Career Development Practice and Career Counselling in Australia

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This article provides an overview of the field of career development in Australia and focuses upon career counselling. The overview is contextualized within the broader career development industry and recent initiatives that have raised the professionalism of career development practice. This contextualization includes the roles of the Career Industry Council of Australia and the *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*, and the education and training required for practice. The article includes a précis of public and private models for the delivery of career counselling, and presents themes within the field's scholarship, research, and development.

Career development practice in Australia includes the provision of a broad range of professional activities provided by a similarly broad range of professions. The term *career development practice* as it is used in Australia is similar to the term of *career guidance* used in the United Kingdom and Europe, and *career development services* used in Canada.

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Career development in Australia has a long history extending back to the 1920s (Morgan & Hart, 1977). There are three predominant forms of career development practice: career counselling, career information services, and career education. They may be delivered in educational, health, welfare, or workplace settings in the form of individual consultations (e.g., counselling, coaching, and mentoring); class or group training and development (e.g., school career education classes); organizational consulting; staff development; injury rehabilitation; or elite performance in the arts and sports. Notwithstanding the importance of career information services and career education, the focus of this article is upon the career development industry broadly and career counselling specifically.

Career Industry Council of Australia

The peak body for career development practice in Australia is the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA). CICA's (2008) vision is to promote the benefits of career development for individual, social and economic benefits of career development for all Australians, so as to enhance individuals' participation in society and national productivity more broadly. Its establishment in 2003 set an international benchmark of cooperation among domestic professional associations. Similar to the American Counseling Association with its union of various professional counselling associations, CICA is a consortium of 12 member associations which claim career development practice as a dimension of their core professional business. Many of the member associations focus upon the delivery of career development within schools (i.e., the career education associations for their named States and Territories, e.g., Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association, and Queensland Association of Student Advisors), whereas the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services and Graduate Careers Australia focus upon the post-compulsory and higher education sector; the

Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australia targets the health sector; and the National Athlete Career and Education programme concentrates on national sporting performance through bodies such as the Australian Institute of Sport. The Career Development Association of Australia represents members working in a wide range of industry settings (e.g., government, education, and private practice).

CICA is responsible for the delivery of national activities and projects under a significantly funded contract with the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. This is consistent with the aim of advancing and building a career development culture within the nation. An example of one of CICA's projects in this vein is the highly successful *National Career Development Week* (http://www.ncdw.com.au/). Schools, universities, colleges, community agencies, worksites, government departments, literally any organization, can run a career development event under the aegis of the *National Career Development Week*. Participants can register their event and receive various kinds of support to promote and operate it (e.g., promotional brochures, website registration). This *Week* draws attention to how career development can play a role in benefiting individuals, communities, educational institutions, and workplaces.

There are approximately 4,000 individuals who are members of the 12 member associations under the aegis of CICA (M. Geeves, President of CICA, personal communication, May 28, 2009). How many in that number who routinely perform career counselling as part of their practices is unknown. Furthermore, it should be noted that not all professional organizations with members who deliver career development services in Australia fall under the aegis of CICA; although there is always scope for organizations to join CICA should doing so be considered mutually beneficial. For example, the

Australian Psychological Society (APS) is not a member of CICA, yet psychologists in Australia play a significant role in the career development industry (e.g., personnel selection, educational guidance, workplace injury rehabilitation). There are approximately 27,254 registered psychologists in Australia (Littlefield, Giese, & Geffen, 2009) and more than 17,500 psychologists members of the APS (2009). The number of psychologists who routinely offer career counselling in their practices is similarly difficult to estimate. Given the limited number of member associations in CICA and, concomitantly, the relatively unknown number of professionals outside of CICA who engage in career development practice, it is difficult to estimate the number of Australian professionals who routinely deliver career counselling in their practices.

Towards a Regulated Profession: Career Development Practitioner

Until relatively recently, the provision of career counselling in Australia was largely unregulated. On the one hand, career counselling has been provided by a variety of professionals with recognized professional status (e.g., school counsellors, psychologists, and rehabilitation counsellors), and, on the other, by individuals without formal recognition or professional status. Partly in response to the national review of career development services conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002), there has been pressure for reform towards professional regulation. This pressure for extensive evolution has been effectively managed by the career development industry (McMahon, 2006; Patton, 2005).

