
A snapshot of a selection of items added to VOCEDplus

MARCH 2022

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The demand for data and digital skills is spreading quickly across the Australian labour market

Digital skills in the Australian and international economies

Digital skills in the Australian and international economies / Angela Hope, Natasha Yemm, Giang Nguyen, Mohammad Ali Raza, Erica Sparke, Carissa Buhagier and Rachel Neumann.

Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: National Skills Commission, 2022. 24 pages.

Digital skills proficiency is important to the economy on multiple levels. It can ensure success for people in the labour market, enable transitions between jobs, and open new opportunities for Australia to lead in the development of digital technologies into the future. This paper provides an analysis of digital skills in the Australian and international economies using a mix of data sources and analysis techniques. The first part of the analysis addresses key questions about definitions, utilisation, and employer demand for digital skills across the Australian labour market. The second part of the analysis addresses key questions about how digital engagement in Australia compares to Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States. The authors examine the digital skills sought by employers and the roles that require them across the five countries. The findings suggest the skills needed to respond to the digital world are amongst the fastest growing in the Australian economy. Skills clustered around engaging with the digital economy are expected to increase by up to 28 per cent on current use levels over the next five years.

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The reification of skill in policy has resulted in a skills fetish

Challenging the skills fetish

Challenging the skills fetish / Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie and James Doughney.

British journal of sociology of education, volume 43, issue 3, 2022, pages 475-494.

This article describes the process through which human capital theory came to dominate policy in post-compulsory education, to result in the fetishisation of skills. It relates skills policies to the contemporaneous development of policies on lifelong learning. The current promotion of 21st century skills, genericism and trainability leads to the alienation of skills from the people who embody and exercise them and the social context which enables and gives value to peoples' exercise of their skills. The article argues that this reification and fetishisation of skills degrades education, work and social life.

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The Committee recommends that, by March 2023, the Australian Government resource effective whole of community and family language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (LLND) programs that target adults with low LLND skills including in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, and other socially and economically marginalised Australian communities

More than 85% of New South Wales adult and community education providers report the Omicron impact on their organisations as 'severe' or 'major'

Australian inquiry into adult literacy and its importance

Don't take it as read: inquiry into adult literacy and its importance / House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training.

Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2022. xxviii, 184 pages.

This inquiry examined the importance of developing strong language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (LLND) skills, overcoming barriers to learning, and the ability of existing adult education programs and providers to meet demand. The Committee found that poor education outcomes are strongly correlated with poverty and geographic isolation. There is a need to address factors that contribute to low LLND skills across all educational systems, at every stage of a person's life journey. The inquiry found that there are currently a range of accredited programs available for adults to improve their LLND skills, including Australian Government programs focussed on employment readiness and vocational education and training. However, adults with low LLND do not necessarily want to sign up for accredited courses. Instead, working with a volunteer tutor or attending a small class at a neighbourhood centre can help build their skills and confidence, which may then lead to employment and further education and training opportunities. However, the adult and community education sector is significantly under-resourced and is currently unable to meet the high demand for adult LLND education. There is also a critical shortage of qualified adult literacy teachers in Australia. The Committee's report also notes that too many Australians leave school with LLND skills gaps that limit opportunities and life choices. At the same time, many older Australians are finding that the skills they have relied on in the past are not keeping pace with technology.

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COVID-19 impact on adult and community education in Australia

COVID-19 impact on NSW adult and community education providers / Community Colleges Australia (CCA).

Sydney, New South Wales: Community Colleges Australia, 2022. 19 pages.

The arrival of the COVID-19 Omicron variant in New South Wales (NSW) in December 2021 and early 2022 has impacted the operations and enrolments of the state's adult and community education (ACE) providers. From 31 January to 8 February 2022, Community Colleges Australia (CCA) conducted a survey of its NSW members to determine the full impact and its ramifications. More than 90 per cent of NSW ACE providers reported significant impacts on their operations. Findings include: (1) Metropolitan providers are more impacted than regional and rural providers; (2) Providers report a general fear and fatigue that has made a major impact on the willingness of potential students, or their partner organisations, from engaging with ACE providers; (3) There are special pressures on enrolments in the NSW ACE Program and foundation skills, where a large majority of learners are unable or unwilling to move to online learning; and (4) Most providers report trainer shortages, especially in aged care (one-third of NSW ACE provider vocational training activity).

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Training of faculty staff was identified as a requirement for successful Universal Design for Learning implementation

Universal Design for Learning in tertiary education

Universal Design for Learning in tertiary education: a scoping review and recommendations for implementation in Australia / Noor Jwad, Mary-Ann O'Donovan, Erin Leif, Elizabeth Knight, Elicia Ford and Jessica Buhne.

Launceston, Tasmania: Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, 2022. 43 pages.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is defined as a framework to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. Learner diversity can comprise physical, visual, hearing, sensory, attention, and communication barriers. UDL recognises there is no 'average' learner and that learners come with a wide variety of prior experiences, abilities, preferences and needs, and enables curricula to be written flexibly so they are accessible to the highest number of learners, addressing the variance in the student population. At the same time, UDL does not negate the need to make extra accommodations for some learners. Initial scoping of the literature and the policies and resources of Australian tertiary education institutions has identified that UDL principles are not yet fully or consistently embedded in the development of tertiary education coursework or curriculum in Australia. This literature review and environmental scan has been used by the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) and the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program to inform the development of Australia's first [free online UDL training](#) for tertiary educators.

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Higher education institutions interested in expanding their online programmes have the opportunity right now to initiate additional online courses and programmes and expand existing business models, reaching students and learners who were not considering learning online previously

Future of digital and online learning in higher education

The future of digital and online learning in higher education / Stefan Humpl and Tine Andersen.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. 29 pages.

This reflection paper offers a systematic overview of the current debate on how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been valued for digital and online learning practices and adaptations. As the pandemic has forced the established understanding of education and learning towards rapid digitalisation, this reflection focuses on the post-COVID-19 pandemic period and asks what kinds of propositions are indispensable, so that the deployed digital transformation of teaching and learning can endure in the future. In other words, will higher education return to known concepts and methods of primarily analogous teaching and learning in the post-pandemic period, or will the digital transformation last beyond the pandemic? Finally, who will benefit from continuing the digital transformation in higher education and who will be disadvantaged?

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