



Career development learning
for students with disability

Background paper

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The project aimed to critically engage with existing good practice in CDL for students with disability and then develop, pilot and showcase further examples of best practice programs and resources to complement what already exists. The first stage of this process was a review of key literature and composition of this background paper.

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Introduction

This background paper underpins, and is an output of, a national project that has been designed to critically investigate career development learning (CDL) for students with disability¹. The main output from this project is the development of a suite of practical resources for the field, including resources for students, families, practitioners and employers. The project also builds upon a number of grants and fellowships funded by the Department of Education Skills and Employment (DESE) and administered by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) in the 2019–2021 period, all of which were designed to investigate how students from a diversity of backgrounds can be best supported to achieve their educational and professional goals.

The project was designed to explore how more appropriate careers support could be provided to students with disability to address inequities in employment outcomes compared to students with no recorded disability (Brendle et al., 2019; Cunnah, 2015; Education Council, 2019; Ranasinghe et al., 2019). CDL was deliberately chosen as a framework to inform the project due to its applicability to a critical social justice perspective. CDL benefits from a broad perspective, taking into account the ableist lens of career theories and combining it with current disability theories. CDL refers to “learning about the content and process of career development or life/career management” (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 6) and it has been identified as an important way to redress inequities and create fairer societies (Cedefop et al., 2021) by supporting individuals in reaching their full potential.

The project implemented a mixed-methods approach across four highly collaborative, iterative phases including:

- 1) **A national audit and review of key literature** about existing CDL programs and career interventions targeted at students with disability that occur across the educational life cycle. The purpose of the audit was to ascertain what supports and programs already exist and ensure that this project did not replicate what was already available.
- 2) **Surveys and interviews with students with disability, their parents and carers, and stakeholders across sectors:** secondary schools, universities and other higher education providers, vocational education and training providers, industry, and government in different roles. The purpose of these interviews was to capture

¹Note: In this report and other resources in the CDL Hub, we have opted for the 'person-first' terminology of person or student 'with disability' rather than identity-first language (e.g. disabled, autistic) (Young, 2022). However, we acknowledge that within the disability community there is a range of ways that people identify with disability or disabilities, which are "diverse and individualised" and that language around disability is "constantly evolving" (Young, 2022, n.p.).

expert insights into CDL and employment experiences to inform the creation of the project resources and associated outputs.

- 3) **The design, implementation and evaluation of best-practice pilot programs** that occurred in four states in Australia. These programs were all contextualised to local need with different approaches adopted to address those needs. All the programs had a research component running alongside the project implementation.
- 4) **Development of CDL resources targeted at students, parents and key stakeholders** in the field designed to support the provision of careers support to students with disability.

Methodology

The purpose of the background paper is to scope the literature that referred explicitly to the overarching theme of CDL with specific reference to students with disability. By drawing on academic articles, book chapters, policy documents and relevant literature, this broad theme was then interrogated to focus on those documents that referred to actual practical and applied materials in the field (see Table 1). Documents in languages other than English were not included due to translation difficulties, and the range of the documents was limited to a 10-year span (2011 to 2021) to ensure relevancy.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Peer-reviewed articles	Languages other than English
Book chapters	Outside the dates of 2011–2021
Policy documents	

The literature review was guided by the following question:

- What career programs or interventions exist across Australia, and how do these frame and target students with disability?

This question was supported by the following sub questions:

- How are the career development needs of students with disability considered?
- How might best practice in career development and support for students with disability be defined?

A number of search terms were identified to guide the analysis of the literature shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Search terms

Search terms
Career education and disability
Disability and education
Disability and work
Disability and vocation
Critical disability studies
CDL theories

Databases and search sites included the NCSEHE website, ADCET website, ProQuest Central, ERIC EBSCO, UOW library database, Taylor and Francis Online, QILT website and National Disability Scheme website. The search resulted in 6,535 documents. After being filtered through the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the number was reduced to 203. The databases and initial references are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Database and initial inclusion of references

