The question of how young people come to choose their career path in life has become a hot topic in both educational and political circles. The ongoing skills crisis has helped focus the thinking of political leaders and educators on the importance of young people making good choices about their future career. Governments at both the Federal and the State level have introduced a range of initiatives aimed at better supporting this important process in a young person's life.

The current focus on what some pundits have described as a 'skills crisis' has meant that career education and the process of career development for young people has become a central concern for politicians and educators. The need to do things differently can be found in work of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum on 'How Young People are Faring' and the 'National skills shortage' strategy. Both point to a lack of preparedness in young people making informed decisions about life, learning and work.

In this context, a whole school approach to career education can be seen as a means of providing meaningful information and support to young people. In a sense, what I am advocating is an acceptance from teachers that schools do not exist in a vacuum and that their responsibilities as educators go beyond traditional notions of the curriculum and the subject structure.

In a whole school approach to career education, it becomes the responsibility of all teachers to make connections between the curriculum and the current and future lives of young people.

**John Martino** explains that career development and the eventual transition into work needs to become part of a whole school approach and needs an earlier focus in our schools.

**A new approach in schools**

The 21st century demands a new approach to career development, and as a consequence traditional approaches to the issue, grounded in the subject segmentation of the traditional curriculum, will not suffice. The segmented curriculum has in many cases contributed to the disengagement and confusion felt by young people, and impacts negatively on choices made by these young people and their families about what to study and what work opportunities are available. It can be argued that the arcane subject structure inherited from the 20th century is still alive and kicking in many schools, and contributes to school attrition, unemployment and the skills shortage.

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In a whole school approach to career education, it becomes the responsibility of all teachers to make connections between the curriculum and the current and future lives of young people. The subject content needs to be placed within the context of a young person’s capacity as an individual to engage in the wider society and be open to a range of possibilities, both in work and in life in general.
The lone specialist
The idea that a lone specialist career educator (sometimes granted a fractional time loading to do the job) can adequately help young people to make these connections is ludicrous. It is not possible or even appropriate to train all teachers as specialist career educators. But a possible strategy is one that employs all teaching staff as the ‘first contact’ for the dissemination of accurate, appropriate, and contextualised information, which is delivered confidently. Classroom teachers are best placed to put the necessary information about developing career options within the context of their specialist disciplines. They are able to draw on their own life experiences, and their range of personal and professional networks, to build layers of knowledge with and for young people.

In this context the line of attack taken in developing the career elective for pre-service teacher education employs a ‘bottom-up’ strategy to promoting the whole school approach. If all pre-service teachers are exposed to this idea, then it becomes possible to embed conversations about the world of work, education and the future across the curriculum.

Conclusion
The impact of the globalised knowledge economy of the 21st century is yet to fully emerge in the Australian context. What is clear is that the more information young people have access to, the better they are placed to make informed decisions about their lives. No one has been able to adequately predict what the future has to offer, what is clear though is that just doing things the way we did them last century will no longer suffice. If I can paraphrase the old African proverb, ‘It takes a village to raise a child’, it has become apparent that it will take the whole school community to help young people to make sound choices about their future.

Web references
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