

# Grow careers: a case study in innovative career development in schools (Part One)

Dr Catherine Hughes, *Career Counsellor, St Patrick's College, Prospect, Tasmania*  
 e: catherine.growcareers@gmail.com w: <http://www.growcareers.com.au>

The Grow Careers website (<http://www.growcareers.com.au>) is a theoretically derived career intervention that attends to the career development needs of students, parents/guardians, past students and staff in Australian schools. The career theories that underpin the Grow Careers website are cognitive information processing career theory (CIP: Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004) and life-span, Life-space career theory (Super, 1953, 1980, 1990). CIP is concerned with the knowledge base and information processing skills required to solve career problems and make good career decisions throughout life. CIP theorists have turned their attention to applying what is known about individuals as career problem solvers and decision makers to the design and delivery of career interventions and services (Ruff, 2010), including

between resource-based websites and needs-based websites. Resource-based websites are organized on the basis of content (e.g., career assessment tools, occupational information, tertiary education courses, etc.) and may include lists of resources and external links. Users see and can access all the resources and links that are listed, regardless of whether they target their needs. Needs-based websites on the other hand, present users only with information, resources and external links that match their career development needs. Some websites may combine resource-based and needs-based design principles. Resource-based websites are less time consuming than needs-based websites to develop. However, to the extent that there is a large list of resources and external links, they run the risk of being overwhelming for users. Further, resource-based websites assume that users can readily identify the appropriate resources to meet their needs. In a school community this may not be the case, particularly for middle years students in the Growth stage or early Exploration stage of career development who may not be aware of all of the information and resources they need to make informed learning and career choices. Needs-based websites are less likely to be overwhelming as the full range of information, resources and links are spread across all user groups in accordance with their career development needs. Initial development of needs-based websites, however, may be more complex. The Grow Careers website is primarily a needs-based website, although the links to web pages of course providers and resources for career exploration suggest that some pages combine a needs-based and resource-based approach.

Recognising that individuals differ in their readiness for career problem



Dr Catherine Hughes

solving and decision making, CIP endorses a differentiated service delivery model where students are allocated to self-help, brief-staff assisted or individual case-managed levels of career service delivery on the basis of readiness screening. Individual case-managed career service delivery is for those who are low in readiness. The brief staff-assisted level of career service delivery involves a practitioner supporting students or clients in a group setting such as a workshop or career education class. This level of career service is most suitable for those with a moderate readiness. The self-help level of service provides minimal or no career practitioner input. Students and clients independently use career resources, but are able to seek the support of a career practitioner if needed. The Grow Careers website is a self-help intervention that is suitable for high readiness students allocated to the self-help career service delivery level.

Although self-help services are considered appropriate for high readiness students or clients, a needs-based self-help resource such as the Grow Careers website may produce positive career development outcomes for students and clients with moderate or even low readiness.

## The Grow Careers website is a self-help intervention that is suitable for high readiness students

the design of needs-based websites for counselling and career services (Sampson, Carr, Panke, Arki, et al., 2003). Life-span, life-space theory deals with the processes of adapting to the work role and working conditions throughout the life course, life structure, the social context of career development and implementing self-concept in work and other life roles (Hartung, 2013; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996).

### Structure of the Grow Careers Website

Sampson et al. (2003) distinguish

This is particularly the case when use of the website forms part of a suite of career interventions and when the students and clients can access career practitioner support if needed. For example, Doe, Das and Chen (2014) trialled an e-newsletter delivered to students enrolled in programmes delivered by the School of Business at an Australian university. The e-newsletter content was relevant to the courses students were studying, their stage within the course and their stage within the recruitment cycle. Many of the students also accessed other services and resources provided by the university's Careers and Employment Service. Self-reported confidence in understanding job search strategies and recruitment processes was significantly higher at post-test. .

---

---

These processes require individuals to engage in exploratory activities...

---

---

### **Content of the Grow Careers Website**

The content of the Grow Careers website is intended to meet the career development needs of each of the intended user groups. Sampson et al. (2003, p. 7) define needs as "... the gap between what individuals know and what is necessary for them to know to solve a problem". Sampson et al. (2003) describe three levels for planning needs-based website content. Level 1 involves identifying the user groups. As mentioned previously, the Grow Careers website has defined the school community to consist of students, parents/guardians, past students and members of school staff. Level 2 involves identifying the needs of each of these user groups and Level 3 involves identifying resources and external links that satisfy the needs of each user group.

As a website for the whole school community, life-span, life-space career theory is applied cross-sectionally in the context of Australian schools. For the purposes of the Grow Careers website, the needs of each of the user groups were identified with reference

to the vocational development tasks associated with the relevant stages of career development. A brief description of the vocational development tasks (Super, 1990; Hartung, 2013) associated with each career stage follows.

### **Vocational Development Tasks**

#### *Growth Stage:*

The vocational development tasks for children and for adults revisiting the Growth stage at times of transition include developing a future orientation, decision-making capacities, competent work habits and attitudes and a conviction to achieve.

#### *Exploration Stage:*

The vocational development tasks of the Exploration stage for adolescents, emerging adults and older adults experiencing career transition include crystallising a clear and stable vocational self-concept, specifying related vocational and educational options and implementing an initial occupation. These processes require individuals to engage in exploratory activities to develop knowledge of self, knowledge of options, knowledge of the contemporary world of work, career decision-making skills and processes for implementing career and course choices.