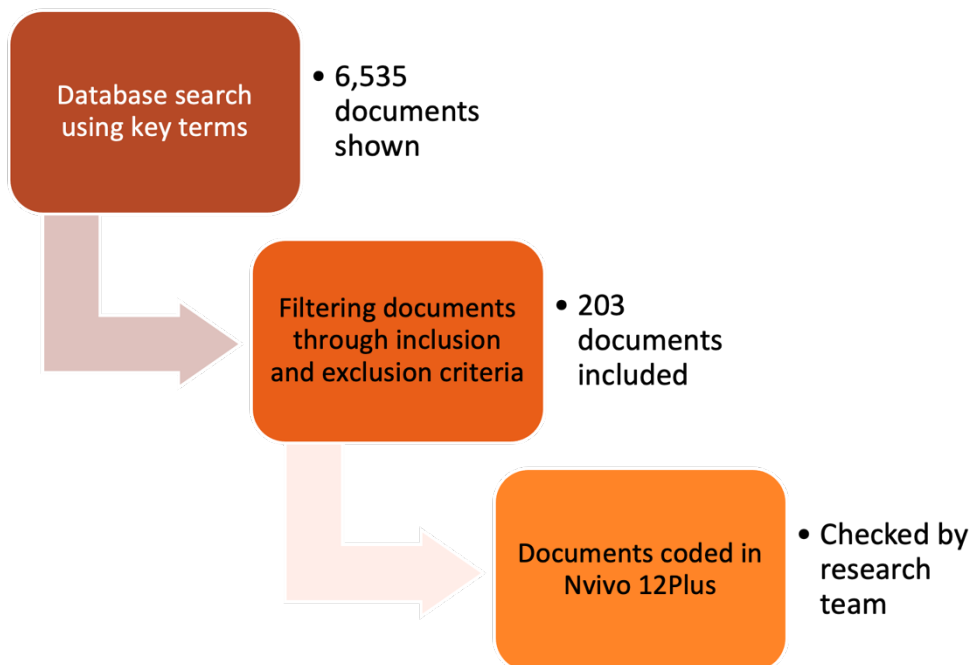
Database or resource	Initial documents included from search (n=x)
LSES Final Report (Austin et al., 2022)	34
LSES Literature Review (Austin et al., 2020)	8
Disability Standards for Education	1
NCSEHE website	7
ADCET website	0
ProQuest Central	91
ERIC EBSCO	41
Taylor and Francis Online	18
National Disability Scheme	2
QILT	1
Total of initial inclusions	203

To ensure that each of the 203 documents aligned to the criteria and broad scope of the project, the following steps were undertaken:

- A high-level read of each document was performed to establish the main themes and topics covered.
- Summary notes relating to the resource were noted in a spreadsheet.
- Retained documents were added to Nvivo 12Plus for coding.
- Coding from Nvivo 12Plus was subject to analysis.

Based on the spreadsheet, Nvivo 12Plus nodes and the summary information, key themes were identified and different literature pieces were allocated to the themes. Figure 1 shows the search process and progression.

Figure 1: Search process



While the focus was on *students* with disability, literature related to the broader category of *persons* with disability was also included in order to capture information on the topic. The Best Practice Principles (O’Shea et al., [2022](#)) underpinned the recommendations in this paper. The Best Practice Principles were developed for career development practitioners providing career advice to students with disability. The Principles were derived from a three-stage process: (1) literature review, audit of CDL practice and empirical research; (2) consultation and revision; (3) application to pilot programs and feedback from the programs (O’Shea et al., 2022).

Discussion

The discussion section is structured according to six predominant themes identified from the review:

- Australian regulatory frameworks and services
- The intersection of career and disability theories
- Equity issues for students with disability
- Barriers and challenges in current approaches to CDL and disability
- Strengths of current approaches to CDL and disability
- Gaps and opportunities in CDL and disability

Australian regulatory frameworks and services

The policy environment around careers within the education environment includes a broad range of national and state legislation designed to address general careers strategies and also those specific to students with disability. Investigating the policy that relates specifically to CDL for students with disability highlighted that approaches are guided both by policies generic to all Australians as well as policies targeted specifically to people with disability. This section will provide a brief overview of these policies and frameworks.

For all student populations, there are strategies and policy statements that are used to inform career development and support, including:

- The National Career Development Strategy (Australian Government, 2019)
- The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA, 2010), and
- Career Guidance: The missing link in school to work transitions (Youth Action, 2017).

The National Career Development Strategy (Australian Government, 2019) focuses on the vision for career development in Australia and the need to provide Australians with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to manage their careers.

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA, 2010) provides a framework for CDL, acknowledging that careers are fluid and multiple. This framework is referenced by other policies and strategies and is key to CDL within Australia.

The **Career Guidance: The missing link in school to work transitions** paper (Youth Action, 2017) provided recommendations for the NSW Government around youth employment. Recommendations included fostering engagement with education, alignment with the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA, 2010) and tailoring CDL to support young people experiencing disadvantage.

The frameworks and services specific to disability include **Disability Employment Services (DES)** (Australian Government, 2021a). DES consists of two parts – the disability management service, which assists job seekers with disability, injury or health condition to

find work and maintain work; and the employment support service, which assists job seekers with permanent disability to find work and receive ongoing support for maintaining that employment in the workplace.

Another framework is the **Willing to Work National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability** (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016). This document is important in highlighting the discrimination faced by older Australians and individuals with disability. These two cohorts have been identified as experiencing barriers to workforce participation (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016). The document also outlines law and policy on discrimination, and what the government and industry can do to eliminate discrimination. Case studies are presented to show what is possible in this field.

