaces—work experience, work preparation and structured workplace learning, the last of which addresses competencies in a training package or nationally accredited course (Woods 2005). The growth in these programs represented a 9% increase from 2002 to 2003 and a threefold increase from 1996 (Nguyen 2005).

Although participation in VET subjects may have increased, there is still a disassociation between schooling and school-organised workplace learning experiences for many students, perhaps for the vast majority of young Australians. Indeed, it may well be for most young Australians that their paid part-time work is the most common and only experience of the workplace and impacted on their taking up school-based programs. Hence, unless they find ways of understanding the world of work, their decisions about post-school pathways may well be ill-considered or ill-informed. For instance, Beavis et al. (2005), in reporting on experiences of Year 8 and 9 students of disadvantaged families, found a mismatch between what students intended to be doing at 25 years of age and the plans they had in place to achieve those outcomes. Also, boys were less likely to have embarked on the right path to fulfil their aspirations than girls. However, the prospects for students who leave without completing the post-compulsory years are bleak in terms of being in the labour force and level of their earnings over the longer-term (Applied Economics 2005).

Research drawing on 2002 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data indicates that transition to vocational education courses is an unsuccessful experience for many school leavers, with 14% of

adolescents failing to complete any module and 30% failing to complete half of their modules. It would appear that either the choice of courses or the match of students to courses is problematic. It is noteworthy that, in Canada, the majority of those employed in apprenticeships are aged in their early twenties, making the Australian figures in table 1 even starker. This suggests that there is a need to find bridges or pathways between the experiences within general education and destinations beyond schooling, particularly paid work and specific vocational preparation in either tertiary or higher education institutions.

Many of the countries represented in table 1 have implemented schemes to assist the transition from school to work. These are focused mainly on school-based interventions, such as career guidance and experiences in workplaces. They range from structured training arrangements of the ‘apprenticeship countries’ (for example, Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland), the structured workplace learning programs in America and Canada, the provision of work experience or work placement programs that are common to many countries, to the school-based enterprises that are a feature of many American high schools (Bailey, Hughes & Moore 2004).

The purposes for these school-based experiences are equally diverse. There are those associated with:

- ✧ developing specific vocational skills (for example, apprenticeships and traineeships)
- ✧ understanding the qualities of and requirements for particular occupations
- ✧ developing broader employability skills
- ✧ introducing the students to the world of work more generally.

Consistent with these trends, the Australian Government recently announced a network structure of career guidance at cluster, regional and national industry levels (Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian National Industry Careers Advisors initiative 2005), which aims to develop more informed decision-making about post-school pathways by Australian school students.

Almost universally, a school-based component which seeks to embellish, elaborate or augment the students’ experiences in the workplace is a key element in securing effective school-to-work transitions. There are powerful pedagogic reasons for doing this and also some practical realities. The pedagogic properties are related to the capacity to exploit all learning potential implicit in the students’ workplace experiences. While it is stated that extensive workplace experiences lead to the development of understandings about the world of work, particular kinds of occupations, employability and specific vocational skills, it is the school-based experiences which have the capacity to secure the full potential of the workplace-based experiences. However, much of the effort and discussion linking school and workplace experiences for educational purposes have focused on joint qualifications, career guidance and securing and monitoring work placements.

In reality, there has been less effort directed towards organising classroom activities led by teachers to maximise the contribution of the workplace component in supporting students’ decisions about their pathways. The project described here seeks to do just that. Moreover, its focus is on co-opting students’ part-time employment and volunteerism to help them learn about the world of work in a general sense and to encourage them to reflect upon the implications for their own post-school pathways.

Co-opting school students’ employment experiences

The emphasis on vocational preparation by Australian students in recent years has contributed to the goal of enhancing their post-school pathways by encouraging them to think about work options, work requirements and pathways to a personally and professionally fulfilling working life (Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999). Schools usually support this in one of two ways. Firstly, programs are offered that provide experiences to develop specific vocational skills, concepts and dispositions to perform specific occupational roles. The recent growth in numbers of school-based

apprenticeships and traineeships are examples of this kind of preparation, as are the ‘stand alone’ VET subjects made available to students in their schools or at technical and further (TAFE) institutes. Secondly, there are programs that aim to assist students to learn about work and working life in order to inform their decision-making about pathways beyond schooling. These include structured work placement and work experience programs of different kinds (for example, Stasz 1999). These form the most common kind of vocational preparation programs that Australian high school students access (Fullarton 1999).

The project reported here focuses on this second kind of vocational preparation—learning about work and working life. Its key premise is that high school students’ part-time employment provides work experiences likely to lead to more effective ways of developing understandings of work and working life than can be achieved through work placements and work experience programs. Up to 70% of both male and female students in their final years of schooling in both city and rural communities are estimated to participate in paid part-time employment (Department for Education, Training and Employment 2000; Fullarton 1999). Consequently, in any senior school classroom there is likely to be a significant cohort, and very possibly a majority of students, who are also in paid employment.

The aim of this study is to show that it is not hard to access the value of these experiences as a resource for classroom-based activities. By learning about work and post-school options, all students, regardless of whether they are employed or not, can form opinions about what they want to do. It is essential that student part-time work not be regarded as constituting exemplars of working life or career options. They are used merely as a means through which students can reflect upon work, working life and post-school options.

The educational value of reflecting on paid employment lies its potency as a resource for developing informed and critical insights about work and pathways to working life. Patten (2001) claims that part-time work contributes to the socialisation and development of adolescents. She proposes that they begin to understand how the world of work is organised and so it can facilitate career decision-making and job transitions. From the perspective of career education, she claims that explorations of the world of work lead to better career decisions, interest-shaped occupational preferences and enhanced learning during preparation for vocational practice. Smith and Comyn (2003) suggest that the development of employability skills arises from the individual’s engagement in their first job. These skills are founded in the authenticity of the working-life experience. Experiences afforded by paid employment are different from those from structured work placement and work experience programs organised through schools.

The distinctiveness of paid employment resides in the kinds of activities and interactions that arise from the obligations of both employers and employees and the kind of demands and commitments required of the student–worker (Billett 2005). These include the need for punctuality, working with others, being effective with time and personal organisation, as well as the imposition of sanctions imposed if work requirements are not met. In addition, in their paid employment students make contributions to taxation, healthcare, possibly superannuation and may join and contribute to a trade union, thereby coming to understand the exercise of social obligation and collective action through employment. Paid part-time work also typically offers far longer involvement than do work experience programs (Fullarton 1999). This results in students’ experiences of working life being of greater duration and having a more substantial impact upon them, thereby providing potentially more educative learning about work and working life. These experiences are available to most classrooms in the senior school.

Given the overwhelming participation by these students in general education provisions within Australia (OECD 2000 cited in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; McKenzie 2001), co-opting students’ part-time employment would appear to have benefits all round. It can substitute for or augment school-organised work experience and it has the potential to assist students to learn about, appraise and make bridges to the world of work. It may focus their interest and investment in study to prepare for these forms of work.

On the other hand, school students may not see this paid part-time work as a potentially rich educational encounter without leadership from the school; quite the opposite may be the case. It is suggested that students view their paid part-time work highly pragmatically and may even be reluctant to talk about it (Green & Smith 2003). This suggests that there is a need for classroom processes that can engage students in reflective and critical consideration of their part-time employment. Equipping students with an informed and questioning understanding of work and working life may also assist their decision-making at school and in their post-school lives (Patten 2001; Stasz 1999).

More specifically, the benefits of guided student reflection on their working lives are seen as being threefold.

- ✧ A critical understanding may inform their decision-making about the kinds of employment pathways they may wish to pursue.
- ✧ It may motivate careful consideration of tertiary education pathway options.
- ✧ It may also assist them to understand how to engage in paid work more effectively and how they can achieve their personal and vocational goals in workplace settings.

Critical, reflective and collective considerations of paid part-time work could provide students with an informed (educated) understanding of working life (Quickie 1999).

Bailey, Hughes and Moore (2004) refer to a study called *Learning work* where one young woman working at McDonald's questions the gender segmentation of work; that is, that the girls work the cash register while the boys cooked the food. The teacher facilitating this section took the question from the student and used this to generate discussion on gender segmentation in the workplace. It is reported that, in this classroom setting, the instructor led the students through a process of considering why patterns of gender segmentation exist and what could be done about them. The authors also conclude that students' engagement in this kind of interaction is deeply empowering and richly informative.

Teachable moments like that can be found in virtually every internship's seminar section, because the abstractions (gender, race, power, change) are, in fact, meaningful primarily in the context of lived experience—and workplace learning students are having those lived experiences to which they can explore the ideas, and vice versa.

(Bailey, Hughes & Moore 2004, p.207)

This understanding appears to be a highly beneficial educational outcome. Working life constitutes a major experience, preoccupation and use of their time for students once they leave school and enter adulthood. Individuals invest in and develop their sense of self through work (Pusey 2003). In addition to personal benefits for students, there are also potential administrative efficiencies to co-opting school students' paid part-time work for educational purposes. By utilising students' part-time employment, schools may capitalise on a resource available gratuitously and readily in each senior school classroom. By recognising the legitimacy of the experiences of paid employment, other benefits might arise. Students without paid employment need be the only focus for schools' efforts to place students in work experience. This may well secure economies in school resources, while maximising the utilisation of community goodwill in the provision of work experiences.

There is also a lingering concern highlighted in earlier studies (for example, Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999) about the degree to which schooling systems and schools are supporting the provision of VET in Schools to the extent of the interest indicated by the community in these programs. It is not always obvious that the rhetoric is matched by the experiences of teachers in vocational education programs by comparison with resources provided to other more academic programs.

Project aims and procedures

This project investigated how classroom-based activities can be used to engage school students to reflect on their part-time work experiences to enable them and their peers to understand more about work and working life, and to inform decision-making about possible post-school pathways.

The project builds on previous work on student participation in paid work and workplace learning (Billett 1998, 2005; Fullarton 1999; Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999; Department for Education, Training and Employment 2000) that has considered the extent of school students' part-time employment and the need for these experiences to be more closely associated with VET in Schools.

The specific questions that this project was to investigate:

- ✧ In what ways can school students' engagement with paid work experiences assist them and their peers to understand work, working life and post-school pathways?
- ✧ How best can schools organise experiences to inform students about work, working life and post-school options?
- ✧ What teaching practices might secure these outcomes?

The practical investigation comprised four stages:

- ✧ Establish the research project within selected schools.

This phase comprised identifying those schools with a profile in VET in Schools programs with students in a range of employment contexts and embedded coursework in their Year 12 curricula. Consent for participation was gained. Databases of registered training providers offering VET at certificate I and II levels were used.

- ✧ Negotiate the curriculum with teachers.

This phase involved working with teachers to organise appropriate classroom experiences. It also entailed developing learning resources and survey instruments that adapted the previous research with adult employees.

- ✧ Enact interventions in schools.

This phase comprised the implementation of the activities at the school and gathering the data from students and interviews with teachers.

- ✧ Interview teachers and write up this report.

This phase involved analysis of data, interviews with teachers as a process of summative and verification checking and the preparation of reports.

Stage one: Establish the research project within selected schools

The first stage comprised identifying schools and teachers for participation in the project and gaining their consent. The aim was to identify schools with an interest in VET in Schools, secure the consent and involvement of a small number of schools (up to five) in metropolitan and regional locations to trial classroom-based activities that allow students in paid employment to describe and reflect upon their work, working life and post-school options. It involved a total of ten classes and their teachers across these schools.

