

# Credentials, Incentives and Recruitment

As the nature of work continues to evolve, students' expectations of future career paths are also quickly changing. The graduate job market has already been subject to considerable disruption, and predications are that careers based on once desirable professional degrees (such as law and medicine) are set to be radically disrupted in the near future by emerging technology. Against this backdrop, many are beginning to question the relevance of the traditional degree-based higher education framework as a pathway to maximising human potential. As demands increasingly focus on educating for skills as well as (or instead of) specific knowledge, more attention is being given not only to the ongoing relevance of traditional degrees, but, more generally across the education system, to the role of credentialing as evidence for both students and prospective employers of those skills and knowledge. The debate on credentialing, in as much as the end credential may equate to the marketable product, in turn corresponds closely to the issue of recruitment of students into education pathways which match their preferences, ambitions, and abilities. There is a further set of inter-related issues around the incentives currently built into the education system which drive the behaviour of its key participants: that is, institutions, teachers, students, and employers. This working group will examine these complex and inter-woven issues.

Key questions to be answered include:

## *Assessment and qualifications frameworks*

- How can we best provide evidence that a student has developed the skills and/or knowledge that a prospective employer may be seeking?
- What does current thinking on learning and evaluation tell us about accurate and meaningful assessment of skills and knowledge, and how can this be applied in a way which meets the needs of students, and prospective employers?
- Is there still a place for the traditional degree, and if so, what does it deliver that alternatives do not?
- Are current vocational training pathways (including traditional apprenticeships) cost-effective and competitive; and if not, what are the alternatives for vocational training?
- How do we develop an appropriate qualifications framework for the increasingly wide range of skills and knowledge being developed within traditional and less traditional education pathways; and how do we propagate recognition of and buy-in to that framework through the qualifications marketplace of students and employers?
- How can we ensure that students leave education with evidence of skills and knowledge that is internationally recognised, as more graduates seek to pursue working opportunities transnationally?
- As employers increasingly utilise search algorithms in recruitment to shop for skills rather than educational brands (such as institution and/or headline qualification), to what extent can or should those brands adapt?
- What is the role of accrediting bodies?

## *Market incentives*

- What is the appropriate balance in student recruitment to particular courses or fields of study between collective societal and market interests (e.g. public capacity building; institutional survival; industry demands) and individual interests (e.g. personal interests and abilities; individual ambition; perceived economic opportunity)?

- What are the current incentives driving the behaviour of education market place participants (such as institutions, teachers, students, and employers), and how can they be altered to drive optimal economic, social, and personal outcomes?
- How do we balance or re-engineer the competing incentives applying to lecturers and researchers at higher education level (i.e. incentives to teach, to research and publish, and to innovate and commercialise)?
- Is excessive or distorting market power concentrated in the hands of certain participants, and if so how can we better balance the diverse market interests?
- How effective are the current market performance indicators and signals into and through the education life cycle, including ATAR?

*Pricing and market competitiveness*

- How do we improve the market competitiveness of Australian education vis-à-vis alternative pathways competing for potential students?
- Can greater transparency in education price-setting, admissions decision-making, revenue, and costs improve market behaviour; and if so, how can we ensure greater transparency?
- What is the appropriate course/qualification price-setting mechanism for higher education and other institutions: e.g., cost-recovery versus strategic price-signalling versus cross-subsidisation of R&D/innovation output?
- How do we optimise the value proposition for students, for example by reconsidering course cost drivers such as pre-requisites which might be designed to fulfil institutional rather than genuine requirements of educational efficacy?
- Is there a supply-demand mismatch in the higher education market: what do universities want from students; what do students want from universities; and what do businesses want from graduates?
- How can or should markets be influenced (through information/persuasion, pricing/funding, and/or regulation) to produce more efficient economic and social outcomes?

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