Similarly, the **2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005** (Australian Government, 2021b) is a comprehensive document that reviews the currency of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE) (Australian Government, 2005). This review occurs every five years and involves the input of stakeholders through a submission process. The 2020 review recognised that career-related information needs to be co-designed with people with disability, and that student transitions require greater support.

While these frameworks and strategies are reasonably up to date and collectively cover a number of themes, closer analysis reveals inconsistencies across them. The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA, 2010, p. 8) noted that “until quite recently few young adults in Australia had access to a program of learning explicitly designed to facilitate the development of their careers”. This means that the best practice and findings from one resource are not necessarily transferable to, or available in, another resource nor used consistently by career practitioners. This potentially disadvantages students with disability through a lack of cohesive application that is specific to this cohort (Soresi et al., 2008). The absence of unified frameworks and strategies has implications for students with disability, as access to quality careers resources may be limited, haphazard or inequitable, unless targeted measures for young people experiencing disadvantage are put in place (Youth Action, 2017).

Regulatory frameworks and theories align with the theme of equity profiles for students with disability, where students with disability have circumstances and needs that are best told by those with a “lived experience” of disability.

The intersection of career and disability theories

Career theories

Career theories are prolific and are used to “address career development needs of the individual throughout the life span” (Lorenz, 2011, p. 25). Career theories within the literature include Holland’s theory of vocational personalities and work environments

(Creager, 2011; Toomey et al., 2009), Super's life span career development theory (Lorenz, 2011) and social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Creager, 2011; Gibbons et al., 2015; Michael et al., 2015). There are many theories related to both careers and disability, but there is no theory that combines both fields. As a result, the following sections provide an account of the key careers theories followed by relevant disability theoretical framings found in the literature review. We note that many of these careers theories are inherently ableist as they do not take into account the challenges and strengths of individuals with disability.

Holland's theory

Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments cites six personality types and then links these to certain occupations (Creager, 2011; Toomey et al., 2009). The six personality types are "Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional" (Nauta, 2010, p. 11). Holland proposed that individuals search for work that lines up with their skills, abilities and values, and that the appropriateness of fit between personality and work environment equates to satisfaction and performance in employment (Nauta, 2010).

The personality and employment fit are known as congruence and can be "used to predict job satisfaction, job performance, and job stability" (Toomey et al., 2009, p. 82). Dockins (2004) elaborates, citing that higher degrees of congruence within personality and work environment predict greater positivity in work outcomes.

Holland's theory has been extensively researched (Creager, 2011; Dockins, 2004; Nauta, 2010) due to both its longevity and its popularity. The strengths and weaknesses of the theory have been investigated in research in a range of international settings, including Iceland, the Philippines, Germany, Switzerland, and in English speaking countries. These highlight the strengths of job satisfaction and personality profiles.

Super's theory

Super's (1980) life span career development theory explores the stages of career development, from growth in early childhood to exploration in adolescence (Lorenz, 2011). The later stages include establishment of career, maintenance of career and transition into retirement. As the roles change and develop across the life span, the individual adapts to new levels of maturity and circumstances (Savickas, 1997). Specifically, within adolescence, individuals are considered ready to make choices about life-long learning and careers (Savickas, 1997), and supports need to be in place to guide them in these choices. This theory ties in with findings in the literature that advocate for CDL activities to start early in life (Lorenz, 2011; Zatta & McGinnity, 2016) to position the individual to make informed choices about careers.

Super's theory (1980) recognises that embarking on a career is more than a "simple process of matching people to jobs" (Niles, 2001, p. 131). Instead, it is an integrated approach that views life roles, such as being an employee or a student, across the life span (Sterner, 2012).

Social cognitive career theory

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) covers the interaction of goals, self-efficacy, external factors such as parental support and barriers, and career choices (Gibbons et al., 2015; Michael et al., 2015). Much of SCCT is influenced by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which cites "that one's career choices are the result of complex interactions between the three variables of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals" (Burga et al., 2020, p. 156). These interactions guide the individual in making their own career goals and choices (Burga et al., 2020; Kaminsky & Behrend, 2014) and can be used to predict future career behaviour (Kaminsky & Behrend, 2014, p. 386). Studies have confirmed the SCCT is an effective career theory in both Western and non-Western countries (Creager, 2011).

Lorenz (2011), a psychology, education and careers academic, wrote that while theories were important and useful, they also needed to be used in conjunction with each other to meet the multifaceted needs of individuals. This is important when considering that these theories could be influenced by an ableist lens. With this in mind, the following section explores disability theories and how they overlap with career theories.