Preference was given to schools with a track record in VET in Schools. These schools were preferred because the project required the engagement, effort and some commitment by participating schools and teachers. Schools did not need to be particularly successful champions of VET in Schools; rather, they needed to offer a receptive environment for the trialling and evaluation of these approaches. The concern was that schools not interested in VET in Schools would be unlikely to provide environments conducive to testing some of the project's assumptions.

The participating schools were located in greater Brisbane and an adjacent shire, as well as in regional Victoria. In both places, a research assistant was employed to assist with the identification, selection and achievement of agreement and then consent to participate by the schools and the individual teachers. The project also involved the negotiation of instructional strategies with the teachers who were implementing them; these teachers were also to be supported by the locally based research assistant. This is elaborated in stage two. The two research assistants collaborated and served as sources of advice and support for the schools in both areas (that is, Brisbane or regional Victoria).

In total, six schools agreed to participate in the project. Three of the schools were in metropolitan Brisbane, and one in an adjacent shire in Queensland and two were in regional Victoria. The schools comprised:

- ✧ a Queensland catholic co-ed school, referred to as St Bede's College
- ✧ a Queensland private girls' school, referred to as Claybrook College
- ✧ a Queensland private co-ed school, referred to as Greylands College
- ✧ a Queensland state school, referred to as Bayside State High
- ✧ a Victorian state school, referred to as Whitefields College
- ✧ a Victorian state school, referred to as Grasslands College.

Stage two: Negotiate the curriculum with teachers

The goals and accompanying processes for this project were new and untried; many components were obviously underdeveloped and needed considerable interaction with school participants to convey the intent. Stage two involved working with teachers in the selected schools to refine the instructional focus and the pedagogic practices which might support success in the classroom. The aim in this stage was to identify and develop the most appropriate strategies to assist students to describe and understand their paid work and to think critically about possible post-school pathways.

Because of differences in the various schools' settings and locations, student cohorts, and readiness, it seemed important to engage each teacher in the development of their approaches to the trial and its implementation. That is, there was a need to permit teachers' input into the design, enactment and evaluation of this approach in ways relevant to the particular context. Each teacher was provided with \$500 per student cohort (one school had more than one) to be used at the school's discretion to assist and support their particular school-based intervention. Schools were free to use these funds for teacher relief, among other options.

An illustrative framework for describing the students' work was adapted for teachers to use, to adapt further and refine (or just ignore), and was provided as part of a suggested set of four one-hour sessions to be used as classroom activities. These activities (see appendix 1) required engaging students in describing their part-time employment within categories of work activities and interactions. The illustrative framework has been used to describe the requirements for work in earlier studies (Billett 2000; Billett, Barker & Hernon-Tinning 2004). The other elements of the suggested sessions comprised workshop activities and worksheets. They aimed to assist students to reflect on and share their workplace experiences—to think about these in terms of projected post-school occupations and educational destinations. Students could also assess the most effective ways of learning about work, working life and post-school pathways.

In all instances, the research assistants in both locations were available to go into classes (with the requisite clearances) and, in some instances, were able to provide direct support and advice to the schools.

Stage three: Enact interventions in schools

Ten classes of students in six schools were involved in these trials. The role of each teacher was to guide the process, engaging the students in describing, sharing and critically appraising their workplace experiences, and collecting the students' worksheets for the researchers. The first trialling of the strategies was with a Year 12 legal studies class of girls in the final term of 2004 in a Queensland metropolitan school (that is, Bayside State High). It was during this trial that the set of four one-hour interventions was developed in consultation with the teacher at that school. Teachers were encouraged to engage students to work in pairs or small groups, comprising students who were engaged in part-time employment (and those who were not). All the students involved in the pilot had part-time employment.

The guidance and kinds of approaches required across schools were acknowledged as differing widely and depended upon student experiences and readiness to engage in this kind of learning. Therefore, it was proposed that the set of four interventions would be suggestions only and would need to be tailored by teachers to suit the particular requirements of their students.

The suggested sequence was as follows. Over the first two sessions the students described and critically appraised their paid work and working life and that of their peers, using the suggested framework. This included comparing their work experiences with their peers, which permitted students without paid work experience to learn about work and working life. Worksheets were provided to the students to assist in their description and analysis. In the third session, the students considered how their work experiences might shape their decision-making about post-school pathways. Students were also encouraged to critically reflect upon the different kinds of post-school pathways available, the kinds of characteristics required to commence along these pathways, and how best they serve particular vocational outcomes. In the final session, the students were invited to reflect upon different ways of understanding work, working life and post-school experiences. Responses in the final two sessions were recorded on supplied survey forms. The numbers and year level of students participating in the activities differed across the six schools, as indicated in table 2.

Table 2: Schools and participating classes

School	Year	Students
Bayside State High	12	10
Claybrook College	12	22
Greylands College	12	15 ¹
St Bede's	11	12
Whitefields College	11	16
Grasslands College	11	13

Note: 1 In the first round, 95 students completed the worksheets describing their paid part-time work.

Year 11 and 12 students comprised the student cohorts across the six schools. In some schools, the contact person within the school was the teacher who actually undertook the classroom interventions. Yet, in two other instances, the initial contact (at Greylands College) and school point of contact (at St Bede's College) were not the teachers who ultimately conducted the classroom activities. Therefore, there were different levels of knowledge about and commitment to these interventions across the schools.

Stage four: Interview teachers and write up report and arrange dissemination of the findings

Throughout the classroom-based activities comprising stage three, data were gathered on the efficacy of the activities from the perspectives of both students and teachers. These data comprised those gathered in interviews and through the use of schedules of questions. These data were used progressively by the students through the completed worksheets and surveys. The findings were analysed, reported and disseminated. The data consisted of:

- ✧ accounts of work, work practices and participation in work
- ✧ comparisons across workplace settings
- ✧ how the strategies were being used
- ✧ the efficacy of the approach from the perspectives of students and teachers
- ✧ the kinds of outcomes that were realised.

Interviews were also conducted with teachers and the coordinators of the research activities who were interacting with the schools. To aid the analysis, the data from the students' worksheets were placed into tables. The first of the tables refer to their reflections upon work. The second set of tables refer to comparisons across the students' experiences of different kinds of workplaces. The third set of tables presents data on students' engagement in thinking about how their paid employment helped them to consider options and pathways beyond school. The fourth set of tables refer to the relative usefulness or educational worth of this kind of classroom-based set of experiences. The data in these tables were analysed and the findings provided in the next section.

Findings

Key research questions

The findings reported here are the results of analyses of the survey and interview data from the teachers and students at the participating schools. These findings are divided into six sets to address the key research questions.

In what ways can engagement with paid work assist school students and their peers to understand work, working life and post-school pathways?

Discussed under this question are:

- ✧ differences in the enactment and outcomes of the school-based interventions
- ✧ understanding work
- ✧ reflecting upon paid work.

What kinds of teaching practices might secure these outcomes?

Discussed under this question are:

- ✧ engaging students in reflecting upon work and post-school pathways
- ✧ considering teachers' roles.

How can schools best organise experiences to inform students about work, working life and post-school options?

Discussed under this question is:

- ✧ considerations for vocational education and schooling.

The first set of findings addresses the differences between what was intended by the research and what actually occurred in the school settings, the cause of these differences and their potential implications. Respectively, the next three sets of findings directly address the key research questions and are concerned with: use of experiences in paid work to assist students to understand work and working life; the educational worth of reflecting on paid work; and a consideration of the contributions of these experiences to students' reflection on post-school pathways. This is followed by findings that emerged from the conduct of the research relating to the roles of teachers and schools.

In what ways can engagement with paid work assist school students and their peers to understand work, working life and post-school pathways?

The enactment and outcomes of the school-based interventions

The first set of findings is associated with differences between what was intended by the research and what actually occurred in the school settings, the cause of these differences and their potential implications. There were differences in the approaches taken across the schools, and their consequences need to be elaborated from the outset because they influenced the efficacy of the project. They illuminate something of the potential diversity in the approaches adopted and the outcomes that might be experienced in the school-based processes associated with replications of

this initiative. It is suggested that the factors that shaped what occurred at each school could influence a range of VET in Schools initiatives more broadly.

As elaborated above, it was never envisaged that all of the school-based interventions would be based on the suggested set of resources provided by the researchers, but rather adapted at the teacher's discretion and appropriate to their classes. Indeed, each school-based intervention was distinct, despite all schools electing to use the materials developed for the pilot without alteration (see appendix 1).

Some teachers used a considered approach although, in at least two schools, the classroom-based processes floundered to a greater or lesser degree, seemingly because of a lack of planning and consideration of student readiness. At St Bede's College the teacher who had been assigned the task, found it difficult and frustrating, as did a number of the students in her communication class. Consequently, the data from this school were quite incomplete in parts. The data did, however, provide useful insights into the students' part-time employment and the means of engaging students in class activities around thinking about work. Using the unmodified teaching resources originally prepared for a class of Year 12 legal studies girls with a mixed group of Year 11 students so that they might think about their paid employment proved to be difficult. This resulted in the teacher being suspicious and resentful of the intent of the research.

At Greylands College there were different difficulties. Another teacher at this school was given the task of implementation, after the VET coordinator had taken leave. Poorly briefed and faced with a large number of students to include in the research, logistics overcame his capacity to satisfactorily complete the project. This resulted in the data being incomplete for the promised cohorts. It became necessary for the teacher to request assistance for the final session. It is noteworthy here that, at both these schools, the individual who had been the initial point of contact elected to pass on the classroom task to another teacher. Moreover, in each case, requests from the research team to assist and engage with the teachers were rebuffed in one instance, and delayed until the teacher had encountered difficulties in the other. This may say something not only about the processes occurring within schools and the readiness and interests of teachers, but it also reinforces the difficulties that arise from educational initiatives which are enacted by those who are not engaged and interested.

So, was the process fundamentally flawed? Or, was the problem—the unwillingness to adapt learning materials (regarded as possibly corrupting the data)—an indication of an imperfect understanding of qualitative methods?

Across four of the schools, students clearly indicated that the tasks of using unmodified resources containing some technical language and writing on worksheets were onerous, with some students at St Bede's (Year 11), Greylands College (Year 12), Whitefield's College (Year 11) and to a lesser extent in Grasslands College (Year 11) indicating their frustration with the meaning of words and the task of writing. Certainly, the teachers' interest, competence and engagement in the task appeared to be important for the experiences for students in the classroom-based activities. For instance, at Whitefield's College, a careers counsellor was involved directly, and her efforts in engaging the students were highly facilitative in the quality of their reflections. The teacher at Bayside State High (Year 12) demonstrated the capacity to facilitate and guide the students in a way that was largely productive.

At Claybrook College (Year 12) the interest generated by the teacher led to students making representations to the school about the need for work experience programs. Also in this instance, the teacher went further in support of her students and developed a work experience proposal with them to present to the school community. This school was included in the study belatedly because of the difficulties experienced at St Bede's College. The teacher at Claybrook College worked closely with the researcher in being briefed about the project and how it might proceed. Nevertheless, like the other teachers, she elected to use the existing four one-hour sessions virtually without any change. However, this teacher appeared to have engaged her largely Year 12 student

cohorts effectively in the process of reflecting on their employment. Moreover, the classes occurred outside classroom time in lunch breaks, in the students' free time.

