The Future of Education

Caloundra City Private School

Discussion Brief Number 02

The Age of Agility and Jobs to be Done

We hope we now share an understanding of the challenges and opportunities awaiting young people currently in schools throughout the world. Whether they be in London, Boston, Shanghai, Kolkata or Caloundra, they are all destined to journey into adulthood during the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The challenges generated by the VUCA environment will prove insurmountable to some. Our common task is to ensure that CCPS graduates do more than meet these challenges – our goal is to have them thrive. To do this, we must refine our understanding of the qualities they will require, distil these into a list of Jobs to be Done by CCPS, and (in subsequent briefs) work together to refine our approach as a group of educators (which includes you).

Discussion Brief 1 touched on the implications of 4IR on the future of work. These changes are already occurring, and the pace of change is accelerating. How then can we prepare our children for an environment that is very different to the one experienced by any generation in history? We believe the answer is crystallised in the term 'Age of Agility'.[1] There are numerous reports being issued in Australia and elsewhere, and we will be drawing on some of their findings throughout the briefs. The USA is a particularly rich source of information. Because they realise their education system is in crisis, and because they are experiencing VUCA a little more acutely, they can act as our 'canary in the coal mine'. America Succeeds is one of the US based groups calling for educators to prepare youth for the challenges that await them. They produced two excellent reports: The Age of Agility[i] and Agility Thriving[ii]. They issued an ominous warning in the first report in 2017:

Forward-thinking corporate executives, academics, technologists, and economists may not often agree, but on this they are virtually unanimous: the disruption we're just beginning to experience will rival any technological upheaval in history in both scope and impact.[iii]

The report noted Klaus Schwab's (from the WEF) conclusion about the impact of 4IR:

… I am convinced of one thing—that in the future, talent, more than capital, will represent the critical factor of production.

This brings us back to the point where we finished the first brief. Our school's graduates can prosper if they present themselves as talented people who can help employers navigate a business environment under constant threat of disruption. The report continued (our emphasis in bold):

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1 Look at the work of 'O Desk', just one of many portals through which employers can access talent from anywhere in the world. Many of the people looking for work on these platforms are highly trained, keen, and relatively inexpensive.

…one thing is clear: those who will survive and thrive in this new reality **will have to be highly agile, creative, critical thinkers, comfortable in diverse environments, and open to a future far more fluid than that to which we are accustomed.**

Unfortunately, our current education system has long been behind the curve in preparing students for the current world of work, let alone the new Age of Agility. **Without profound and rapid changes to how we educate our children, this nation faces the real possibility of falling farther behind countries with nimbler and more innovative education system. [iv]**

We touched on 4IR technologies last week, but we failed to note the added impact of demographic trends and the very significant impact of global talent markets. Deloitte's Framework for Understanding the Future of Work (below) reminds us that our graduates won't just be competing against fellow Australians, they will be competing against talent from anywhere on the globe. Various forms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) mean that distance is no longer an obstacle, allowing managers to engage people from anywhere and at any time. It may surprise you to learn that many Australian companies have been outsourcing their work to contractors in various countries for many years, sometimes because different time zones allow the work to be ready overnight, sometimes because the hourly rate is cheaper, and sometimes because these contactors have skills that are scarce at home.

The implication for individuals includes being a lifelong learner (which is broader than completing a series of university degrees), shaping their own career path, and pursuing their own passions. As we highlighted last week, lifelong learning cannot be forced upon individuals. Only people with a positive attitude to learning can sustain the effort to be constantly learning 'on the job' and/or through micro-credentialing or other avenues for learning, such as MOOCs. Shaping one's own career path sounds wonderful, but not for people who lack vision, resilience, and organisational skills. Passion is great, provided students have been given the

opportunity to find one. We have all seen students with a passion for sport or music, but can we be sure that every student has been given the opportunity to find a passion? How can we provide these opportunities without adding to the pressure they feel from social media, where everyone else seems to exude passion? It's not as if we can tell them to find a passion by dinner time. They need time to explore and have different experiences, and many of them occur off the school campus.