CICA's most distinctive role in recent years has been its work towards regulation of the profession through promulgation of its *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*

(CICA, 2006), and concomitantly with the advent of national infrastructure that forms the national organizational dimensions, ethical statements, and competencies of the profession *Career Development Practitioner*. The Professional Standards include a code of ethics for individuals within the member associations of CICA. It also stipulates the competencies deemed necessary for effective career development practice; defines the activities and dimensions of the profession; sets regulations on continuing professional development; and provides public endorsement of degree qualifications. These are important responsibilities of industry self-regulation as the use of occupational titles such as "career counsellor" or "career coach" is not legislatively regulated by a statutory authority in Australia. Some professionals who are *also* career counsellors in their professional lives, such as school guidance officers and psychologists, are registered and controlled by statutory authorities.

Core Competencies and Specializations

The Professional Standards stipulate core competencies that are to be demonstrated by all professional career development practitioners: knowledge and application of *career development theory*; knowledge and application of *labour market* information, and the preparation of individuals to make transition into and through the world-of-work over their working lifetime; *advanced communication skills*; *ethical practice* and a commitment to ongoing professional development and lifelong learning; recognition and respect for *diversity*; knowledge and application of *information and resource management*; and *professional practice* skills including management of client records, case management, project management, and service evaluation. These core competencies subsume a number of specialist competencies: assessment, counselling, programme delivery, working with individuals with a disability, project management, and employer liaison. The

specializations are indicative of the breadth of professional backgrounds within the career development industry, ranging from those who provide one-on-one or classroom services to clients (e.g., assessment and counselling), through to those who work with organizations as their clients (e.g., project management and employer liaison). These competencies are similar to those stipulated by other professional associations, such as the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (2003).

As a specialist competency, career counselling is subsumed under the core competency of advanced communication skills. Career counselling is defined within the Professional Standards:

> An individual or group process which emphasizes self-awareness and understanding, and facilitates people to develop a satisfying and meaningful life/work direction as a basis to guide learning, work and transition decisions, as well as manage responses to changing work and learning environments over the lifespan. (CICA, 2006, p. 37)

CICA substantively adapted this definition from the work of the Canadian National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards. With respect to the delivery of career counselling, it is expected that career development practitioners undertake training required to "explain major theories and models pertaining to counselling; apply counselling theory to career development counselling; demonstrate theoretically-driven career counselling practice" (CICA, 2006, pp. 23–24). Although it is necessary to define and describe career counselling as a specialist competency within the Professional Standards, in practice it is often integrated with the specialist competencies of career assessment and working with individuals with a disability.

Entry-level Qualifications

As part of its responsibility to monitor and advance the profession of career development practice, CICA is responsible for the endorsement of degree qualifications with majors or specializations in career development studies, so as to inform the public and practitioners of their relevance as an appropriate qualification for the profession. CICA's Qualification Endorsement Committee is responsible for the official process of endorsing degrees presented to CICA by Australian and New Zealand higher education providers. New Zealand institutions are welcome to submit their degrees to CICA because of the affinity between the two nations' labour market, education systems, immigration regulations, and a treaty which guarantees certain rights and privileges of access and equivalence.

At this stage, a specialist Graduate Certificate is considered an appropriate minimum entry-level qualification for the status of *Professional Career Development Practitioner*. In 2012, this qualification will become mandatory for all individual members of member associations within CICA. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) stipulates that a Graduate Certificate requires the completion of the equivalent of six months of full-time study, ordinarily following a preliminary undergraduate degree (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2009). An undergraduate degree in Australia usually comprises three or four years of full-time undergraduate study with a government recognized institution of higher education. There are also higher degrees into which the Graduate Certificates articulate, and these too may be submitted to CICA for endorsement (e.g., Master's or Doctoral degrees). CICA requires the Graduate Certificate to have a significant level of content specializing in career development studies in order to obtain its official endorsement.