The implementation of the initiative across schools was far from uniform, as were the outcomes. The differences in enactment of the initiative appeared to have had quite distinct consequences for the kinds of outcomes some students experienced. The key variables appear to have been:

- ✧ the engagement of the teachers who implemented the initiative
- ✧ the level of students and their readiness to engage in activities
- ✧ the understandings and capacities of teachers to facilitate effective student engagement and reflections.

The differences in the outcomes appear related to the extent to which students' reflections were positive and directed towards helpful educative concerns and processes. These issues are elaborated under the heading 'Teachers' roles'. These initial findings also raise questions about the capacities within some schools to effectively enact VET initiatives, even for those nominated as having had a tradition of involvement in vocational education and training.

The enactment of the procedures did not proceed as planned or as successfully in all schools. In the pilot study, the teacher at Bayside State High School requested that the researchers develop a set of sessions and these were implemented with a few adjustments within the school. All the other schools requested and used the same set of resources, often without any modification or consideration of the student cohorts and their readiness.

However, despite the same set of resources being used, the school-based procedures were enacted in quite distinct ways. In some instances, the teacher and the students struggled to implement the procedures, including collating forms and surveys. In one instance, the teacher gave up, and with another did not complete the full procedures with all the cohorts.

In all six schools, some students struggled and in a few cases resisted expressing their experiences in written form. Consequently, the processes and quality of outcomes varied enormously across the six schools. The key outstanding issues that shaped the enactment were:

- ✧ the limited adaptation of materials and interventions to the particular student cohort when needed
- ✧ the degree to which the teacher was able to facilitate the learning process of the students
- ✧ the interest and readiness of students
- ✧ the provision and standing of work experience and vocational education programs within the school.

Thus, there were differences between what was intended and what happened in schools, with variations in processes and outcomes reported across the six schools. An additional school was included in the project after difficulties arose at one school, and the availability and quality of data differed across the six schools. Because of these variations this initial finding is important in understanding the other findings. It also raises a series of issues about the centrality of teachers' roles in vocational education and training provision in schools, and whether their schools and school systems support their teachers and students adequately. These issues are explored and elaborated, in part, in the following sections with a particular emphasis being given to this topic in the section on 'Teachers' roles'.

Understanding work

The students were asked to use a worksheet to describe their paid part-time work in the first session. This worksheet comprises categories of workplace activities and interactions that the

students were asked to respond to describing their work experiences (see appendix 1). The aim of this activity was to provide a base for students to:

- ✧ reflect upon their own paid part-time work
- ✧ share those experiences with other students
- ✧ consider the relative effectiveness of different kinds of work experiences.

These categories of class activities and interactions were adapted from a more comprehensive scheme that was developed earlier with the aim of understanding the requirements of paid work (Billett 2000). The categories have been used in several studies of work and learning through research with adult employees (for example, Billett, Barker & Hernon-Tinning 2004).

Some students, particularly those in Year 11 cohorts, found the task of responding to all of the questions tedious. Some clearly resisted; however, most students provided rich accounts of their part-time employment. Yet, both kinds of students provided helpful data about:

- ✧ the kinds of work they are engaged in
- ✧ how the division of labour is organised in workplaces
- ✧ what tasks are subject to close scrutiny and monitoring
- ✧ in what ways they have discretion of freedom to act
- ✧ what work is prized and most valued in the workplace etc.

In addition, they were able to articulate important features of work and working life. For instance, most of the respondents were able to articulate a definition of teamwork. Moreover, some provided critical examples of the importance of teamwork and working together. As many of the students were engaged in service and retail outlets, the importance of working together was highlighted. For those in retail and service employment, there were often critical comments about their treatment by customers. Here, for instance, many reported how they disliked rude customers. In these ways, the students were able to provide quite critical and nuanced accounts, indicating what they had learnt through their part-time employment.

The claim made here is that such insights are unlikely to be developed through school-based work experience programs since, through their part-time employment, students are engaged in the kinds of working experiences which expose them to authentic working life and conditions of employment. Here again, it is necessary to reiterate that these forms of work were not meant as exemplars or preferred occupational outcomes. Instead they provided a platform to reflect upon work and working life more generally. The survey forms consistently indicated that such reflection had occurred. As discussed later, it was really only the degree to which students were able to constructively appraise work, working life and consider post-school pathways that led to the richness of the data.

Certainly, the data on the kinds of work the students participated in elaborated many of the key attributes of work and working life. These are now discussed.

Kinds of work

From the findings it is obvious that students have the opportunity to gain insights across different kinds of work. Students' part-time employment may be categorised under three headings. These are:

- ✧ retail
- ✧ food preparation and service
- ✧ other.

The research reflects other work (for example, Fullarton 1999) in that there was a fairly consistent pattern of student participation in retail and food preparation and service roles. However, striking

amongst these categories of work was the diversity of the kinds of callings and experiences in retail and food service workplaces. For instance, while some students engaged in large retail settings, such as supermarkets and general stores, others worked for small retail operations. In the former, much of those workplace dealings were with peers and other workers while, in the latter they were engaging more frequently with managers and owners. As noted below, the kinds of activities they engaged in and responsibilities they were required to fulfil differed quite markedly across these retail workplace settings.

Similarly, while some of the students worked in chains of fast-food outlets, others were involved in restaurants, cafes and food outlets, which were quite small and specialist in their products. Like the retail category, there was a diversity of experience in food service outlets, and these were similar to those of retail workplaces. Yet, as elaborated below, there are also significant differences. For instance, securing gratuities (that is, tips) from customers in restaurants is associated with a particular focus on teamwork: providing the kind of service that would secure gratuities.

The ‘other’ category of employment was quite diverse and appears particularly influenced by the location of the school. Not surprisingly, students in the regional areas tended to engage in activities that could easily be distinguished from their metropolitan counterparts (for example, farm work, hospitality settings, garage work).

There was a pattern across the sample (albeit unrepresentative) of different kinds of outcomes associated with the schools. Some cohorts seemed far more likely to be engaging in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships than others. In addition, there was something of a contrast between the kinds of employment the girls from Claybrook College (a prestigious private school) secured compared with their peers at Bayside State High.

Within the categories of retail, food service and other, quite a diversity of work was offered. Examples at Whitefield College included retail in a pharmacy; food service included coffee, pizza, bakery; ‘other’ included housekeeping in the snowfields.

At Claybrook College, the retail work included costume hire and manufacture, with the food service roles involving waitressing and working in an ice cream store. Here, the ‘other’ work included being a physiotherapist’s receptionist, training army cadets and a swimming pool attendant.

At Greylands College, where 85 students completed information on their part-time employment, the retail work included both large and small retail workplaces with a range of specialities (for example, vegetable store, video hire, newsagents, pharmacies). Here, the food service work included preparing hamburgers in a small takeaway cafe, making pizzas, cooking fish, working in coffee bars and restaurants. Other kinds of work included being a gymnastic coach, fibre glassing, electrician, swimming coach, hairdresser, working in a kitchen design workplace, newsagents, administration within an aquatic centre, butcher, production of pharmaceuticals, trade assistant, and office work.

In tables 3 to 7 the distribution of participation in categories of paid part-time work across the schools is presented.

Table 3: Whitefield College—participation in categories of paid part-time work

Category of work	N=	Examples
Food preparation and service	9	Pizza, coffee bars, waitressing, McDonald’s and restaurants
Retail	3	Pharmacy, store work
Other	2	Baking, cleaning snow cabins

Table 4: Claybrook College—participation in categories of paid part-time work

Category of work	N=	Examples
Food preparation and service	9	Juice bar, waitressing, ice cream store
Retail	6	Customer service, cashier, general work, managing shop, costume hire and manufacture, fruit store
Other	3	Cadet training, receptionist at physiotherapy clinic, pool attendant

Table 5: Greylands College—participation in categories of paid part-time work

Category of work	N=	Examples
Food preparation and service	24	Hamburger preparation, pizza-making, waitressing, serving food, cafe, food preparation, cooking fish
Retail	36	General store work, pharmacy, fruit shop, video store, vegetable shop, video hire, newsagents, pharmacist
Other	15	Gymnastics coach, fibre glassing, electrician, swimming coach, hairdresser, kitchen design, newsagents, aquatic centre administration, timber yards, office work, trade assistant, butcher, pharmaceutical manufacturing

Table 6: Bayside State High—participation in categories of paid part-time work

Category of work	N=	Examples
Food preparation and service	4	Takeaway food trainees (Subway, Red Rooster), restaurant traineeship, cafe
Retail	4	General retail work (Coles, Crazy Clarks), cashier at Home and Garden

Table 7: Grasslands College—participation in categories of paid part-time work

Category of work	N=	Examples
Food preparation and service	2	Cooking takeaway food, making hamburgers
Retail	5	Mixing and selling paint, pharmacy, paint store, hi-fi store and installation, car sales yard
Other	6	Electrical work, farm work (spray equipment), plumbing work, farm work, hairdressing, garage/mechanical work

These tables outline the diversity of paid employment on offer to school students. It is more than likely that any cohorts of Australian Year 11 and 12 students will be engaging in a diversity of forms of work and workplaces, and with quite diverse employment arrangements and requirements. Therefore, it is possible that in Year 11 and 12 classrooms generally there will be a range of forms of work activities for students to share with one another to enable consideration of work, working life and their post-school pathways. The data also suggest that there are quite different experiences across schools and regions. Note for instance, that within the student cohorts at Bayside High and Greylands in Queensland, where school-based apprenticeships and traineeships are heavily promoted, there was a number of students also engaged in structured entry-level training arrangements, as well as part-time employment. The diversity of employment kinds appears to be shaped by the location of the schools and their standing within their communities. By sharing their experiences, classes can tap an extensive range and depth of work so that students can understand more fully the employment and pathway options.

Range of tasks

It was also found that students have the opportunity to consider a broad range of tasks and levels of responsibilities, given the sheer volume of work on offer to school students. The findings accord with those of others (for example, Fullarton 1999), where retail and service work, especially from large outlets, predominated for students in part-time employment. Among the retail work was the inevitable cashier, shelf-filling, cleaning and store assistant kinds of work tasks. Many of these were

reported to be closely supervised wherever money or crucial activities were being undertaken. Yet there were also higher levels of responsibility mixed with the mundane, where money and securing the premises were involved. Within retail there was diversity: tinting and paint sales; pharmaceutical and cosmetic sales; costume-making and hire work; installing sound systems often using subtle pressure techniques to sell more. Hospitality work also provided diverse situations—food preparation in large and small outlets, as well as waitressing, housekeeping at ski lodges, reception work and baking.

Tasks were various, ranging from military cadet training; making costumes for a costume hire business; a receptionist at a physiotherapy clinic; a swimming pool attendant; electrical work; mixing paints in a paint store; baking; and managing a jewellery shop. Where facilitated sessions in classrooms were provided, students in paid employment were able to provide rich insights to the world of work to share with their teachers and peers.

