

# Literature Review –Thematic Summary

## WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVENESS IN LEADING TO A REDUCTION IN LONG-TERM YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT?

### Background

A brief literature review has been undertaken to determine how scholars, employment organisations, and other industry experts measure and define effectiveness. The review involved a process of identifying scholarly articles and reports compiled by relevant institutions, along with interpreting available information regarding understandings, and measurements of effective employment.

So far, four key themes emerged through the review, which are aligned with [SVA's Fundamental Principles for Youth Employment report](#) as well as [SVA's Employment Perspectives paper](#).

### 1. Development of soft skills

- Skattebol et al., (2015) *'Unpacking youth unemployment'*: finds disadvantaged young people benefit from education-based/mentoring programs aimed at enhancing non-cognitive (soft) employability skills such as self-esteem, mental health, confidence, as well as attitudinal and motivational-based skills.
- Creed et al., (1999) *'Improving mental health status and coping abilities for long-term unemployed'*: trial of specially devised training course that has the primary goals of improving well-being and mental health – resulted in significant lowering of psychological, and elevation of self-esteem
- Kelly, W. (2017) "Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and the Children's Advice and Referral Alliance (CARA)": Identifies 'wellbeing' (physical and emotional health, a sense of purpose and belonging) as a core non-cognitive element to a child's future development

### 2. Individualised support

Supports the identification of personal barriers to employment and unique circumstances which offers the opportunity to tailor a broader program.

- Skattebol et al., (2015) *'Unpacking youth unemployment'*: discusses the benefits of 'wrap-around support' and youth mentoring, requiring significant figures such as classroom teachers, representatives of youth service providers, and parental/guardian figures to develop knowledge of education pathways, and information tailored for individuals to help establish successful careers and lives.
- Wilson et al., (2011) *'Reengaging young people with education and training: What are the alternatives?'*: examining what constitutes 'best practice' regarding alternative education approaches; offering one-on-one support tailored to individuals needs and circumstances, aimed at avoiding alienating youth on the margins of mainstream schooling.

- Office of the Children's Commissioner and JustSpeak (2012) "I'm trying to do the right thing – just going about it the wrong way": notes the importance of wrap around and mentoring programs centred on youth/restorative justice run by community leaders, or 'people they can trust'.

### 3. Multi-sector coordination

Ensuring interaction between the young person and multiple organisations that can make the pathway from unemployment to employment as smooth as possible (including employers, mental health services, housing as well as traditional employment services).

- Skattebol et al., (2015) *'Unpacking youth unemployment'*: employer engagement programs (work experience programs, workplace visits) that link education providers with employers enhance the social and cultural capital of disadvantaged young people.
- McKinsey and Company (2012), "Education to employment: designing a system that works": Innovative and effective programs around the world have important elements in common (multi-sector coordination, early and intimate intervention); an education-to-employment "system integrator" is essential with overlapping responsibilities and visions between parties.
- Maxwell et al., (2010) "Effective Programmes: for youth at risk of continued and serious offending": identifies the need to build a web of support/community to appropriately address a young person's and mental health/career path.
- The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2010): YACVic's response to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development discussion paper: YACVic has recommended the 'cross-departmental' approach in order to most effectively coordinate student wellbeing services throughout Victoria to sustain participation/engagement in school and employment.
- Down et al., (2018) "Rethinking School-to-Work Transitions in Australia": Complications experienced outside of school environments have a clear impact on a young person's performance, and self-assessment/identity at school. Hence, better coordination between students, teachers and families must occur for young people to acquire necessary tools to successfully integrate into the 'adult workforce'.
- Creed et al., (1999) *'Improving mental health status and coping abilities for long-term unemployed'*: examination of negative psychological impact of unemployment and finds that training-based interventions improve mental well-being and employability outcomes.
- Office of the Children's Commissioner and JustSpeak (2012). "I'm trying to do the right thing – just going about it the wrong way".
- Kelly, W. (2017) "Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework": the CYW Framework breaks key stages of child development into three stages; 5 years and under; 6 to 12 years; and 13 years and over – intended to assist educational institutions to target their soft/cognitive skill development, as well as 'mapping-out' their personal development.
- Down et al., (2018) "Rethinking School-to-Work Transitions in Australia": examines cultural capital and discusses how students with limited access to it are may be the least equipped to negotiate effective

transitions to employment. Hence, schools arguably have a responsibility to provide a curriculum which aligns with a student's interests and capabilities.

- Rao, G. L. (1989) "Effectiveness of government employment programs in improving the employment prospects of disadvantaged youth": articulates the importance of completing vocational, pre-apprenticeship and employment-based programs in order to secure meaningful employment. However, the report notes how socioeconomic status and gender may influence prospects of employment, as well as an individual's likelihood of completing a relevant educational course.

#### 4. Strengths-based

- Brotherhood of St Laurence "Advantaged Thinking Program Framework" : argues that greater attention needs to be paid to moving people out of disadvantage by building on their strengths and capabilities. The Advantaged Thinking approach starts from a point of strengths and assets, rather than needs and problems – the inherent potential in people, and in communities, to achieve a life they have reason to value.

Advantaged Thinking is not simply a strengths-based approach – although it draws from and builds upon this widely used practice. Where strengths-based approaches usually focus on the individual and their strengths, Advantaged Thinking recognises the critical importance of the geographic, systemic and institutional settings within which they must make choices about their lives. It sees people as always situated within place, and the structures which either enable or curtail their ability to build a good life. In doing so, it recognises that any effort to create change for people must attend to both this individual and structural context, making positive investment and influencing change in both – one without the other cannot make lasting change for individuals or communities.