In a typical scenario, a school teacher, guidance officer, psychologist, or human resources professional who has completed initial professional qualifications comprising various sequences of undergraduate and/or postgraduate studies, may take a Graduate Certificate in career development studies so as to secure their acknowledgement as a career development practitioner by one of the member associations of CICA, in addition to their original profession and qualifications.

While this qualification regulation sets a minimum standard for entry into the profession of career development practitioner, it may have implications for postgraduate qualifications used for entry into other professions which have an ostensibly natural affinity to career development practice (e.g., school guidance officer, psychologist). In the case of psychologists, who have a six-year training model for statutory registration by a government authority, there are concerns that postgraduate degrees in counselling psychology and educational/developmental psychology which are offered by Australian universities may not have sufficient career development content to readily attain endorsement from CICA (McIlveen, Hoare, McMahon, & Patton, in press). Such a scenario will, of course, need testing through CICA's Qualification Endorsement Committee which conducts a case-by-case assessment of particular degrees as they are presented before CICA over time.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned concerns regarding postgraduate qualifications for professions whose practitioners have for some generations ethically and effectively provided career development services, for some practitioners of those professions who possess extensive experience in the career development industry and postgraduate qualifications in a cognate discipline (e.g., Master of Education majoring in school guidance and counselling; or Master of Psychology majoring in counselling psychology), CICA has established

a policy stipulating an *alternative pathway* which enables those practitioners to secure formal recognition as a career development practitioner under the Professional Standards from their member association of CICA. In addition, CICA has established a policy to endorse Vocational Graduate Certificates which are equivalent to the Graduate Certificates according to the AQF. Vocational Graduate Certificates can be provided by registered training organizations which assess and accredit the knowledge, skills, and competencies of very experienced individuals using a formally defined process of *recognition of prior learning*.

In addition to setting the minimum qualifications for professional status as a professional career development practitioner, CICA has established a qualification for the status of *Associate Career Development Practitioner*. Individuals operating at the Associate level have not completed the minimum qualification for professional status (i.e., Graduate Certificate) or have not been granted equivalent status through the alternative pathways, but they are working in the career development industry in some paraprofessional capacity. Individuals at this level of practice would have ordinarily completed a lower qualification at the level of Certificate IV as defined by the AQF. Such individuals may work as career information officers within career centres or as employment officers in recruitment agencies. With respect to the Professional Standards, individuals at this level would not ordinarily be deemed qualified to offer career counselling.

Supervision

The Professional Standards and its code of ethics require career development practitioners to engage in continuing professional development that entails the completion of a certain number of hours on a yearly basis according to the various requirements of each member association of CICA. To that end, CICA has commissioned an online

database to facilitate its member associations monitoring the learning activities of their individual members. While this measure of quality is necessary and welcome, the Professional Standards do not, however, stipulate that career development practitioners must engage in professional supervision, either for continuing development or for clinical quality. Also, research into the amount of supervision undertaken by a sample of career counselling professionals raised concerns regarding the apparent lack of a professional culture and infrastructure to facilitate the supervision of career counsellors within Australia (McMahon, 2003, 2005). Indeed, there is scant published evidence of the widespread uptake of supervision by Australian career development practitioners as a routine part of their practices. Notwithstanding the evidence produced by McMahon's relatively small-scale studies, the dearth of published studies of the formal supervision of Australian career counselling professions does not furnish the conclusion *ipso facto* that there is a lack of actual practice of routine supervision on a widespread scale; but it does leave scope for question.

Taking a learning approach — particularly a lifelong learning approach — to the development of a culture and infrastructure for supervision has been suggested (McMahon, 2004; McMahon & Patton, 2000). One model published in the Australian literature which demonstrated a competency-based approach to learning was an internship in which supervision of career counselling practice was mandatory (McIlveen, 2004). In this example, supervision was required in order for the supervisor to officially endorse the intern's achievement of specified competencies according to the requirements for a postgraduate master's degree in psychology. In this particular case, supervision was one of the mandatory requirements for statutory registration as a psychologist, and it was the official endorsement of competencies that acted as the driver for the programme. The potency

of supervision being mandatory cannot be dismissed (see Bimrose & Wilden, 1994).