#### *Establishment Stage:*

The vocational development tasks of the Establishment stage of career development for young-middle aged adults and adults revisiting the Establishment stage include implementing vocational self-concept by obtaining and settling into an occupational role (stabilizing), consolidating through sustained productive work activity and effectiveness, and advancement for some workers. Other workers may take on more diverse work roles such as being part of committees or project teams. For some the work role may be peripheral and other life roles may be central. In this time of change and uncertainty, many individuals are likely to recycle through the Establishment stage.

#### *Management Stage*

The vocational development tasks of the Management stage include consideration of renewal (e.g. mid-career change) or alternatively staying in a current role. Staying in a current role requires holding on to that role by meeting new challenges and negotiating changing technologies. Some workers update by renewing their skills to enhance work

performance. Others may innovate and discover new challenges. Savickas (2002) summarized these vocational development tasks as doing tasks (i.e., holding on), doing tasks differently (i.e., updating) and doing different tasks (i.e., innovating). In today's uncertain changing world of work, not all workers deal with the Management vocational development tasks. Indeed, Savickas (2002) questioned the usefulness of this career stage in the contemporary world of work. He stated that the Management stage may be relevant in bureaucratic organisations. Many schools and school sectors are bureaucratic organisations and long-term employees may deal with one or more of the vocational development tasks of the Management career stage.

#### *Disengagement Stage:*

This stage is concerned with transitioning to retirement and eventually implementing self-concept in life roles other than work. The vocational development tasks of this career stage include decelerating, i.e., reducing workloads, for example by working part-time, retirement planning and retirement living. Rather than separate from the work role, many workers may recycle through exploration and establishment and engage in alternative work.

Table 1 (on page 22) describes how the Grow Careers website presently addresses the career development needs/vocational development tasks of each of the intended user groups. The nature of the information, advice and external links is listed by user group and career stage. Although parents and guardians have their own adult career development needs, an assumption has been made that parents/guardians would mainly visit the Grow Careers website to support the career development of their children. Accordingly, adult career development needs of parents and guardians have not been covered.

On the website each of the career development needs are captured in the menu items for the relevant user group. For students in the middle years and secondary years, the menu items are expressed in terms of the typical career questions that students ask when they approach a Career Practitioner.

**Table 1**

Relationship Between Grow Careers Website and Vocational Development Tasks

User Group	Career Stage and Application on Grow Careers Website				
	Growth	Exploration	Establishment	Management	Disengagement
Middle Years	Information and links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of planning</li> <li>• Decisions students make that influence future options.</li> <li>• Putting effort into school subjects.</li> <li>• Support people for making decisions about subjects and careers.</li> </ul>	Information and links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advantages of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• School subject advice.</li> <li>• Identifying career options that match interests and subjective perspectives.</li> <li>• Resources for career exploration.</li> <li>• Getting a part-time job.</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Secondary Years		Information and links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advantages of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• School subject advice.</li> <li>• Support people for making decisions about subjects and careers.</li> <li>• Career options and interests.</li> <li>• Resources for career and course exploration.</li> <li>• Post-school options and exploratory resources.</li> <li>• Getting a job.</li> <li>• Career decision-making model.</li> <li>• Applying for courses.</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How parents can promote teen career development.</li> <li>• Links to resources and information.</li> </ul>		N/A	N/A	N/A
Past Students		Dealing with or recycling through Exploration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career decision-making model.</li> <li>• Resources to clarify self and options knowledge.</li> <li>• Resources for exploring career and course options.</li> </ul>	Dealing with or recycling through Establishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job search skills, job application documentation, personal brand.</li> <li>• Job interview skills.</li> </ul>	Dealing with or recycling through Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources of course information and MOOCs.</li> </ul>	
School Staff		Recycling through exploration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career decision-making model.</li> <li>• Resources and information on changing career direction.</li> <li>• Resources for exploring career and course options.</li> </ul>	Dealing with or recycling through Establishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job application documentation, personal brand.</li> <li>• Jobs vacancy websites.</li> </ul>	Dealing with or recycling through Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources of course information and MOOCs.</li> </ul>	'Seniorpreneurship' Australian Business website.

**References**

Das, Doe, & Chen (2014) Das, M., Doe, M., & Chan (2014). The effect of distributing tailored careers e-newsletters on students' early career-related confidence: A pilot study. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 32, 96-99.

Hartung, P. J. (2013). The life-span, life-space theory of careers. In S. B. Brown & R. W. Lent (2013). *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (2nd ed.), pp. 83-113. Hoboken: NJ, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Ruff, E. (2010). The effects of theory-based techniques and media tools on information-seeking behavior (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Florida State University. Tallahassee, USA.

Sampson, J. P., Carr, D. L., Arkin, S., Minvielle, M., & Vernick, S. H. (2003). Design strategies for need-based Internet web sites in counseling and career services technical report number 28. Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development.

Sampson, J. P., Reardon, R. C., Peterson, G. W., & Lenz, J. G. (2004). *Career counseling & services: A cognitive information processing approach*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole – Thompson Learning.

Savickas, M. L. (2002). Career construction theory. In D. Brown (Ed.). *Career choice and development* (4th ed.), pp. 149-205). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Super, D. E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. *The American Psychologist*, 8, 185-190.

Super, D. E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 16, 282-298.

Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown and L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 197-261). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Super, D. E., Savickas, M. L., & Super, C. M. (1996). The life-span, life-space approach to careers. In D. Brown & L. Brooks, *Career Choice and Development* (3rd ed., pp. 121-178). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

*Grow careers: innovation in career development in schools (Part Two)* will be published in the 2016 Spring Edition of the Australian Career Practitioner.