Supporting young people’s life and career development in a changing world

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Summary

• Young people and social change

• Understanding the situation of young people today

• Ways forward
Social change

We are witnessing change on a scale comparable to the Industrial revolution in Europe 1600 - 1800
Child labourers in a cotton factory

We are seeing the displacement of the industrial, work-based social and economic order that was established during the industrial revolution.
The situation of young people today

We are witnessing a dramatic reconfiguration in human work and a far-reaching redefinition of the relationship between productivity and social resources.
The relationship between education and work is changing

On a global scale, young people have never been more engaged with education
But:

“It remains uncertain if there will be enough decent employment opportunities for the 25.6 million more young people globally in the labour market between now and 2030”

(International Labour Office 2017)
The “new normal”

Labour markets are increasingly
- informal
- precarious
- part-time

Education is increasingly extended
Youth transition is not a new problem

But the scale and nature of complex and failed youth transitions is a challenge to conventional understandings of education as a tool for youth transition
Job insecurity makes it hard to build lives

Australian Life Patterns participants that were in insecure work in 2012 (age 23-24) and 2017 (age 28-29) were:

• More likely to only have a secondary school degree

• More likely to be ‘single’ or ‘in a relationship’ than in ‘de facto’ / ‘married’

• More likely to have poor mental health (particularly women)

• More likely to report lower levels of wellbeing

• More likely to feel they cannot plan for the future
Despite being the most educated generation ever, young people’s wellbeing is an issue

- Mental health, drug use, obesity and communicable diseases are entrenched health problems among young people in developed countries.
- For young people in developing countries (where 87 per cent of the world’s young people live), the concerns are about nutrition, hygiene, maternal mortality through early child-bearing, HIV and survival.
Mental health

- In Australia 21% of 12–17 year-olds accessed services for emotional or behavioural problems (in 2016)
- 14% of young Australians have a mental health disorder, of which the most common is anxiety.
- Half of 15 – 19 year-olds were very concerned about coping with stress (Mission Australia, 2017)
  - One third were concerned about school or study problems and body image
  - one in five were very concerned about depression
Understanding the situation of young people today

The issues raised by young people’s lives today are not any longer simply a matter of individual youth transitions – they are an outcome of political and economic decision-making.
An emerging consensus

That new policy frameworks need to:

• take a moral and ethical stance
• strive towards social justice
• involve young people’s participation
The ‘new normal’ and post-Fordist policies (Furlong et al)

The ‘new normal’ for young people is precarious work

- Characterised as liminal – neither unemployment nor full-time career oriented

Policies assume that the problem is a deficit in human capital

New frameworks need a more permissive approach so as to stimulate creative approaches to life management in an era characterized by increasingly diverse pathways
The Precarious Generation and ‘society as a contract’ (Bessant et al)

Those born since 1980 are at significant generational disadvantage and require new policy approaches.

The broken contract: young people’s investments in their human capital will not be rewarded by secure jobs, higher incomes and ‘a good life’.

A new ‘intergenerational contract’ is needed:
- Recognising young people as political actors.
- Ethics and a just society: a capability approach.
Ways forward

Two examples
1. An ecological, participatory and social justice approach

New Gen: A leadership training course for young people from key populations at higher risk of HIV in the Asia Pacific region
New Gen

• HIV affected youth as leaders and trainers
  • participatory
• Using an ecological model to focus on structural causes
  • social justice & change-oriented

By Professor Helen Cahill
2. An ethics of care

An institutional framework for promoting student mental health and wellbeing

Health promoting organisational actions

1. Foster engaging curricula and learning experiences
2. Cultivate supportive social, physical and digital environments
3. Strengthen community awareness and actions
4. Develop students’ mental health knowledge and self-regulatory skills
5. Ensure access to effective services

1. Policy development and review processes
2. Participation and empowerment of staff and students
3. Allocation of appropriate resources and recognition
4. Staff professional development
Drawing conclusions

In the contemporary redefinition of the relationship between productivity and social resources, young people are being set up to be the losers.

The older generation has a responsibility to shift to new policy settings and support programs based on moral and ethical principles; social justice, and young people’s participation in decision-making.
Young people not only can be part of the solution to these global challenges – they must be
Thank you