



POLICY BRIEFING NOTE: 14

“CAREERS ADVISERS: are they unnecessary ‘middle-men’?”

This is the 14th of a series of short Policy Briefing Notes
published by Careers England
APRIL 5th, 2014

1. Following our publication of Careers England Policy Commentary 25¹ on the Secretary of State for Education’s comments at the House of Commons Education Select Committee on 18th December 2013, it is salutary to read what has just been written today in Australia about this.
2. Here is a reminder from the text of the Hansard record of the Secretary of State’s words on 18th December 2013, from which you will recall that the Secretary of State apparently sees **careers advisers as redundant**:

‘It is certainly the case that we should do more to engage employers with schools and vice versa. What I emphatically do not believe is that we need a cadre of careers advisers to operate in between those two’ (p.19).

3. *So let’s see what our Australian colleagues make of this.*
4. *We are pleased to be able to make available here, as a further contribution to this on-going important debate, the article by Jim Bright which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and the Melbourne Age (5.4.14)*
5. *Please note this article is copyright The Sydney Morning Herald.*

¹ <http://www.careersengland.org.uk/documents/Public/Policy%20Commentary%2025.pdf>



Culling those middle men

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Date: 05/04/2014

Source: AGE

Publication: The
Age
Section: My
Career
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Jim Bright takes a British idea and generously applies it.

From the country that invented hip replacements, the collapsible baby buggy and soda water, comes yet another revolutionary innovation in the area of career development. Yup, those plucky Brits.

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, has come up with a quite brilliantly creative new approach to his portfolio. Just in time for Christmas, on December 18 last year, he fronted the country's key education committee and argued that they should cut out the "middle man" and have employers provide the careers advice to students. There was no need for a "cadre" of careers advisers, he said.

Well, here in our great southern land we rather pride ourselves at taking English inventions and beating them at their own game. Cricket, for instance. So in the spirit of Anglo-Australian competition, why not take up Gove's challenge! Surely we can do better than just cutting out the middle men in one area of our schools.

Maths teachers, for instance. When was the last time you used a differential equation or integrat So let's cut out the middle men here - we don't need these woolly-jumpered, bearded maths te calculators; we need real-life role models to teach us the rudiments. Who better than Wayne Swar run a budget, and I nominate Craig Thompson to run sessions on credit card use.

English, of course, is a hotbed of middle men getting in the way with their obsessions with grammar and poetry. When was the last time you wrote a poem that was not on a lavatory wall? Do we need these middle men to insistently teach us about the evils of split infinitives? Of course we don't!

Science, of course, is hopelessly out of touch. The insistence by geeky science teachers that a bunsen burner is a gas-fired flame device, when we all know it is a cricket pitch that turns square, illustrates just how outdated these nerds really are.

Everybody knows that science is something that only happens in US and Chinese laboratories and universities, so surely the best thing is to have science lessons delivered by those who are in closest touch with Australian scientists. Flight Centre representatives can provide our budding Einsteins with full itineraries to assist in their exodus to well-funded international centres, and all at reasonable rates!

The idea that career education is limited to nothing more than providing a source of labour for employers, and that careers advisers are middle men, is frankly absurd. Career education aims to provide students with the decision-making skills and personal attributes to allow them optimally to acquire, apply and transfer their skills to make a meaningful and valuable working contribution to society over time in a way that also ideally satisfies personal needs and ambitions. Such a process goes well beyond the initial transition from school to training, further or higher education or work.

In the same way that numeracy and literacy set up life skills, career education sets up the skills for lifelong learning, decision-making, flexibility and contribution. Undoubtedly there is an important and central role for employers in this process. However, they do not replace the essential and valuable role of the careers adviser.

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