Disability theories

The perspectives of career theory are not sufficient for considering the unique issues encountered by individuals with disability. Within the literature reviewed, disability theories included affect studies (Goodley et al., 2018), ableism (Goodley et al., 2018; Kasnitz, 2020; Vehmas & Watson, 2014), social model of disability (Krause, 2018), and critical disability studies (Goodley et al., 2018; Jones & Cheuk, 2020; McDonald-Morken, 2014; Vehmas & Watson, 2014). The following analysis of disability theories is key to developing a more nuanced understanding of the field.

Affect

Affect refers to emotion or feeling and is impacted by economic and cultural factors. Because affects are "felt individually, materially and physiologically but are always being reproduced by their entanglements with the social world" (Goodley et al., 2018, p. 199), this acknowledges that emotion is interconnected with a range of other factors. When one of these factors is disability, then affect also becomes linked to others' perception of disability and the emotions associated with disability. Affect can also be influenced by culture and society (Goodley et al., 2018). These perspectives can intersect when others, without disability, impute pity or heroism to those with disability. This is problematic because the relational affects create "othering" that is not helpful for people with disability (Goodley et

al., 2018). Othering may include the lowering of expectations for students with disability. For example, in a 2017 study of vision impaired students in Australian universities, it was shown that these students were less likely to enrol in science and technology subjects than in arts and humanities. This was in regard to lack of consideration for specific needs such as access to graphic materials and learning materials in advance of the class, inadequate resources, and communication difficulties within the classroom (Butler et al., 2017). Likewise, affect can impact self-belief, limiting career aspirations and goals (Gibbons et al., 2015).

Ableism

Ableism is linked to the medical model of disability, which references what a person with disability cannot do or be (PWDA, 2021) and reinforces “prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression towards people with disabilities” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 650). Similarly, ableism has been viewed as oppression (Kasnitz, 2020) and dominance (Vehmas & Watson, 2014) as it plays out as a lack of consideration for the lived experience of people with disability. For example, Kasnitz (2020) wrote about an experience where a person without disability was embarrassed in a situation where the author was having difficulty with speech. Kasnitz (2020, p. 19) noted that “If I get embarrassed, I can’t get my needs met ... having the luxury of being embarrassed is ableism”. To counteract ableism, work needs to be done on perceptions of disability, stigma and discrimination, and models of disability (Bogart & Dunn, 2019).

Social model of disability

The social model of disability is a deliberate shift from a “medical” model of disability, which “sees disability as residing solely within the individual and focuses on ‘fixing’ or ‘curing’ the impairment” (Krause, 2018, p. 9). This model recognises that disability is shaped by the social environment (Krause, 2018). In other words, the experiences of the person with disability are limited or liberated by how the environment is constructed. An obvious example is a building without access ramps; for an individual in a wheelchair this results in difficulty and exclusion. The limits of disability could be lessened or eliminated, however, through principles of design, such as universal design, where all buildings are designed for wheelchair access. The social model of disability allows for a broader view of disability which is solutions-based (Krause, 2018).

Critical disability studies

The broader view of disability, or the intersectional factors of disability, are key to critical disability studies, which uses critical discourse to challenge current disability theories and to re-evaluate mindsets that frame the lived experience of people with disability (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Critical disability studies has become a platform to discuss “political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all” (Goodley, 2013, p. 632).

Critical disability studies departs from the previous framework of disability and draws on theories across a number of fields including postcolonialism, Indigenous, and feminist studies (Goodley et al., 2018). Critical disability studies reveal “unearned advantaging and disadvantaging based on perceptions of disability” (McDonald-Morken, 2014, p. 14). By challenging previously held beliefs or understandings of disability, the aim is to create a greater measure of understanding in society.

Implications

While there is a range of career and disability theories, there is no single theory that is dominant in the research around CDL. Each theory has particular foci and is relevant to a facet of disability and careers. For example, career theories span lifetimes and include personality types (Lorenz, 2011; Nauta, 2010), while disability theories highlight the inequities prevalent in disability discourse (McDonald-Morken, 2014; Vehmas & Watson, 2014). However, there is a need for an established career disability theory that spans the fields of career and disability.

Alongside an evidence-based disability–career theory, it is recommended that career and disability theories are underpinned by best practice in order to support a life-cycle approach to CDL for students with disability (Best Practice Principle [BPP] 5 in O’Shea et al., 2022). Best practice spans the concepts of co-design of CDL (BPP 2 in O’Shea et al., 2022), focusing on strengths of individuals with disability (BPP 3 in O’Shea et al., 2022) and inclusive and accessible CDL (BPP 8 in O’Shea et al., 2022). Best practice supports the equitable access to quality CDL, which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) and allows the matching between skills and interests in employment (OECD, 2019).

Equity issues for students with disability

When considering the literature related to employment and students with disability, a number of key themes were identified, including:

- lower levels of employment
- disclosure of disability
- stigmatising disability and impact on employment.