Routine/non-routine work activities

Given the findings, students in paid employment were able to discuss the effects of routine and non-routine tasks. They identified the mix of routine and non-routine activities in the workplace and who was most likely to undertake these tasks. They could distinguish between the routine, low-paid and low-skill tasks and those which offer higher remuneration and status, requiring greater depth in preparation and greater range. Routine work is often more demanding than non-routine, but it offered opportunities for rich learning. Students in retail settings and sometimes those in food preparation and service areas often referred to their own work as being routine and menial.

Students identified work which was shared by all and required frequently. In retail and food settings, shelving and serving tasks were commonly referred to. However, in some workplaces the routine work for some students carried significant responsibilities: *Routine working includes opening and closing the store and managing the store* (Claybrook College). *Supervising others in the baking of bread, and working independently in performing housekeeping roles in a snow chalet* (Grasslands College). *Routine tasks include answering phone and making appointments. Discretion includes opening practice and closing it. Responsibilities include payroll, banking and treating [as directed] patients* (Claybrook College). Students could identify that routine tasks were often related to conditions of employment and status. Also, as discussed later, they could indicate the kinds of attributes associated with performing more interesting and non-routine activities which, they said, required qualifications, specific competencies, age and experience.

Discretion and responsibilities

The range of responsibilities provided a source for sharing valuable information about working life. The degree of freedom to act in the students' paid employment and the responsibilities they had for other workers under their management differed widely. Often that freedom was associated with undertaking menial tasks that were highly routine (for example, serving customers, cleaning, filling shelves), whereas most of the monitoring and lack of discretion was associated with the handling of money, which was typically supervised closely and the focus of considerable stress. However, supervision was variable, depending on the size and complexity of the operation. One student had control of the stock and takings in a store that serviced customers waiting to get on ferries. She was rarely closely supervised as her employer needed to focus his efforts on the ferry operations. She commented *he never supervises me because he trusts me*. She looked after the entire shop, including balancing the cash register. Other students managed retail stores, worked on their own late at night, trained cadets and sprayed crops on a farm, driving expensive and complex farm machinery. They all reported considerable discretion in their work.

Students also reported having responsibility for their own productivity and the conduct of their work: in a newsagent the work *requires high levels of self-organisation and discipline, because the work is not closely supervised* (Greylands College). Pharmacy work entailed *discretion, providing medication advice and confidentiality*, with another student outlining how she organised children's parties at a fast-food outlet. *I distribute set tasks to staff—making sure my department is as an efficient, practising food safety*

(Whitefields College). The responsibilities that were reported were typically directed towards students' work performance: *we're not really monitored—responsibility for others includes work as a team, working safely, work requiring multiple tasks* (Whitefields College). There was also responsibility and possibly the necessity for training and supervising less-experienced counterparts reported. The cadet trainer claimed that she had *total authority for and responsibility over cadets*, while the swimming pool attendant ensured the safety of pool patrons.

The students were required to outline the obligations that employers had to them to ascertain if they were aware of the reciprocal nature of rights and responsibilities within an employment arrangement. Despite a lack of understanding of this point by teachers and students alike, some responses included opportunities being made available to reward students for good performance, care for employees, such as waitresses leaving work late at night, and the extension of responsibilities, once a track record of performance had been established. Some students also identified the trade-off between unsocial hours and rates of pay, thereby understanding a principle that underpins a range of concepts around employment relating to casual loading and penalty rates for awkward working hours.

Certainly, through their reflections the students were able to identify and understand the scope and degree of discretion and responsibility included in their work, as well as those that were to be exercised towards them as employees. They recognised when both these were deficient. The findings suggest that students are able to use their paid employment to gain insights into these authentic qualities of work and working life.

Intensity and complexity of work

The intensity and complexity of work are increasing in contemporary work and working life, with consequences for individuals' choices and conduct. Sharing their understandings of the extent of work intensity can help students shape their future options. Retail and service work provided ways for students to articulate issues associated with the intensity of work. They saw this in terms of particular times of the day (for example, serving meals at lunchtimes, in the evening) or on particular days (Friday night, Saturdays or Sunday lunchtime). By identifying these occasions, students could also list the consequences for workers with some feeling like 'walking out' at times, others noticing the unpleasantness experienced in dealing with customers who were perceived to be rude or overly demanding—yet to whom they have to be pleasant. They noticed that intensity had different effects on their team members. The impact of intense work is: *stress, injuries, abusive customers* (Whitefields College); *work can be very intense on Sunday mornings, Saturday afternoons and lunchtimes—when stressed more mistakes are made by trying to do many things at once* (Greylands College). It was remarked by some students that there was an inevitability about the pressure to meet customers' needs, with some observing that stress levels can be managed effectively while being able to keep customers happy.

Work complexity affects work practices. Students could distinguish degrees of complexity by referring to their own service-related work which they regarded as not very difficult or complex to undertake or learn. They also listed tasks which they found difficult to understand and learn (for example, cash register, being nice to all customers, preparing food properly while being under pressure to do it quickly, taking customer calls, cash handling and customer service—*preventing kids fighting at parties*). Thus, Year 11 and 12 students are able to discuss the complexity of work and distinguish which tasks are harder to learn and perform effectively.

Working with others

The majority of students could define teamwork, with the retail sector and franchised fast-food outlet employees having these concepts made explicit through the imperative to work together in meeting customers' needs. The students listed individuals working together to achieve the workplace's goals most consistently. Teamwork means: *we have to communicate with each other and make sure there's no personality clashes* (Whitefields College). Teamwork means: *being able to trust someone to do their part so that you can do yours* (Grasslands College); *to all work together, when you have finished doing your*

task on your station, you help others' (Claybrook College); teamwork means: *sharing tasks. If one person is busy preparing food, another free worker will go and serve the customer* (Greylands College); and *working together to effectively reach a successful outcome* (Claybrook College). On the other hand, teamwork could also provide conflict, with a view that co-workers were not fulfilling their obligations to themselves and others as workers. One respondent indicated that his work was 'horrible', but if everybody worked together as a team, life would be easier for everybody.

Because teamwork requires a continuity of engagement with other members in the workplace, part-time employees in Year 11 and 12 have more of an opportunity to understand this aspect than their counterparts only undertaking work experience. In these ways, students were able to understand the collective responsibilities and processes that constitute much of paid work. The students in the study realised that teamwork means working together, as well as working at a level where the burden of the workplace is shared across those working within it.

Status of employment

Many students reported that their particular paid employment arrangement is not high-status, with consequences in the workplace: *Being a part-time worker means you get weird hours, early call in* (Whitefields College); *Juniors get to do the low-status work such as dishwashing because it's not as important, and a place where they start* (Greylands College). In their responses, students could also identify high-status tasks and saw the relationship between high-status work, skills and qualifications, as well as ownership of the business: *High-status work is being successful with wedding functions because of the money and satisfaction—often conducted by senior staff because of their experience* (Claybrook College); *high-status workers are those who have the authority and technology to void orders* (Greylands College).

Paid employment assisted students by identifying routine work as not well regarded; that part-time could lead to inconvenient shifts (*you get weird hours*) and lack of continuity of work and regular employment compared with full-time employment, where better conditions than for part-time workers applied. Students could associate more high-status work with specialist skills, experience, qualifications, and age. In this way, the students in paid employment could critically assess the conditions of work and working life, providing very specific educative consequences for them and highly consistent with general educational goals.

Shared values

Students could readily identify the values in their workplaces where customer service was a central concern, because these values were often made explicit. *Key values in this workplace are to be quick, friendly customer service, to be helpful and to always find someone who will help customer if you cannot do it yourself* (Grasslands College). They shared other implicit values and they expressed areas where their own values were not aligned with those of the workplace. In particular, having to be nice to people who are being rude or awkward—*Don't like it when customers are offensive* (Greylands College)—was seen as a key point at which the values of the workplace (*being pleasant to customers regardless*) and the students' values were not the same. *I don't think you should be nice to everyone* (Greylands College). However, a number of students also indicated agreement between the values of their workplace and those of their own. A key benefit was *seeing little kids' faces light up when they get happy meal* claimed a Whitefields College student who worked at McDonald's. Another similarly identified benefits from the work as *a closer relationship with kids*. As noted, students engage in work in which they were clearly well prepared for and derived more than remuneration as an outcome. The military cadet trainer was aware of her responsibilities and the role she played at work in exercising the workplace's responsibilities towards recruits. The young woman working as a waitress understood the benefits of working with paying customers and how best to secure gratuities from them. Other students were able to identify the negative side of interacting with customers, those which contravened personal values and sense of self.

Having some understanding of the different kinds of values that exist in workplaces, as well as how these might either coincide or conflict with personal values, seems an important concept for students to understand as intending workers. Again, it is suggested that the kinds of experiences for

understanding workplace values are likely to be best understood through participation in paid employment—authentic working life experiences.

It is proposed that the process of describing and reflecting on their part-time employment was helpful for the majority of students across the six schools, even though some resisted the experience of having to read and write down aspects of their experience. As discussed later, this process might well be more conversationally or group-focused in classroom-based activities. Despite an unwillingness to write on the part of students involved in the research, overwhelmingly, the conclusion here is that paid employment and its discussion in a classroom setting provides a safe space to understand and engage in the world of work in ways that permitted a critical reflection upon it.

Comparisons and sharing of experiences

In the second proposed session, the students engaged in the process of sharing their descriptions, experiences and reflections of their paid part-time work with other students. The concern here was to share, compare and contrast experiences within a cohort of students. This also provided an opportunity for students who have not engaged in paid part-time work to learn from other students about their paid work experiences. Students were asked to identify experiences that were both common and different across their groups. It appears that there were quite different processes used within each of the schools. Some elected to have a group discussion, at the end of which students filled in their worksheets individually or collectively. This was evident in some of the responses that were very similar across groups of students. In other situations, it seems that the students worked in pairs. The data from the schools suggest that the students were easily able to identify commonalities across work experiences. In particular, and not surprisingly, they were able to identify much of the common experience associated with low paid work in the service work in which they been employed.

For instance, the students at Claybrook College identified a series of tasks and roles through their work experiences. These included:

- ✧ *commonly undertaken tasks*: cleaning, answering the phone, customer service, using cash register, counting money, EFTPOS, having meetings, dealing with people courteously, dealing with good and bad customers, promoting the workplace, promoting sales, presentation matters
- ✧ *issues associated with remuneration and rewards*: rewards in terms of overtime, working on Sundays and public holidays to get more pay; as well as activities that were good for business, and how the exercise of good service and sales work was well rewarded.
- ✧ *work that was poorly rewarded*: cleaning, register work, customer service work, bad customer service work, making mistakes, being rude to customers, being late, disrespect, being lazy; understanding that night work is not better paid
- ✧ *the best work for those people who had the skills and experience to do it*: training and also personal qualities, such as reliability, and responsibility.
- ✧ *benefits*: personal fulfilment and also opportunities that might arise from their work
- ✧ *qualities associated with personal attributes and training essential for good work (albeit largely service work)*: good communication, good personal appearance, energetic, happy, liking the products sold or served, good personal hygiene, being able to do a number of tasks, being able to handle money.

