Australia: BECOME career education programme

Providing an inquiry-based approach to career guidance beginning at primary/middle school

One of the most important findings from the OECD Career Readiness project is that how students think about their potential futures in work can be expected to have long-term positive impacts on their employment outcomes in adulthood.

Launched in Australia in 2017, BECOME is a career education programme aimed at providing students beginning at upper-primary (from the age of 10) with personalised guidance and dynamic information in a way that explicitly deepens their understanding of themselves while at the same time broadening their awareness of the world of work and the many ways people engage with work. Central to the programme's objective is the belief that "career education should be *early*, *often* and *integrated* into students' broader education experience". Fostering ongoing student curiosity, the programme takes an inquiry-based approach to career exploration with the aim of placing students in the driver's seat of their exploration. The BECOME approach engages the work of Jim Bright, professor of Career Education and Development at the Australian Catholic University.

BECOME consists of teacher-led classroom lessons, activities and discussion points, and incorporates an app that presents thousands of occupations to students. Within the student web app, students can engage with, collect and sort occupations, as well as make notes about their career thinking. Meanwhile, another digital tool - BECOME's Insights Dashboard - provides teachers with a real-time snapshot of what students are interested in, enabling them to better engage with their students' interests and curiosity.

The programme comprises of three stages (or "domains"):

- 1. Awareness This domain relates to both awareness of self (including understanding influences on thinking) and of the world of work (and how it is constantly changing). In this domain, students explore the world of work and its many occupations through the student web app and answer inquiries such as 'If our class ran the world...'
- 2. Aspiration Here, students conduct deeper research into the career ideas that they explored in the previous domain, and create a list of occupations that they believe would make a good fit for them.
- 3. Agency Lastly, students define, design and conduct an inquiry-based experiment to test out one of their ideas and "try it on for size". Examples of these inquires include "Do I have the patience to be an animator?" and "How sociable is a zookeeper's job? Would I get lonely only talking to animals?"

A recent case study of the programme was conducted at St. Luke's Catholic College in Marsden Park, New South Wales, Australia. The practice consisted of a 20 hour BECOME unit undertaken by 180 students (ages 10-13). The approach was presented at the 2021 OECD Disrupted Futures conference and is available here.

Data was collected from the students in pre- and post-programme surveys as well as the Insights Dashboard. The evaluation is designed to test whether students had broadened and deepened their career interests and understanding of the relationship between education and employment, investigating whether they had discovered new, relevant and interesting career possibilities.

To find out more, please visit: https://info.become.education/findoutmore