Lower levels of employment

According to both the literature and data, people with disability experience much lower levels of employment. There are sustained differences between individual outcomes based on health-related issues including whether a person identifies as having a disability. For example, Alverson and Yamamoto (2018, p. 151) noted in their US study, that the “unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 9.5%, compared to 3.9% for people without disabilities”. Similarly, university graduates with disability were “30% less likely to

be employed than graduates without disability” (Australian Network on Disability, 2021, p. 1). Although absolute percentages differed between sources, there is an overarching recognition that employment rates differ according to disability status (Brendle et al., 2019; Cease-Cook et al., 2015; Diversity Council Australia, 2019).

Employment outcomes for people with disability have long-term social and economic repercussions. This includes reduced social inclusion and limited access to skills development and also much-needed social networking (Diversity Council Australia, 2019). Further impacts of employment difference include lower financial status, lower social inclusion and “lower personal wellbeing” (McLachlan et al., 2013, p. 138). In combination, these can create a poverty cycle (Hughes & Avoke, 2010) that further limits access to education and employment.

Disclosure of disability

Disclosure of disability refers to the revealing of disability to employers or colleagues. However, disclosure can be contentious, as many individuals with disability remain unsure about whether, when or how to disclose (Gatto et al., 2019). The Australian Human Rights Commission (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 172) recognised that “disclosure is a complex issue faced by people with disability during recruitment and when in employment”. Adams (2018, p. 7) found that some individuals with disability choose not to disclose due to fears of discrimination and stigma, while others do so in the hope that the employer and workplace will support their needs. The dichotomy of whether or not to disclose disability can cause stress and anxiety for the individuals involved (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016).

Instances of discrimination after disclosure have been recorded where individuals were discriminated against in the workplace or have had job offers withdrawn (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Cunnah, 2015). Issues around disclosure can be exacerbated by lack of resources and lack of understanding in the workplace, which can create confusion about how and when to disclose disability and also how well the employee is supported to do so (Gatto et al., 2019). Similarly, studies show that students with disability have not had sufficient coaching to disclose their disability and to advocate for necessary accommodations (Gatto et al., 2019; Lindsay et al., 2016).

While it has been shown that disability-specific supports create an environment where individuals are more likely to disclose disability (Newman et al., 2016), fear of the consequences can inhibit disclosure. However, if education to employment transition programs have provided adequate support and training in the benefits of disclosure – for both employer and employee – this can facilitate a positive working environment and a greater use of employee strengths in the workplace (Barrow, 2013; Crudden, 2012). The implications are that effective transition programs and disclosure training can create equitable work environments for individuals with disability.

Stigmatising disability and impact on employment

Stigmatising disability by employers and within workplaces presents further challenges to gaining and maintaining employment that particularly impact individuals with disability. For example, employer reluctance to hire workers with disability has been noted in the literature (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Cunnah, 2015; Cunningham et al., 2014). Likewise, discrimination in the form of stigma impacts some job seekers, particularly in relation to mental health conditions (Cunnah, 2015). Cunningham et al. (2014) also found that there was reluctance by some employers to engage individuals with disability because of the perception that these workers “could pose a risk to other workers or that the business would incur additional costs” (Cunningham et al., 2014, p. 30). Although such fears are recognised to be unfounded, overcoming misconceptions like these can be an ongoing challenge, constraining the career opportunities for individuals with disability.

Being better informed about specifics of disability types is important for destigmatising and for creating diversity in the workplace. It is essential not to homogenise disability as each disability type has specific repercussions in the employment market. For example, autistic social-skill mastery is a challenge for individuals with autism (ASD) where “only one-third of young adults with ASD are employed or seeking post-secondary education” (Adams, 2018, p. 5). Interview performance can be impacted by differences in social skills, effectively barring entry to employment (Cashin, 2018; Hayward et al., 2018). If an individual with autism does gain employment, communication and socialisation differences may have an ongoing impact with co-workers (Adams, 2018), regardless of whether the individual can perform technical aspects of the job (Haertl et al., 2013; Lee & Carter, 2012). Thus, maintaining employment is problematic if complex and unspoken social expectations exist (Farrell-Banks, 2018; Haertl et al., 2013; Lee & Carter, 2012). Stress related to work was another inhibitor in maintaining employment (Hayward et al., 2018) with stressors attributed to sensory issues, social interactions and difficulty adapting to change (Hayward et al., 2018). Appropriate support for transitioning is particularly significant for individuals with autism (Adams, 2018), as challenges can arise from leaving behind familiar environments and routines, adjusting to additional choices and also to new people.

Barriers and challenges in current approaches to career development learning and disability

The recurring themes around challenges in career advice and disability within the literature focused on discrimination in the workplace including social exclusion and insufficient support during transitioning to the workplace.