Similarly, through their comparisons, students at Whitefields College listed responsibilities and practices important in their part-time work. These comprised: engagement with customers, other workers and managers; important tasks related to maintaining the hygiene of the workplace; and preparing meals. These tasks have responsibilities central to the success of the workplaces in which they were employed. That is, they concluded that service-oriented workplaces rely on interactions with customers; groups of workers acting together to fulfil customers' needs; and the necessity for interacting with supervisors. Students clearly understood (sometimes with cynicism) the requirements for what constituted effective work performance. Handling money and credit facilities entailed trust, honesty and care on the part of supervisors and owners. Students also identified what

was well rewarded, including additional pay for working unsocial hours (for example, early starts, Sundays, public holidays), taking initiative, being self-motivated and enthusiastic, producing good work and immediacy. The findings here provide useful accounts of the students' understanding of performance in these kinds of workplaces. At one level, they identify the trade-off for time generally, and unsocial time, in particular. Also, what is reiterated is the importance of personal qualities of engagement and being effective in work activities.

Similarly, at Grasslands' College, the students were able to synthesise some ideas about working life through their group processes. These included:

- ✧ Those common across the students' experiences include: punctuality, answering to the boss, teamwork, keeping work area safe and clean. Differences were identified as: travelling, working at one location, dirty, repairing and fixing equipment, producing milk, serving customers.
- ✧ Work attributes that are well rewarded were: being neat and tidy, independence, self-initiative, pre-planning, operating complex equipment, gratuities from customers, positive feedback, specialist work.
- ✧ Work not well rewarded was identified as being: non-team player, rude to customers and clients, breaking things, not being punctual, making mistakes, cleaning, dissatisfaction with work, sweeping floors and menial tasks.

In responding to the question of how they could ensure they were prepared for well rewarded work, the Grasslands College students responded with: personal characteristics (good skills, motivations, hard work, persistence, good personality); particular kinds of preparation; and qualifications (for example, good education, initiative training).

Finally, these students stated the lessons they had learned from these reflections about different kinds of work. Here they referred to:

- ✧ you need to develop the required skills and to get experience
- ✧ work hard at school; [have a] positive mindset, persistence can help achieve the goal you set to achieve
- ✧ need to develop your skills so you can get experience; always put in 110%; get as much experience as I can in areas, set yourself short and long-term goals
- ✧ must keep record clean and be mentally and physically fit
- ✧ you'll need to be motivated and get out there and get experience and skills needed for interesting work and the tasks which are involved.

These final reflections are fascinating. They suggest that the students have some understanding of what awaits them outside school and the need to acquire what elsewhere is referred to as 'human capital'. These responses, arising from the group discussions, provided useful bases for proceeding.

By being involved in paid employment and sharing their insights with other students who were not in paid employment meant that a discussion sometimes eventuated which allowed the working students to share their experience of participation in the world of work so that non-working students would begin to understand something of its diversity, its requirements and its shortcomings. While the students were often critical in their comments about their paid part-time work, their responses suggest that they have been exposed to and participated in work activities that reflect tasks important to their workplaces.

Crucial features of work and working life, identified by students included:

- ✧ the distinctions between the conditions and roles of part-time workers by comparison with those of full-time workers, where they existed
- ✧ the unrewarding and unattractive nature of menial work

- ✧ the different discretion afforded to workers and under what circumstances (for example, where money is involved)
- ✧ the different prospects for workers in the workplace
- ✧ concepts about team work, sometimes from a critical perspective
- ✧ the standing of workers and their treatment (for example, by rude customers and ‘uncaring’ bosses)
- ✧ the requirements for work performance.

The overall indication is that students could identify the salient features of work and working life. Given that many of these insights derived from cumulative experiences through paid employment, it is proposed that these experiences are authentic and a richer base for considering work and working life than are substitute work experiences, such as those offered through schools. Teachers who can facilitate the reflective disposition of students in their classes have enabled students to maximise their understandings and learning, and have given their paid employment even greater relevance.

Reflecting upon paid work

In different ways, and not always directly, the students consistently suggested, through their responses to worksheets and discussions, that the workplace is an effective environment to learn about work and working life, and for considering post-school options. Some students agreed that the kind of processes trialled in this project were helpful in thinking about the world of work beyond school and were often associated with an encouraging teacher.

Some referred to a wider range of work-based experiences, part-time employment and school-organised work experiences as being important experiences in understanding how best to understand the world of work. Without an experienced teacher to support a facilitative process, students may not engage in the necessary constructive and critical reflection.

Students identified that the ideal way of being informed about career options was through the provision of different kinds of work and workplace experiences facilitated by the school, whereby people who are knowledgeable about the actual experience of the particular work are invited to talk about the everyday experience in that occupation. At Bayside State High, the students suggested that, in many instances, there was a significant problem in only being able to experience the actual practice in the professions after completion of a tertiary or a higher education program. That is, only after considerable investment in time, money and other resources would they come to understand that their employment goal would be to their liking. What they were suggesting was the opportunity to participate in or learn about what constitutes the actual everyday activities of the occupation for which they were being prepared. Across the six schools, students collectively proposed quite different purposes for engaging in authentic workplace experiences.

At Claybrook College, some of the Year 12 students did not consider that this process assisted them to think about the world of work beyond schools. For instance:

- ✧ not so much, doing the same thing, but something to deal with customers
- ✧ hasn’t really, not in the field of work I want to do in the future—but has taught me how the workforce operates.

This last comment suggests that richer or transferable forms of learning occurred for the student, with the assumption (often shared by teachers) that a learnt outcome had to be positive.

However, other students at Claybrook College identified the contributions of the process in guiding their post-school directions:

- ✧ It makes me think I need to get better qualifications in order to get better pay.
- ✧ It made me want to have a better job as you don’t get paid as much.

- ✧ It has taught me how the workforce operates.
- ✧ It has made me think that I would like some day to own my own business, but I do not want to make a career out of sewing/designing costumes.
- ✧ I don't want to be checkout girl at Coles in the future. Does not open many horizons for the future and is very monotonous.
- ✧ I do not want to work in retail; has helped teach me how the workforce operates.
- ✧ Opening options, preparing me for what I should expect, exploring choices and different job descriptions within my career advice.
- ✧ It makes me want to work with people, but not in a convenience store or restaurant.

Although the students at St Bede's College did not engage enthusiastically with the classroom-based process, their data reveal informed insights, which might have been stronger had the activities been utilised more effectively. Their responses include concerns about menial work, different conceptions of teamwork (including a critical one about the failings of a co-worker), the importance of customer service work, the different times at which work is busy, the way that checking money at the cash registers is closely monitored but cleaning is not, and the conflict between their personal values and having to be pleasant to customers.

At this school it was disappointing that the potential of their contributions seemed not to have been drawn out or facilitated. The offhandedness with which one student refers to his employment situation can be contrasted with his observation of a co-worker as angry and lazy. An opportunity for an important class discussion may well have been lost here, as per the opportunities identified by Bailey, Hughes and Moore (2004).

Students also used their encounters in paid employment and their reflections to appraise their post-school options. Undoubtedly, some students would have done this without the classroom involvement. However, through their classroom-based activities, the independent or collective reflections seemed to provide a basis for discussing and evaluating their ideas and considering pathways for action.

At Claybrook College, the students began to agitate for the school to become involved in school-organised work experience, because these reflections suggested to the students the need for the school to take a role in supporting these activities. The appraisal of their experiences in the project had led them to recognise the value of engagement in and reflection on workplace experiences.

In other schools where work experience was offered, students remarked on the inadequacy of the coordination and monitoring of these experiences and the marginal value it had in the life of the school: the placements went unremarked by teachers and were not integrated into class activities. For some students therefore school-organised work experience was often a non-event. Often its positive outcomes were realised through happenchance or student effort, rather than through good organisation. The students at Bayside High discussed this in their focus group activities. They stated that the school-organised work experience was not compulsory, occurring at the end of the year in the last week of Year 10. The girls claimed that most of the boys could not be bothered going to work experience, so hang around at school. Most girls, claimed the boys, go out and do work experience, but the experience is not monitored by the school nor attracts interest by the teachers, despite its being stated in the school's outline that there will be three visits by teachers.

Students observed that work experiences are not taken seriously in the school. It is never referred to within the school. While they took up the work experience, some girls did not undertake the work in proposed post-school pathways. After work placement, as in their paid employment, they had definitely decided not to do the kinds of jobs they had experienced. However, there were exceptions. One student reported having had a great time in her work experience with informative co-workers in a pharmacy. She had served customers, stacked shelves and sold pharmaceutical items—except prescription drugs. On the other hand, one student spent the entire time entering hundreds of email addresses into a computer system. A third, sent to a childcare centre, was

directed to clean and take little children to the toilet. Through this experience she realised that she was not suited to this kind of work. With a focus on giving the students tasks, other aspects were overlooked. The full range of jobs in the workplace was neither revealed, nor career paths discussed by the adults in the work experience workplace, or indeed in the school.

Different perspectives overwhelmingly confirm that authentic work experiences are richly informative for a number of educational purposes. However, to maximise the experience, diverse approaches are likely to be required, those which best suit students' readiness to engage in constructive reflection and decision-making.

Specifically, students were able to identify a range of educational purposes for reflecting upon their paid work experiences. These included learning:

- ✧ about working life
- ✧ about different kinds of work—what is common and different to them
- ✧ about the kinds of work they do not want to engage in post-school
- ✧ about the kinds of work they want to do post-school
- ✧ whether preferred work options are actually what the individual wants to do
- ✧ whether the preferred post-tertiary or university occupation is actually what individuals want to do.

In these ways, paid employment experiences provided quite different opportunities for students in their classes for considering work, working life and preferences for forms of employment. They recognised the importance of actually experiencing what it is like to work, and how this justified their investment and direction in school, tertiary and higher education. Likewise, Patten (2001) indicates that, along with family, school and peer groups, work is an important context for the development of young people. Patten notes that, by combining activities in education and work, characteristics of career maturity are developed; these can be distinguished in those students who engage in paid employment. She concludes that: 'it would seem prudent for schools to more closely link the workplace as a site for learning, and not only in the formal structured workplace learning programs'. Many of the students would agree and, especially for work experience to be effective, would want their teachers to visit them and acknowledge their participation. Moreover, building on their experiences of paid work could serve well the goals of learning about working life.

Patten (2001) claims that exploring the world of work increases self-knowledge as well as an awareness of suitable educational and occupational options. These data support this claim. Smith and Comyn (2003) propose that employability skills are context-bound, making learning through engagement with particular workplaces inevitable. Reflecting on paid work experiences may assist the development of understanding of contextual issues associated with workplace performance and the highly situated nature of workplace performance or expertise (Billett 2001). Therefore, it may be only through authentic working life experiences that young people will come to understand the importance of the skills required for work and the relevance of employability skills. Yet, the capacity to share work experience reflections through classroom-based experiences, such as those trialled here, offer the chance to understand employability skills characteristic of a range of experiences.

Central to students' decision-making about working life and post-school pathways is their involvement in reflections and discussions at school about their experiences in paid employment. The key considerations are:

- ✧ how best to engage students to reflect constructively, yet critically on those experiences
- ✧ the facilitative processes in schools which engage and link students' paid work experiences to considerations of working life and post-school pathways
- ✧ the kinds of skills teachers require to best facilitate those processes.

These issues are taken up in the next sections.

What kinds of teaching practices might secure these outcomes?

