Ideas Lab: Education and the Future of Work
2015
WE ARE WESTERN SYDNEY
Located in the heart of one of Australia’s fastest growing economic regions, Western Sydney University offers unlimited potential to students with the talent, drive and ambition to succeed.

Western Sydney is an exciting place to be. As the nation’s third largest economy and one of the fastest growing population and employment centres, it is an increasingly important, dynamic and culturally diverse hub of business, industry and innovation.

With a large multicultural population of more than two million people from 170 nations, Western Sydney’s global links are creating unlimited opportunities for international business, investment, education and cultural exchange.

Ranked amongst the top two per cent of universities in the world, Western Sydney University values academic excellence, integrity and the pursuit of knowledge. We are globally focused, research-led and committed to making a positive impact on the communities we engage with.

Your success starts here.
“Rather than a ‘job-for-life’, today’s youth are likely to have between 10-14 jobs by the age of 38.”
INTRODUCTION

This paper emerges from the Ideas Lab: Education and the Future of Work event, held in partnership with Western Sydney University, the Centre for Educational Research and Blacktown City Council.

The Lab addressed three fundamental questions surrounding education and the future of work in the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) region:

- What is the future of work?
- How does the future of work impact upon the community?
- What are the pathways to the future of work?

The Forum discussion highlighted a number of broad challenges for GWS including, but not limited to high levels of youth unemployment and disengagement, increased technology and globalisation of work and barriers to sustainable employment by society’s most marginalised groups.

This paper is a summary of the main issues that arose from the debate and identifies how the Centre for Educational Research (CER) can explore, investigate and support improved outcomes for GWS.
What is the future of work?

CHALLENGES

- increasing employment opportunities in GWS
- diversifying employment market in response to a decline in hard skill industries
- building capacity of current and future workforce for ‘future of work’
- increasing engagement across sectors in the transition of people from school to work and unemployment to work

Globally, the future of work is undergoing rapid change. Work is now predominantly mobile, technologically-driven, and the skills required to navigate this new landscape are growing increasingly broader. Individuals are required to self-manage, build a broad skill set, and to respond effectively to change like never before.

65% of today’s primary school children are projected to end up in jobs that are yet to be invented and rather than a ‘job-for-life’, today’s youth are likely to have between 10-14 jobs by the age of 38.

As Australia faces a slowing down of our 15 year-long resource boom, we need to look increasingly to engage in Asia and build the foundations for investing in scientific and technological innovation.

The GWS region is facing unprecedented growth with the population set to grow by 1 million over the next 25 years; requiring an estimated 450,000 extra jobs.

Unlike the inner Sydney regions, GWS’s economy is heavily reliant on manufacturing and other 20th century industries which are expected to continue to decline over the next 20 years. And while 49% of GWS’s population is under the age of 35, some 18% are unemployed and many more disengaged, and the region continues to fall behind the State average in terms of post-school qualifications.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

- identifying how to integrate technology into schooling and learning in GWS
- working with new technologies in creative and socially responsible manners
- analysing the positive and negative effects of globalisation, global technologies on local GWS residents, and community members
- understanding future work transitions, entrepreneurship and new work pathways
How does the future of work impact upon the community?

Globalisation increasingly divides the community; providing new opportunities for some and acting to inhibit others in the search for work, well-being and stability.

Marginalised groups are often those most vulnerable to the impacts of the future of work upon the community. The GWS region includes four out of five of Sydney’s lowest socio-economic suburbs and more than 40% of the population are from CALD communities. These communities are also the most likely to experience high levels of unemployment, under-employment and disengagement.

Changes in state and federal priorities over the past two years have significantly impacted the region’s capacity to respond to the growing needs of those most disenfranchised by globalisation.

CHALLENGES

- deeply engrained and inter-generational unemployment (particularly young and older workers)
- cessation of government funding of support services for the most vulnerable communities
- limited networking, information-sharing between and across sectors
- limited cross-sector collaboration and partnering
- limited engagement by industry in work preparedness of marginalised GWS communities
- increasing cost of education
- increasing cost of living

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

- understanding the diversity of Greater Western Sydney communities and their educational needs to prepare for the future of work
- working with the community sector to provide educational support for communities adversely affected by globalisation
- working to provide educational support for business and community groups to optimise the positive effects of globalisation
- initiating community research projects that articulate the effects of globalisation on the Greater Western Sydney population and recommend options to optimise its effects
What are the pathways to the future of work?

**CHALLENGES**
- limited evidence to support success of existing alternative pathways to work
- limited knowledge by mainstream education about alternative pathways to work
- limited engagement in programs by industry

There are options for alternate pathways to work in GWS for those who are unable to complete the traditional academic pathway programs. These include youth connect programs, the Lendlease initiative, TAFE and university foundation programs.

Again, changes in government priorities in recent times have resulted in a cessation of funding for school to work transition programs and alternative education programs across NSW and Australia generally.

These difficulties have meant that services offering alternative pathways to work are functioning in variously contradicting or fragmenting processes with little research into their combined impact.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that these pathways are producing workers that are able to meet employer requirements, or if they are able to address the deeply engrained social problems that have resulted from globalisation.

**RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS**
- analysing the current alternative pathways to work and their effectiveness
- articulating the gaps between employer needs and alternative pathways to work
- mapping and bridging the spaces between mainstream educational providers and alternative pathways to work
PARTNER INITIATIVE: EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Blacktown City Council is in the process of developing a work experience program to better equip young people with a broad range of soft skills required in the changing workforce. Blacktown City Council identifies student engagement with microbusinesses as the key to developing more generalist skills such as leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, communication and public speaking to better prepare them for any career environment.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this initiative, please contact:

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The Centre for Education Research at Western Sydney University invites industry, community and education to partner and collaborate on our research into the ‘Future of Work’.

We anticipate:
- Workshop series
- Forum(s) (held in community venues)
- Consulting (for corporate work and education needs)
- Policy papers (connecting work needs with education provision)
- Research collaborations (between all parties)
- Community network (hosted by CER)

The University is committed to research that changes our region, the nation and the world. We do research with impact: industry-led, interdisciplinary and solution-focused. The University has the talent, facilities and resources; but the Ideas Labs are about taking these resources out to our region – listening to the people who know the right questions, people who face these questions every day.

In an Ideas Lab, we gather together people from industry, business, government and non-government organisations to debate the challenges you face. Through a facilitated panel discussion with open Q&A from the audience, the University leads a forum that aims to generate tangible outcomes for your business, your sector and the community.

The University draws on the forum discussion to identify research opportunities to find solutions that have real impact on our region’s businesses, industries and communities.

We want genuine and sustainable partnerships that grow from our research. For more information and other upcoming labs, visit westernsydney.edu.au/ideaslab.

INVITATION

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