Discrimination

Discrimination can occur at any stage of an employment cycle and can be systemic. This may be due to a lack of knowledge and skills in how to develop discrimination-free workplaces

(Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 12). Similarly, colleagues within the workplace need education and support to understand how to make workplaces inclusive of workers with disability. Research has shown that “almost one in 12 Australians with disability (8.6%) reported they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their disability” (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 11). Employers comprised almost half of all discrimination sources (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016).

There has been a disconnect reported between employer willingness to hire employees with disability and actual hiring (Adams, 2018). This discrepancy accentuates that discrimination can unintentionally occur where people with disability are not being hired due to employer practices such as withdrawing an offer of employment upon the disclosure of a mental health condition (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016) or facing additional challenges to gaining employment for individuals with disability as they may require more intensive support in the workplace (Nota et al., 2014).

The challenges in providing CDL to individuals with disability are deeply embedded in society and take time to change and overcome. It is recommended that career practitioners start small by acknowledging the challenges in providing high-quality CDL to individuals with disability (BPP 1 in O’Shea et al., 2022) and taking steps to change the culture around discrimination, social exclusion, lack of support during transition, and the risks in disclosure of disability in the workplace (BPP 8 in O’Shea et al., 2022).

Disability can result in social isolation through marginalisation and exclusion (Youth Action, 2017). Social exclusion can mean that there is a lack of social networks, limiting access to resources, support, access to education, and networks to employment (Youth Action, 2017). In addition to social exclusion and isolation, poverty can be a limiting factor for young people with disability, with 45% of young people with disability living with or near poverty levels (Youth Action, 2017, p. 37). Poverty often compounds disadvantage, but this can be offset by community and family support and social inclusion (Youth Action, 2017).

Transitioning

Transitioning from school to work was also identified as impacting negatively on employment rates for students with disability (Adams, 2018). Transition involves a new start between education and employment which is often reliant on “strong parent and carer advocacy” (Australian Government, 2021b, p. 17). The challenges in transition for individuals with disability highlight the need to create and strengthen transition services and support between education and employment. This aligns with Alverson and Yamamoto’s (2018) observation that transition services can greatly assist in facilitating positive post-school outcomes (discussed further in the “Strengths of current approaches to career development learning and disability” section).

Appropriate transition support provides success factors for students entering the workforce. Brendle et al. (2019, p. 203) stated that “the challenge for schools is that of preparing students living with LD [learning disability] strategies to successfully transition to the workplace and maintain employment”. If transition is not adequate, students with disability can experience disadvantage. Planning for transition is complex (Barrow, 2013), but when deliberately constructed (e.g. via written form) in ways that reflect each student’s needs, strengths and the resources available, transition support can be highly beneficial to individual employment goals. Gatto et al. (2019) also noted that having a specific staff member supporting students in work-integrated learning (WIL) was beneficial to the transition from education to employment. Without specific transition support, students with disability may experience disadvantage in their search for employment, even after graduating with university qualifications (Eckstein, 2021). Similarly, school teachers may only be made aware of the transition needs through strong advocacy from parents and carers (Australian Government, 2021b). In practical terms, it has been noted that teachers and school career development practitioners may have low expectations of students with disability. A situation that exemplifies this is described as:

... this might mean that your careers adviser does not tell you about Ticket to Work or disability employment services, and they do not assist you with finding suitable workplaces for work experience – for example, where the facilities are wheelchair accessible. (Parliament of Victoria, 2018, p. 136)

The challenges around discrimination in gaining, maintaining and transitioning to employment reveal the need for specific support of students with disability, as well as for increased awareness of employers on the benefits of employing individuals with disability. This recognition informed two of the Best Practice Principles from this study – namely that career practitioners, employers and teaching staff continue to develop positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion (BPP 7 in O’Shea et al., 2022) while providing disability inclusive partnerships between industry and students with disability (BPP 6 in O’Shea et al., 2022).

Strengths of current approaches to career development learning and disability

A number of strengths within the careers and disability sector were identified in the literature. These included early exposure to employment programming, workplace accommodations and drawing upon the existing strengths of individual workers with disability. Successes in the field are underpinned by approaches which focus on strengths, which can be further developed in line with Best Practice Principles.

Early exposure to employment programming

Early exposure to CDL can improve long-term employment outcomes (Gmitroski et al., 2018, p. 11) and provides a solid foundation for all students through opportunities to foster job or

career aspirations and explore future possibilities. Early employment experience and future study have also been found to be “crucial to ensuring future employability, income and independence” (Lindsay et al., 2017, p. 642). For students with disability in particular, gaining early and initial employment through supported placement or during casual employment while at school can provide a solid foundation for skills and also time to develop some of the capabilities required within the workplace.

Workplace accommodations

Workplace accommodations can contribute to an environment of success for students with disability. Accommodations leading up to employment can include connection with mentors or life-skill coaches who model behaviour and provide coaching in interview skills and techniques (Lindsay et al., 2017). Within the workplace, the type of accommodation must be customised, depending on the nature of employment, the working conditions and the needs identified by the person with disability (Lindsay et al., 2018).