Engaging students in reflecting upon work and post-school pathways

The evidence suggests overall, that the kinds of processes utilised in this project, although resisted by some and not to all students' liking, were effective in assisting students to consider work and working life. This section uses data from the students, teacher interviews and interviews with the two local coordinators to identify the overall usefulness of the processes and how best the processes of reflection on work, working life and post-school pathways might be further developed. The limited scope of the study in terms of the numbers of schools engaged prevents generalisation. However, the breadth of activity of the students engaged in the process offers some confidence to suggest that the findings here are not restricted to the participating schools. In some schools, the activities occurred during class time. In others they were enacted during lunch breaks and spare periods in their timetables. There was wide variation across the sites in relation to students' familiarity with using group work as a tool for learning; their dislike for writing was also an issue. Had data-gathering been based on audio rather than text, quite different findings may have resulted; many students were more competent in discussing their ideas than presenting them in written form.

As part of the final of the four sessions, the students evaluated the reflective process used in school. They were asked to indicate the usefulness of the approach taken within their school. Using a Lickert scale, the students indicated their perception of the usefulness of the classroom-based activities. The data from Greylands College and St Bede's College are not included in this table, because the activity was either not undertaken or the data were too incomplete, respectively. Overall, as indicated in table 8, the majority of students rated the activity as being helpful or better. That is, the students agreed that the process had helped them to think about work, working life and post-school pathways. In this table, the four schools which provided data are presented in the left column along with the number of respondents from that school. The frequency of the students' rating of the usefulness of these interventions is then indicated across the columns to its right. The two most frequent responses were those of the students finding the process either 'helpful' or 'useful'. These, when aggregated with the responses reporting the process to be very useful, were far greater in number than those reporting its efficacy to be limited.

Table 8: Usefulness of trialled approach

School (n=)	Very useful	Useful	Helpful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
Bayside State High (9)		2	5	2	
Grasslands College (10)	1		1	4	3
Whitefields College (16)	1	5	3	4	2
Claybrook College (17)	1	7	8	1	
Totals	3	14	17	11	5

Note: Greylands College and St Bede's did not complete data used in this table.

The students reported that what was most useful in the trialled approach was the process of thinking about and discussing their paid employment. The students saw their experiences reflected in that of others. They recognised something of the diversity of paid work. From this they decided on what they did not want to pursue in their careers and how best they should learn about the world of work beyond schools.

While some students regarded this process as unhelpful, they did complete the worksheets and record their reactions to paid employment. Even those students who strongly disliked their paid employment and indicated that discussing it was not at all helpful concluded that the best way to learn about the world of work and preferred work options was to engage in authentic work experiences. While the teaching and learning strategies in this research were not optimal, what was central was students discussing and thinking about their authentic work experiences. Central also is

teachers' knowledge of their students' capacities, preference and the requirement to ensure the optimum classroom interventions.

School-organised work experiences

Most, but not all of the schools participating in the study have work experience programs. McKenzie (2001) reports a growing level of interest and participation in work experience programs, work placements and school-based workplace learning arrangements in Australian schools. These arrangements are most likely to be found in government schools (91%), Catholic schools (86%), and at consistently lower levels within independent schools (48%) (Malley, Frigo & Robinson 2001). Work experience programs differed across Australian schools. In some schools, it was compulsory, but not in others. In some states, students are provided with out-of-pocket expenses by employers. Consequently, comparisons are dubious for part-time employment and the diversity of work experiences in which schools participate (or not). As noted, students in one of the six schools that lacked work experience in their program requested such a program be made available to them. To compare the students' perceptions of the relative usefulness of school-organised work experience programs with those of students' understandings of their paid part-time work, students were also asked to indicate the usefulness of each, using a Lickert scale. As Claybrook College does not have a work experience program and two of the schools (that is, Greylands College and St Bede's College) did not engage in this research activity or the data were incomplete, only three schools could report.

The data presented in table 9 indicate that the students at these three schools believe the classroom-based experiences trialled in this project had either the same or higher levels of usefulness as school-organised work experience. That is, paid work is perceived as being at least as effective by these students, with more students reporting their usefulness as being greater than those suggesting otherwise. However, the numbers here are small, and as such, are indicative at best.

Table 9: Comparison of usefulness with school-organised work experience

School (n=)	Much more effective	More effective	About the same	Less effective	Much less effective
Bayside State High (9)	1	2	6		
Grasslands College (10)	1	3	3	1	2
Whitefield's College (16)	2		4		
Totals	4	5	13	1	2

Note: Greylands College and St Bede's did not complete data to be included in this table. Claybrook College does not offer a school-organised work experience program.

The students' responses are highly consistent with their responses captured by the qualitative data. That is, many of the insights gained by the students seemed unlikely to have been derived from short periods of work experience, but rather by ongoing, authentic work activity—their paid part-time work. It was these that provided the opportunity to understand the distribution of tasks and rewards in the workplace. The efficacy of reflecting on work experiences in paid employment is confirmed through both students' perceptions and the analysis of evidence from the research.

Best means of understanding post-school pathways

The students were also asked what they believed to be the most effective ways for learning about post-school pathways. While much of the school effort associated with post-school pathways to date has been through the provision of qualifications and counselling arrangements, Ryan (1999) questions the value of this approach. He poses the questions about the extent and timing of providing information about jobs; how to ensure its quality and relevance; and to what extent school-based provisions substitute effectively for early labour market experiences. These questions are not easily addressed and remain unanswered.

The processes of providing advice about post-school pathways are complex, particularly for students seeking direct entry into the labour market. The provision of advice, its timing and implications for students can be crucial. For instance, advice about apprenticeship or traineeship options directly aligned to specific vocational outcomes are required to be given quite early in students' senior years of schooling to permit them to take on a specific pathway of vocational preparation. Similarly, considered choices about subject selection can be important to students seeking to realise their vocational goals through university programs. Therefore, implications for school students' decisions on early career choices can be far-reaching, although it is not clear how prepared these students are for making these decisions, nor whether the advice and guidance they receive is optimum (Ryan 1999). Yet, there are also issues associated with how students can seek advice that is realistic about their career options. Gaining access to authentic work experiences can assist in informing students about the kinds of work available and the level of preparation required to gain such employment.

In this context among the range of the issues identified by a number of countries is the amount and timing of career information for students. For instance, in Japan, where teachers themselves undertake work experience options, younger Japanese workers still claim the best information about work comes from actual work experience rather than teacher-based guidance. Ryan (1999) found that the Japanese Government emphasises the tailoring of career guidance to individual student personalities, rather than recommending that all students strive for high-status outcomes. He concludes that:

the most promising way of finessing controversy over the merits of in school and out of school informational provisions to young people is to inject work experience into the educational curriculum, through such devices as work placements, work shadowing and school-based enterprise. (Ryan 1999, p.11)

As a result of this research, we add the need for a consideration of co-opting students' paid part-time work experience to be included in this list.

Patten (2001) argues that, where links are made between schools, adolescent employment and adult careers—through interventions such as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, structured workplace learning programs, work experience and work observation programs—in ways that operate within a career education framework, there appear to be better facilities for the school-to-work transition.

Students engaging in the process of reflecting on their paid employment reported it to be useful. By responding in written form limited data were produced. However, student preferences could have been captured by other methodologies, such as observing the rich interchange and the sharing that occurred through small group and class processes. In the case of this research, there was a requirement to capture extensive data from students, which being in written form, may have interfered with more familiar classroom interactions.

We noted that the rich and sometimes nuanced discussions in the classroom were not reflected in the brief written statements provided by the students in their worksheets. There were suggestions for other ways of learning about occupations, including advice from teachers, and access to specialist electronic resources and agencies. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that, when tailored to the students' readiness and preferences, the reflection upon paid work experiences in classrooms can be an effective pedagogical device, for both those students who are engaged in paid part-time work, and those who are not. Thus, whether used on their own or augmenting other activities or resources, school students' paid work experiences offer an educational resource readily available in Australian Year 11 and 12 classrooms.

Teachers' roles

The roles and skills of teachers are crucial in shaping the effectiveness of these reflections of paid part-time work. The three key variables across the six schools were:

- ✧ the capacities, interests and age of students
- ✧ the practices and policies within the schools that shape activities and priorities:
 - ◆ presence and quality of school-organised work experience
 - ◆ participation in school-based apprenticeship and traineeships
- ✧ the interests, capacities and experience of the teachers.

The anticipated enactment of this project had included engaging the teachers in a process of planning for the interventions in each school. However, this was undertaken in some schools (that is, Claybrook College, Bayside High and Grasslands), but not in the others. In essence, each school used the resource prepared and trialled at Bayside High in different ways, but without tailoring it to their students' readiness and capacities. Some teachers encountered problems in the first session but continued despite their being unsure about consistency of findings and believing that they would be corrupting the data if they modified the process to meet their particular students' requirements. In addition, those teachers who had been directed to the task by another (in one case absent colleague) enacted the classroom-based processes with very little enthusiasm.

The teachers' unwillingness or inability to customise resources in VET raises issues of how learning resources meet different learning requirements in the classroom, especially those designed to support training packages. That is, what happens when training packages are used in school settings?

Some teachers handed out the materials, with individual and groups working through them, sometimes resentfully. Others engaged their students, clarifying and addressing their questions, and importantly, questioning their assertions. The responses from the worksheets and other feedback indicate that there were clear differences in both the outcomes for students and the appreciation of the potential of their considering their part-time employment. The familiarity of teachers with the world of work beyond schooling, and their beliefs about its value, appeared to shape how they participated in school-based activities. The capacities of teachers to facilitate a learning process, for instance, to engage students constructively in critical reflections on their paid work varied across the six schools.

This consideration is important. The key finding of this study is that the quality of the classroom-based interventions is central to realising the learning opportunities provided by students' paid part-time and voluntary work experiences. In particular, the capacity of the teacher to understand the potential richness of these experiences, engage students positively and facilitate reflective practice around their own school-to-work trajectories was most salient.

This research was clearly additional and not of the teachers' initiation and many viewed the additional tasks as most irksome. On the other hand, effective practices were demonstrated in at least three schools. Positive outcomes arose with students using the same processes that had been less successful in the other schools, providing evidence of teachers' knowledge of work, perspectives on vocational practice and capacities for facilitating student learning.

Clearly teachers are the key to students' reflecting on their paid employment. Outstanding were the capacities of teachers to:

- ✧ adapt and utilise resources to meet learners' needs and secure the intended educational goals
- ✧ facilitate student learning (that is, drawing upon their experience rather than teaching them)
- ✧ manage the teaching/learning process, in particular, their capacity to engage students in productive critical reflection

- ✧ understand the potential for reflecting upon work
- ✧ enact processes reflecting a broader view about learning and educational goals.

If it were up to the teacher, these opportunities for discussion may take a more or less structured approach, given the readiness and capacities of students. Teachers confident enough to engage students in facilitative processes and seek advice from outside the classroom or school may connect classroom practice, students and their paid employment more effectively.

These considerations seem most relevant to recent initiatives aimed at improving information about post-school options for school students, such as the Australian National Industry Careers Advisers initiative. The question arising from this study is how teachers will be able, or be in a position to engage effectively with sources of advice outside the school and value the educative contribution of experiences beyond the school parameters.

How can schools best organise experiences to inform students about work, working life and post-school options?