Public and Private Models of Service Delivery

The Australian Government acknowledges a link between career development and public policy outcomes such as education completion and workforce participation (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006) and funds initiatives, directly and indirectly, through Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments and their subsidiary departments and contractors. Public funding has been typically disbursed for the purposes of education and employment services. For example, public investment in career development may take the form of the employment of school personnel whose role is specifically devoted to career development services for school students. It should be noted that the private schools (i.e., non-government) similarly provide career education services to their students. In Australia, school-based delivery is part of a significant tradition of career education and guidance (McCowan & McKenzie, 1997; Morgan & Hart, 1977), and is exemplified in the work of individuals who belong to the member associations of CICA (e.g., the career education associations of Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory). Career development services in Australia's post-compulsory education sector were recently reviewed by the Australian Government (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008) and the work in this sector has focused on the contribution of career development to student learning and graduate outcomes (e.g., Smith et al., 2009).

In addition to directly funding services, the Australian Government has supported the development of publicly available resources which support career development practice. With its official launch in 2009 by the Australian Government, the *Australian Blueprint for Career*

Development (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2009) represents a further national milestone towards the building of a career development culture within Australia. The Blueprint specifies the career competencies that should be developed within all Australians across the lifespan. The Blueprint's website (http://www.blueprint.edu.au/) houses resources that career counsellors can use in their practices. Furthermore, the Australian Government has also commissioned the *National Career Information System*, which operates as the website *My Future* (http://www.myfuture.edu.au/). *My Future* provides ready access to career-related information (e.g., occupations, educational courses). Employment agencies delivering on Australian Government contracts have also provided some level of career counselling for their clients among other career development services such as job placement. More recently, and partly in response to the employment issues associated with the global financial crisis, the Australian Government established a national "helpline" information service which was commissioned to provide callers with referrals to career development practitioners registered with the scheme.

Career development practice also has a substantial presence in the private sector, albeit much smaller than its articulation in the government-funded sectors. For example, organizations which provide insurance cover for work-related rehabilitation may fund an individual to receive a limited number of sessions with a private practitioner to engage in career assessment (otherwise known as vocational assessment) and career counselling. The purpose of this career counselling is to facilitate a person's return to work after injury in either the original substantive position of employment, or towards other work options should such an avenue be unattainable due to the nature of the person's injury or recovery process. This type of insurance-funded career assessment and career counselling is frequently performed by

psychologists who perform vocational assessments using psychometric tests. Restriction of psychometrics is currently regulated by industry test publishers which set professional qualification as the criterion of restriction. Psychologists ordinarily have access to most tests due to their training in quantitative methods and psychometrics, whereas other professions not extensively trained in psychometrics have access to products which do not rely upon measurement theory (e.g., qualitative procedures). This means that career development practitioners who are not psychologists and come from other professional backgrounds may not have access to a repertoire of psychometric tools.

Individuals may also engage with private practitioners on a self-funded fee-for-service arrangement. This model of career counselling practice does not attract subsidies from health insurance agencies or the like. Career counselling in this setting typically involves clients seeking guidance on matters pertaining to educational decisions (e.g., senior high school students deciding upon post-compulsory education and training options). It may also involve adult clients seeking assistance for work-related problems (e.g., work and family balance). Alternatively, individuals (or their employers) may invest in career counselling for the sake of personal career management and enhancement (e.g., developing career competencies such as networking, or strategic planning for long-term career decisions and actions).