Accommodations that can be offered include a modified environment, additional equipment (e.g. adaptive technology) and practical changes such as modifying work schedules (Lindsay et al., 2018). Providing resources to employers on how to enable accommodations for individuals with disability is an important step in creating an equitable work environment (Gould-Werth et al., 2018).

Strengths of individuals

Focusing on strengths of individuals with disability can lead to an increase in life and career success and satisfaction for the individual (Dyer, 2018). Employers often recognise the unique contributions that people with disability make to employment settings. This includes the value that personal traits add to the work environment; these traits were identified in the literature as honesty, responsibility and good work ethic (Yusof et al., 2014). Similarly, for students with autism, strengths have been identified as reliability, being detail oriented and having high levels of knowledge on particular topics (Lee & Carter, 2012). Strengths are unique to the individual and cannot be generalised, but if employers are more aware of the strengths their employees bring, then work can be tailored to reflect and build upon these skills, which will bring benefits to the broader workplace.

Further work can be undertaken to support the existing areas of strength and success. This has been recognised in the Best Practice Principles, which place additional emphasis on CDL and foreground individuals' strengths and capabilities (BPP 3 in O’Shea et al., 2022) and on ensuring that the workplace is disability inclusive (BPP 6 in O’Shea et al., 2022).

Gaps and opportunities in career development learning and disability

The literature reviewed identifies a range of areas that are under-researched in the field. Gaps included effective transition from university to employment that aligned with the

student's area of study (Cashin, 2018), access for students with disability to higher education (Ebersold, 2008), the approaches of practitioners when working with students with disability in regard to WIL (Gatto et al., 2019), and the lived experience of young people with life-limiting or life-threatening impairments (Goodley et al., 2018). Gaps were also located in the lived experience of employment and disability (Krause, 2018), entrepreneurship and disability (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020), best practice for adults with learning disability (Olea, 2016), and knowledge about the long term vocational benefits of supported employment (Waghorn et al., 2017). To assist in understanding the complexities of these areas, the identified gaps have been grouped into three broad categories: meaningful careers; lived experience of disability and careers/employment; and disability-specific data. These are discussed in the following section.

Meaningful careers

Achieving a meaningful career can take many routes, but each requires some kind of appropriate transitioning support, especially for students with disability. Transitioning to employment from higher education acknowledges the aspirations of students with disability in regard to pursuing a meaningful career in which the knowledge and skills gained from degree study can be applied. Often, the literature focused on students with disability gaining any type of employment, regardless of their degree specialisation, career aspirations and goals. Similarly, for students with autism who have finished higher education, research is limited regarding successful transitions to employment that is related to their area of study (Cashin, 2018).

However, access to higher education for students with disability is also an under-researched area (Ebersold, 2008). Although the desire to attend university may be driven by a love of learning as well as individual career aspirations, the onus is on the university to provide integrated services for students with disability, such as identifying sources of funding, adapting timetables or providing specific support, such as a note taker. While student success is often linked to the integration services provided (Ebersold, 2008), students need to feel safe to disclose their disability as well as feel confident to communicate what they need to achieve their goals and definitions of success, which may be quite different to those of the institution.

Not all students with disability will go on to further education. Some may engage in supported employment – specific work programs for individuals with disability. While supported employment can be positive, more research needs to be conducted into whether this type of employment is meaningful and provides fulfilment for people with disability. Waghorn et al. (2017) points out that due to the cost of longitudinal studies, data is scarce on employment outcomes for people in supported employment.

Other individuals with disability may choose the pathway of entrepreneurship or microenterprise. These are opportunities for the individual to create their own employment

with or without the support of carers and family. Existing research on individuals with disability as entrepreneurs has focused on barriers and lack of physical accessibility in the built environment, and discrimination by “gatekeepers”, whereas research into the crafting of an identity as an entrepreneur with disability or minority has been largely ignored (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020). The field of entrepreneurship can provide bespoke solutions to workplace accommodations and be directly linked to an area of interest, thereby creating a meaningful career. However, people with disability are often portrayed as being somewhat “lesser” than able-bodied entrepreneurs (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020). This positioning is problematic on many different levels, and highlights that the experiences of people with disability remain largely invisible and unvalidated. Irving (2013, p. 1043) argued that the areas of careers and disability are effectively “problematised in the mainstream career development literature”, further marginalising people with disability. To counteract this, there needs to be further research on how people with disability can visualise and create meaningful careers (Irving, 2013) through valuing and calling attention to the lived experience of individuals with disability and their career journeys.