Considerations for vocational education and schooling

I think we are testing the assumption here that the schools do not make employability skills a priority.
(Carolyn Ovens, Brisbane-based research assistant, May 2005)

Smith and Comyn (2003) claim that schools are struggling to develop employability skills. They found that these skills may not be their first or even a priority at all within some schools. Given the context and focus of this research project—developing students’ understanding of work, the world of work and post-school pathways within schools—it is appropriate and perhaps necessary to comment on the prospect of schools providing effective vocational education experiences. The school sample here is small, but given some of the experiences and reflections within this project, it would be remiss not to offer some reflections upon the role of the schools.

For some time now, considerable interest has been shown nationally in the role that schools might play in the provision of VET. Certainly, there is widespread support for schools’ involvement in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Moreover, schools are clearly interested in engaging in vocational education programs. It is assumed that the majority of this interest relates to finding appropriate educational activities for students in the senior years. But how genuine is this interest at the classroom and school system level? An observer might be forgiven for concluding that the interest in VET shown by some Australian schools is quite opportune, that it is closely aligned to securing additional funding, and it fades when funds can no longer be secured. Apart from this study and in some previous studies, it has been sobering to observe that, amidst the euphoria of the interest in vocational education in schools, some schools that made much of their VET profile were providing temporary accommodation and temporary employment to their staff who were teaching in vocational education programs. This suggests the need to consider carefully the degree to which schools engage in VET in Schools programs and provide resources, interest and dedication similar to those attached to other elements of their educational program (for example, high-status academic programs).

The school’s commitment to the staff teaching and administering VET in Schools programs may be emblematic of these concerns. As noted above, teachers were the key to the quality of the educational aspects of assisting students reflect on their paid employment, working life and school pathways. Yet how much is VET in Schools premised on the efforts, intelligence and capacities of teachers in schools, rather than being sustained by the schools’ resources and systems. In an earlier study of vocational education across three regions within Australia (Billett & Hayes 2000), the quality of engagement of schoolteachers in VET programs was most noteworthy. It was often the teachers’ strenuous and determined efforts that underpinned the success of the VET in Schools programs in the communities investigated in that study. These teachers were referred to in this study as ‘zealots’ and their capacity to sustain their level of effort over the long term was

questioned. The sense was of teachers as agents of change, giving everything, working long hours and securing the best possible outcomes for the students at that time. Yet, there was also a sense that this was occurring in ways that were unsustainable, unless adequate support was provided for these teachers.

Evidence of schools' substantially realigning their *modus operandi* to secure effective and adequately resourced VET programs was not apparent across all the schools in this study. There was little evidence that schools' resources were strongly directed towards the VET provision. The data indicated that significant differences existed in the qualities of the organisation and implementation of school-organised work experience programs, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and the overall provision of vocational education. Some teachers shared experiences and reservations that did much to support this perception. Others, however, clearly had a higher level of resources and support for the programs; yet there was little to suggest that these were core activities and priorities.

The closed culture of the school encountered in at least three of the schools can be contrasted with the kinds of institutional practices that schools need to engage in to build positive relations with the community. Some schools were less effective than others in the community engagement beyond the schools, so necessary for effective VET programs. Of course, these criticisms are easily made and maybe common to the majority of education institutions. However, the experiences in this project raise the question of whether programs such as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and also the Australian National Industry Careers Advisors initiative will continue to be sustained more by the agency, energy and efforts of teachers than through appropriate and adequate resourcing by schools. Finally, this research questions whether the priority which government is directing towards VET in Schools is matched by both resources and priority within Australian schools.

Overall, in terms of schooling, the investigation found that:

- ✧ The capacity to adapt a vocational education initiative or module to the needs of the student cohort emerged as a key issue. In all of the schools, the teachers used prepared materials with little or no modification. While this was successful in some schools, in others it led to unsatisfactory outcomes for the students and teachers. This uncritical (and possibly unplanned) use of externally derived materials is problematic. It also hints that, unless teachers have the support and confidence for adapting materials, externally developed materials might be implemented without regard for individual needs.
- ✧ The reluctance of teachers to engage with others outside the school suggests that they act in isolation, rather than drawing upon available sources. The closed culture of schooling is particularly inappropriate vis-à-vis vocational education initiatives, because of the need to engage with the community (including industry) and resources available beyond the school.
- ✧ Some teachers demonstrated a narrow view of learning and vocational education, and possibly a limited view of the world of work beyond schools. This raises problems for the effective provision of vocational education. Associated with this is the capacity of teachers to effectively adapt and utilise experiences outside the school (for example, accessing paid part-time work).
- ✧ Given that the schools selected to participate were identified as those with a commitment to and history of involvement in vocational education and training, the level of competence and capacities demonstrated by some teachers were of concern. Indeed, previous involvement in VET was not predictive of positive education experiences on its own. For instance, it seemed that, where the process was most effectively enacted, it was through the agency of a careers counsellor (at Whitefields College), and by a teacher in a school with only a limited vocational education profile (Claybrook College). However, and conversely, the vocational focus and facilitative expertise of the teacher at Bayside High School was evident.

So, within this small sample, factors other than the VET profile of a school appear to be linked to effective school-based activities associated with understanding work, working life and post-school pathways.

It is not clear from this study the degree to which, despite all the interest expressed by school systems and statements about the centrality of vocational education programs, there are adequate resources, support and organisation to ensure successful programs. Some of difficulties in negotiating classroom-based activities designed to reflect on the students' paid work experiences were a product of the standing and status of vocational programs within the schools. The research provided evidence that a reluctance to recognise the value of paid employment and its rigours placed additional demands upon students. For instance, students engaged in vocational options were often forced to negotiate inflexible arrangements within the academic programs. Hence, for students seeking both pathways, there were impediments that added to the complexity and stress of their study programs. This leads to a question about the capacity of schools to support the full range of post-school options for students through effective vocational education provision.

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Appendix: Suggested school processes

Informing post-school pathways by co-opting school students' authentic work experiences

Draft suggested processes

This document provides a draft of suggested school-based activities to identify the qualities of paid part-time work and voluntary work and its implications for working life and post-school pathways.

Student and teacher interactions are based around four one-hour sessions; each one week apart.

Session 1—Identifying the qualities of paid part-time work (Week 1)

The aim of this first session is to encourage the students to identify the qualities of their paid part-time work using the attached student worksheet (student worksheet #1).

After an initial briefing on the purpose of the project, the students will be encouraged to work through the student worksheet #1 to describe their paid part-time work. They will record their responses on the student worksheet in the spaces provided. They should seek clarification from the teacher if they are uncertain about how to proceed with filling out the student worksheet.

Students who have not engaged in part-time work are asked to engage in the task of working through the student worksheet to familiarise themselves with its processes and focuses. They might choose to respond from their knowledge of some paid work with which they are familiar or even from what they observe in the school they are attending (that is, the instances of paid work there).

Wherever possible, this activity—reflecting on their paid work experience—should be seen as an individual task for each student.

At the end of the session, a copy of each student worksheet #1 will be photocopied for the project's record and the student will have the original returned to them for use in subsequent sessions.

Session 2—Sharing paid part-time work experiences (Week 2)

The aim of this session is to encourage students to share their experiences about paid part-time work to enable them to understand similarities and differences in their experiences.

In this session, each student will work with two other students in sharing their accounts of their paid part-time work, including in the discussion any students without paid part-time work experience. The basis of the sharing will be the work done in the previous week using the student worksheet provided (student worksheet #2).

The students could be directed to consider what is consistent and different in their experiences; what kinds of work are seen to be attractive and offer the prospects of work activities which are: (a) of interest to them; (b) offer prospects for career advancement; (c) are the kinds of work that the students would not recommend to others. They will do this by working each of the elements when sharing their observations with the other students.

Students would list their responses on the student worksheet provided.

Their comments on this second student worksheet will be photocopied, one returned to the student and one retained for the project.

Session 3—Identifying consequences for working life and post-school pathways (week 3)

The aim of this session is to encourage the students to discuss issues associated with their working lives beyond school and how this influences their thinking about post-school pathways.

Working together as a large group, the students will address the following questions:

- ✧ In what ways do your experiences in paid part-time work help you think about the kind of work you want to pursue in your working life beyond school?
- ✧ Why is that?
- ✧ What kind of post-school pathways are you aware of?
- ✧ What are the kinds of work you would recommend to your classmates?
- ✧ What do you have to do to be employed in that kind of work?
- ✧ What are the kinds of work that represent pathways that you would not recommend even to those classmates who may be interested in them to pursue?
- ✧ Why is that?
- ✧ What kinds of work do you think are attractive?
- ✧ Based on your reflections of paid part-time work, how would you advise others about seeking desirable career pathways and work?
- ✧ If you wanted to advise other students about inappropriate pathways and bad forms of work what would you tell them?
- ✧ Why would you advise them that way?

Students would discuss these questions through the hour long session.

Session 4—Evaluating the process (week 4)

The aim of this session is to evaluate the experiences provided in the three previous sessions. This is undertaken by engaging students in a short written survey about their experiences; a group discussion is then used to do expand students' survey comments.

Both the survey and the focus group will reflect issues identified in the student worksheets previously completed by the students.

Questions in the survey and the focus group will include:

- ✧ What was useful about thinking about work in the activities you had over the last three weeks?
- ✧ Why was that?
- ✧ What was not useful in the experiences over the last three weeks?
- ✧ Why was that?
- ✧ How could the sessions be improved?
- ✧ What more do you need to know about post-school pathways to help you make decisions about your options for working life?

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 1

Student worksheet #1: Describing paid part-time work

Please respond to each of the following questions using your paid part-time work experiences as a basis to make those responses.

<i>Multiplicity:</i> what is the range of activities you are expected to perform in your work?	
1	What is the range of the work tasks you are required to perform?
2	What are the specialised tasks in this workplace? Who does them? And how are they rewarded?
<i>Routineness:</i> what are the kinds of work activities you engage in frequently and less frequently?	
3	Which tasks are required to be performed routinely—all the time?
4	Who performs these tasks? And why?
5	Which tasks are performed less frequently than others?
6	Who performs these tasks? And why?
<i>Discretion:</i> what degree of freedom do you have in conducting your work?	
7	Which activities do you initiate and complete at your own instigation?
8	Which activities are initiated, monitored and supervised by others?

<i>Responsibilities:</i> what responsibility do you have for your own work and that of others?	
9	What responsibilities does your work entail?
10	What responsibilities do you have for others and authority over them?
<i>Intensity:</i> in what ways is your work intense?	
11	At what times is this work more intense and for whom?
12	What is the impact of intense work on these workers?
<i>Complexity</i>	
13	What work tasks are difficult to learn and do?
14	Who undertakes these difficult tasks? And how are they rewarded?
<i>Accessibility of knowledge:</i> what aspects of your work do you find difficult to find out about?	
15	What kinds of work requirements are easy to learn?
16	What work requirements did you need help to learn?

<i>Working with others:</i> the degree by which your work involves interactions with others (e.g. team work, working with others)	
17	What kinds of interactions with others are required in your work?
18	What does 'team work' mean in your workplace?
<i>Engagement with the work practice:</i> on what basis are you employed?	
29	What are the consequences of being a part-time worker in this workplace?
20	How does this differ from those who are full-time employees?
21	What responsibilities does your employer exercise towards you?
<i>Status of employment:</i> what is the standing of your work and what support does it attract?	
22	What work activities are perceived as high status in your workplace? And why?
23	Who undertakes this kind of work? And why?