Career Counselling Research and Development

Australia has produced a substantial body of research and development which has contributed to international scholarship (see Prideaux & Creed, 2002). Notable among the contemporary Australian contributions to the field of career counselling theory is "The Chaos Theory of Careers" (Pryor & Bright, 2003). This theory includes theoretical notions adapted from chaos theory in the natural sciences and mathematics, and applies it to the uncertainty, yet behavioural

predictability, of career behaviour and decision-making. This approach facilitates individuals being able to prepare for and exploit change and chance opportunities in their career management. Another significant contribution to the field has been made by Patton and McMahon (2006) who advanced systems theory and constructivism in career counselling through their trans-theoretical Systems Theory Framework (STF) of career. The STF presents a multifaceted view of career which necessitates taking into account myriad personal, interpersonal, societal, and environmental influences. The progressive development of the STF and its application to theory and practice was highlighted in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Career Development* (Patton, 2007). These two theoretical approaches have contributed to the advancement of constructivist career counselling for a post-industrial world-of-work and learning that is less predictable than assumed in theories generated in past decades.

In addition to these constructivist theories, there has been a tradition of research into and development of trait-and-factor and person-environment fit theories. Holland's (1997) theory, for example, has been the focus of extensive research and development (e.g., Lokan & Taylor, 1986), evidenced by an Australian version of the Self-Directed Search (Shears & Harvey-Beavis, 2001) and other tools linked to its typology, such as the Australian Interest Measure (Naylor & Care, 2007). Providing access to quality career assessment tools through an online platform exemplifies an innovative approach to providing career services in a geographically vast nation such as Australia; and it presents similar advantages for geographically smaller nations such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Watts & Dent, 2008). Accordingly, the Australian Government's *My Future* website contains an online interest inventory (Athanasou, 2001) which can be used as a self-assessment tool independently or as part of career counselling and career education. This tool provides an alternative for those individuals who

cannot (or choose not to) secure access to personal career counselling services.

Australia's commitment to opening access to career development in this way reflects a broader concern for social justice. Like their international counterparts (e.g., Diemer & Rasheed Ali, 2009), Australian scholars and practitioners have explored how career counselling can be used to facilitate better outcomes for socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and communities, such as indigenous youth (e.g., Lichtenberg & Smith, 2009) and those who are unemployed (e.g., Hoare & Machin, 2009). To advance this scholarship, the nexus of social inclusion and career development has been made the focus of an upcoming special issue of the *Australian Journal of Career Development* (McIlveen, 2009).

Conclusion

Australia can contribute to the internationalization of career development in a number of ways. Here I highlight three potential contributions. Firstly, establishment of the Career Industry Council of Australia and its various instruments of professional regulation (e.g., Professional Standards) can be counted as major achievement of public policy and professional cooperation. Nations with disparate professional associations or devolved provincial regulation may consider the CICA model as a stimulus for planning a national approach in which various associations or provinces are unified at some level of national cooperation. Secondly, nations which have not yet gone down the pathway of establishing a national qualification system, underpinned by graduate university studies and professional standards for career development practitioners, may be able to learn from the Australian experience at the levels of public policy and professional associations' work with one another and industry stakeholders. Finally, Australia is a geographically vast nation and uses technology-enhanced services as a

platform to extend services out to isolated individuals and communities. Given this experience, it may also be in a position to contribute to other nation's development of innovative online career services which aim for high levels of accessibility, such as *My Future* which has been recognized as an exemplar of online delivery (Watts & Sultana, 2004).

Career development practice in Australia is thriving and rapidly moving towards formal regulation of the profession career development practitioner. The challenge confronting the career development industry is to ensure that the practice of career counselling is fostered by the diverse body of professions which constitute the industry, and to ensure that scholarship and applied research continue to energize Australian practitioners' innovations. Furthermore, balancing the involvement and needs of industry stakeholders and government will require careful consideration and management with regard to the sustainability of funding models and frameworks for practice which are relevant to contemporary society.

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澳洲的事業發展服務和事業輔導

本文概觀澳洲的事業發展情況，尤其集中於事業輔導方面。文章以澳洲整個事業發展行業和提升事業發展服務專業化水平的一些新近措施為背景，論述澳洲事業發展行業委員會的角色及該會制定的《澳洲事業發展從業員專業標準》，並介紹執業所需接受的教育和訓練。文章還簡介了澳洲事業輔導服務的公營和私營模式，以及在事業輔導領域的學術貢獻、研究和發展。