Lived experience

Documenting the lived experience of disability and careers has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it highlights the experiences of students with disability at various stages in their careers and, secondly, it encourages conversations for students with disability who are considering future careers. In a similar manner, celebrating lived experience can open up pathways to positive mental health and wellbeing (Goodley et al., 2018) for people with disability.

Disability frames a person’s view of the world (Toombs, 1995); therefore, it is important to explore diversities within the lived experience of employment or pursuing a career from the perspectives of people with disability. Without an understanding that includes lived experience, employers are ill-equipped to support the aspirations of people with disability and recognise the accommodations required in the workplace. For example, Gatto et al. (2019) noted that WIL practitioners felt that they lacked understanding of what accommodations were needed during work placement. However, if emphasis on lived experience was more broadly shared, and students with disability were deemed the experts, a greater mutual understanding could occur. Finally, without published work on the lived experience of disability and careers, people with disability may have less opportunity to visualise career possibilities.

The CDL Hub for Students living with Disability (<https://www.adcet.edu.au/cdl-hub>) aims to provide a central set of resources that are available to career practitioners, students and their families to underpin more informed careers support that recognises the unique and rich experiences that students with disability bring to the employment field.

Disability-specific data

Specific data refers to the research around certain types of disability and the lived experience of that disability, which are unique to the individual. Instead of being limited to a singular experience, it is useful to provide more precise details relevant to disability. For example, within the literature, there was little evidence of specific information on the lived experience of women with autism at work (Hayward et al., 2018). In addition, Taylor and DaWalt (2017) found that while there was research regarding the obtainment of employment for individuals with autism, there was very little on patterns and predictions of sustaining employment. Key findings, necessary accommodations and recommendations may be missed without specific knowledge of the lived experience of individuals with disability.

Similarly, Lee and Carter (2012) noted that there was very little research relating to the application of social-skills interventions linked to work-related social and communication skills. Olea (2016) also found that there was limited research available to establish best practice for adults with learning disability. Likewise, research in the transition between school and work was limited for students with spina bifida (Lindsay et al., 2017). Without research in these areas, there is little basis for establishing best practice.

The gaps and opportunities within the research are specific to gender, age and type of disability. Without adequate and specific data, there is insufficient knowledge of what works for people with disability and the areas in need of support. To counter the gap in the research specific to disability, gender and age, it is recommended that co-designed further research is conducted to investigate the lived experience of individuals with disability and the specific supports needed (BPP 2 in O'Shea et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This summary review of literature was based upon an audit of work that pertained to CDL and disability. After analysis, the existing literature was grouped into six broad themes and subthemes, summarised next. This analysis informed the activities of the project as well as providing the foundations for a number of the Best Practice Principles (O'Shea et al. 2022).

Firstly, the Australian regulatory frameworks and services documents created a vision of CDL for Australians with recommendations for tailored CDL for young people. Disability-specific frameworks and services focus on disability management services and employment support, as well as recognising the laws and policy on workplace discrimination.

Career theories and disability theories were also explored. Insights into a range of theories revealed a lack of strengths-based theories specific to disability-career. In terms of disability theory, the approaches vary significantly. A problematic notion identified in the literature is that of ableism, which is linked to the medical model of disability. Ableism takes a deficit

approach to disability. Another, the social model of disability, recognises that the barriers for individuals with disability can and should be removed, while disability theories of affect focus on the emotional impact of economic and cultural factors on the individual with disability. The analysis shows the need for theory that spans the fields of both career *and* disability, underpinned by principles of best practice.

Issues of inequity for students with disability are widespread and include lower levels of employment compared to their peers without disability. A significant challenge identified in the literature is the disclosure of disability, particularly around potential repercussions of disclosing. This includes fear of discrimination, misunderstanding, uncertainty on whether needs and accommodations will be adequately met, and issues around emotional/psychological safety. Stigmatising of disability by employers, either unintentional or otherwise, was found to impact on employment prospects and encompassed the dilemma of disclosing disability, which could lead to either positive supports, or unwanted discrimination.

Barriers and challenges in CDL for students with disability highlighted employer perceptions, risk of social isolation and exclusion for students with disability, and the range of issues associated with the transition from education to employment, but also how this could be supported with specific strategies and support staff.

The strengths of CDL and disability showed the positive outcomes that arise from early exposure to CDL for students with disability. This included the contribution that workplace accommodations can make to employment success and satisfaction, and the unique strengths brought by each individual with disability, which can positively contribute to the workplace.

The gaps and opportunities in CDL and disability focused on the importance of meaningful careers, of recognising and celebrating lived experience, and the need for specific data on types of disability in relation to CDL to ensure understanding and optimal workplace experience.

Finally, a number of recommendations for career development practitioners, educators and policy makers were also offered. Importantly, implementing the recommendations should occur alongside Best Practice Principles in CDL (O'Shea et al., 2022), which will help facilitate high-quality CDL for students with disability.

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