<i>Reciprocity of values:</i> to what degree are you personally supportive of the work in which you engage?	
24	What are the key values practised in your work? (e.g. quick service, friendliness to customers, getting them to buy regardless)
25	Which of these are in conflict with personal values?
<i>Access to participation:</i> how easy is it for you to participate fully in the workplace?	
26	Are you able to engage in new and interesting tasks, if you want to?
27	How are opportunities to participate in different and new tasks distributed at work?
<i>Homogeneity:</i> to what degree is your work similar or different to what others do?	
28	What is the range of tasks undertaken in the workplace?
29	What are the particular benefits associated with some activities? What are the shortcomings as well?
<i>Artifacts/ tools:</i> what are the physical tools and workplaces artifacts (e.g. computers) you are required to use	
30	What interaction with tools, technologies are required in your work?
31	Does the technology and tools drive the work process or do you drive them?

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 2

Student worksheet #2: Comparing and contrasting paid part-time work experiences

The aim of this session is for students to share their experiences of paid part-time work with other students in order to reflect upon and understand the world of work beyond school.

Students will work in threes, including students who may not have engaged in paid part-time work.

1. Each student will spend about five minutes working alone reading through the comments they made on their student worksheet in the previous week. They can make additional comments and modify any existing comments that assist them to more accurately capture their workplace experiences.
2. Students will then form into groups of three, including any student who has not undertaken paid part-time work experience. The students will work through each of the items and share their experiences with their peers.

When undertaking this task, they might consider the following questions.

- ✧ What work activities and interactions are common to all your experiences in paid work or what you have been told and thought if you have not been paid for work?
- ✧ What work activities and interactions are different among these experiences?
- ✧ What kind of work is well rewarded?
- ✧ What kind of work is poorly rewarded?
- ✧ What kinds of work give individuals lots of freedom in their working life?
- ✧ What kinds of work seem restrictive?
- ✧ What kinds of work offer opportunities for promotion or advancement?
- ✧ What kinds of work seem to offer interesting work tasks?

The students might speculate on the kind of qualities and preparation that are required to gain those kinds of employment.

What overall lessons can you draw from these reflections about different kinds of work and the respective preparation they require?

Please see attached worksheet.

Please photocopy a copy of the students' completed sheets for reference and return the original to the student.

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project: week 2

Comparing and contrasting paid part-time work experiences

Student worksheet #2

Name:

Task 1: Revisiting last week's sheet

On your own, spend about five minutes working through the comments you made on your student worksheet in the previous week. Please make additional comments and modify any existing comments that assist in more accurately capturing your workplace activities.

Task 2: Form groups of three, including peers who have not undertaken paid part-time work activities. Together work through each of the items and discuss your responses with the other students.

When undertaking this task please consider the following questions.

1. What work activities and interactions are common to the experiences of paid work?

2. What is different among these experiences?

3. What work is well rewarded?

4. What work is poorly rewarded?

5. From these experiences, what kinds of work give individuals lots of freedom?

6. What kinds of work seem restrictive – don't grant workers any freedom?

7. What kinds of work offer opportunities for promotion or advancement?

8. What kinds of work seem to offer interesting work tasks?

9. What overall lessons can you draw from these reflections about different kinds of work and the preparation they require?

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 3

Student worksheet #3: Identifying consequences for post school activities

The aim of this session is for the students to discuss issues associated with their working lives or careers beyond school and how this influences their thinking about post-school pathways.

Working together as a large group, the students will address the following questions. However, before engaging in the discussion they will consider each of the questions, silently and independently. They will also have a few minutes at the end to revise their sheets.

- ✧ How have your experiences in paid part-time work influenced the kind of work you want to pursue beyond school?
- ✧ What sort of work is it?
- ✧ Why would you recommend this work to others?
- ✧ What preparation and personal qualities are required for that kind of work?
- ✧ What are the kinds of work that you would not recommend, even for those interested in them?
- ✧ Why is that?
- ✧ What preparation and personal qualities are required for that kind of work?
- ✧ What kinds of assistance or information are you able to access about work/training/education options beyond school?
- ✧ How could this support be improved?
- ✧ What would be the best way of learning what kinds of work suited you?

Students would discuss these questions through the hour long session.

Please see attached worksheet.

Please photocopy a copy of the students' completed sheets for reference and return the original to the student.

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 3

Identifying consequences for post-school activities: Student worksheet

Name:

Task 1: individual silent work on focus questions

Spend about five minutes or so thinking about the questions presented below about work and careers beyond school in preparation for discussing them with others in the group.

Task 2: Discussion

Discuss your responses with other students for about 40 minutes.

Task 3: Revising worksheets

Take the final five or so minutes to amend or revise your sheet as a result of the discussions.

1. How can your paid part-time work help you think about the kind of work you want to do beyond school?

1a. What sort of work is it?

2. What kinds of work (part-time or otherwise) would you recommend to others students?

2a. What preparation and personal qualities is required for that kind of work?

3. What kinds of work would you definitely *not* recommend, even to those interested in them?

3a. Why is that?

4. What information and assistance are you able to access about work, training and education options beyond school?

5. How could this support be improved?

6. What would be the best way of learning what kinds of work best suit you?

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 4

Student worksheet #4: Evaluating the process

The session aims to evaluate the experiences provided in the three previous sessions.

This is undertaken by firstly engaging students in a short written survey about their experiences, followed by a group discussion to elaborate on students' survey ideas. This will be recorded.

Both the survey and the focus group will reflect issues identified in the student worksheets previously completed.

The proposed process is for the students to initially respond to the survey as an individual activity. The survey will provide important data for an evaluation of the process.

See survey below.

Following this, the students will engage in a group discussion, which will be audio-taped, and this will also be used as a form of data.

Focus questions for the group discussion are:

1. What was useful about the past three sessions in helping you understand more fully the world of work?
2. How did this approach compare with your engagement in school-organised work experience?
3. What is the ideal way that young people should learn about the world of work in order to make effective decisions about their employment choices?
4. What is the ideal way that young people should learn about post-school pathways?

The sheets from the students need to be gathered and comprise important data sources.

Later, an interview will be undertaken with the teacher to evaluate the process and identify its potential improvement.

Co-opting students' experiences in paid part-time work project

WEEK 4

Student worksheet 4: Evaluating the process

Name:

In the three previous sessions, you have:

- ✧ identified the qualities of your part-time work
- ✧ shared your experiences of paid part-time work with other students
- ✧ identified how these experiences might influence your thinking about working life beyond school and post-school pathways.

In this session we are going to evaluate the process used over the past three sessions.

Reflecting on the activities in the three previous sessions:

1. How useful was the process over the past three sessions in helping you understand more about the world of work? (Please tick one)

Very useful	Useful	Helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all useful

Why was that?

2. Comparing the use of school-organised work experience to understand the world of work, how effective was your work experience organised through by the school? (Please tick one)

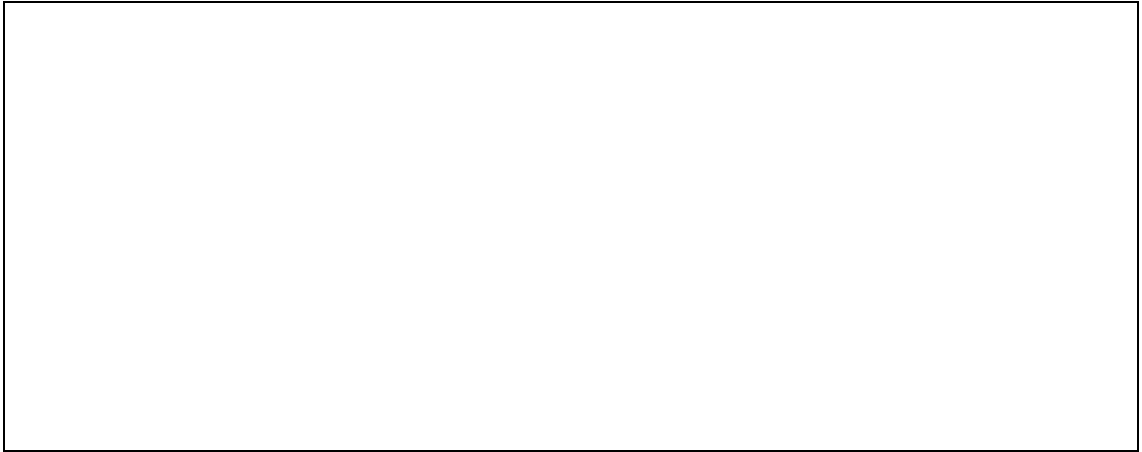
Much more effective	More effective	About the same	Less effective	Much less effective

Why was that?

3. What did you find most difficult in the process of reflecting upon your paid work experiences?

Why was that?

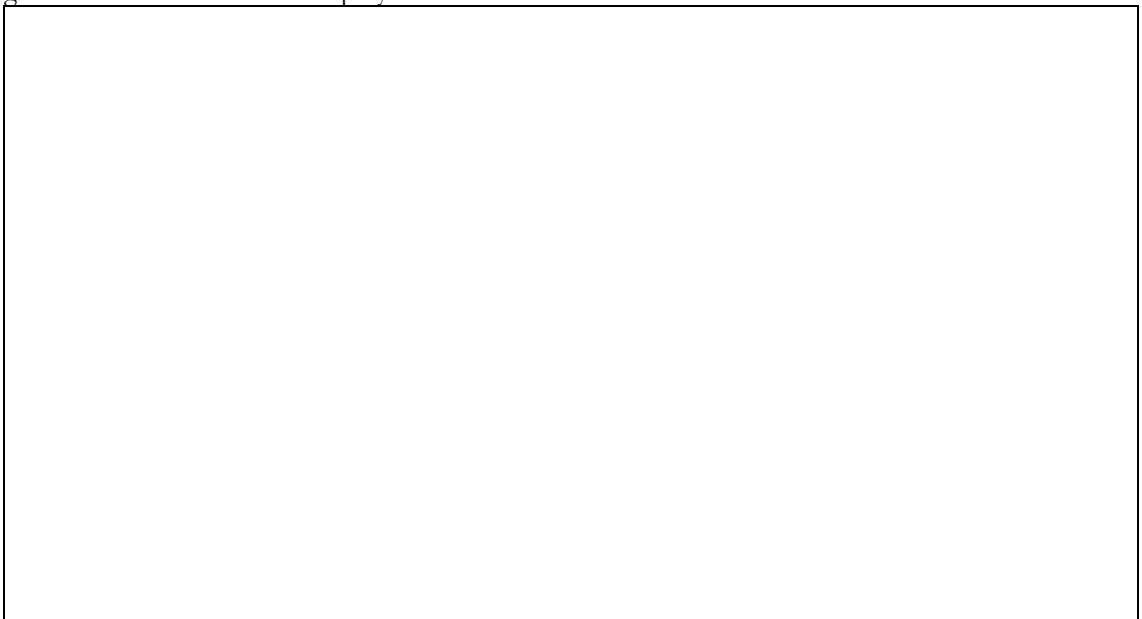
4. How could the use of paid part-time work best assist understanding more about the world of work?



Why is that?



5. What is the ideal way that young people should learn about the world of work in order to make good decisions about their employment choices?



Why is that?

Thank you again for your contributions.



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