The Implications for Organisations are also relevant. If work is to be redesigned for technology and learning, the workforce will need to be technologically savvy (particularly with respect to ICT) and equipped to learn in different ways.
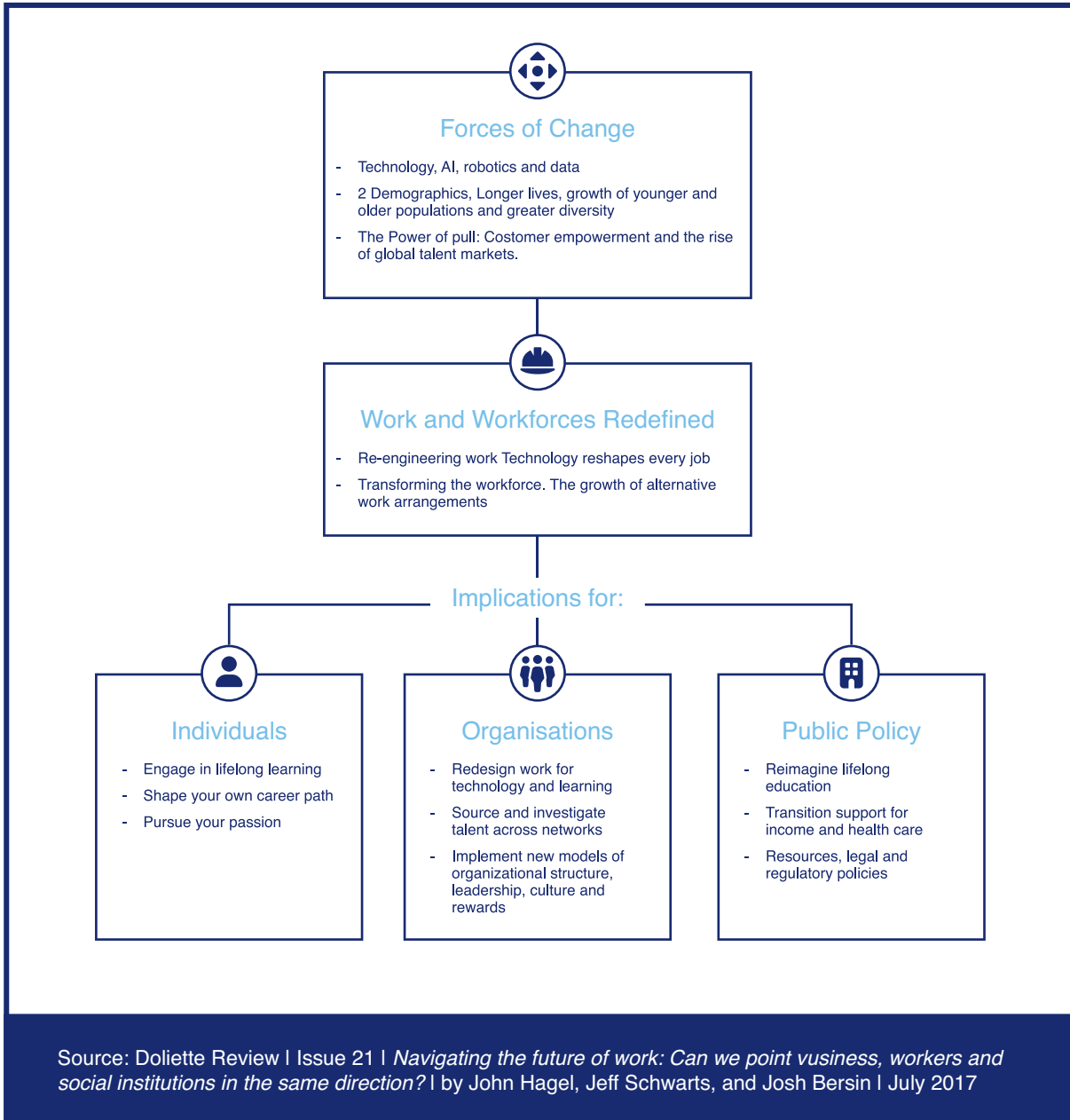
If organisations are going to source and integrate talent across networks, our graduates will need teamworking and communication skills as well as cultural sensitivity. I suspect this generation will readily adapt to new organisational structures, leadership, culture, and rewards predicted by Deloitte, because they have not yet been immersed in the old way of doing things.

The term 'gig economy' has been used to describe the way workers, like musicians, will move from one gig to another. The career path in such an economy will not be linear, as it was for many people in the past. This is illustrated in the diagram, Work Endurance in the Age of Agility.

The new model looks more like a series of waves than the straight line in the old model. It consists of periods of increasing value in the workforce, followed by a decline.

The temporary and relatively small decline occurs as the individual learns new skills or moves to a new occupation. This is followed by another rapid increase in value as the employee's new skills are applied, and so on. They will, in effect, take two steps forward and one step back, but they will be masters of their own destiny.

To be successful in such an environment the worker needs to tune into changes in their work environment and predict when and what new

Forces of Change

- Technology, AI, robotics and data
- 2 Demographics, Longer lives, growth of younger and older populations and greater diversity
- The Power of pull: Costomer empowerment and the rise of global talent markets.

Work and Workforces Redefined

- Re-engineering work Technology reshapes every job
- Transforming the workforce. The growth of alternative work arrangements

Implications for:

Individuals

- Engage in lifelong learning
- Shape your own career path
- Pursue your passion

Organisations

- Redesign work for technology and learning
- Source and investigate talent across networks
- Implement new models of organizational structure, leadership, culture and rewards

Public Policy

- Reimagine lifelong education
- Transition support for income and health care
- Resources, legal and regulatory policies

Source: Doliette Review I Issue 21 I *Navigating the future of work: Can we point vusiness, workers and social institutions in the same direction?* I by John Hagel, Jeff Schwarts, and Josh Bersin I July 2017

skills will be needed. They will be vulnerable if they wait to be retrained and in peril if they are reluctant to learn. They must at least commit to a cycle of skill refinement and adaptation to avoid having their own job disrupted, but greater prosperity will be experienced by those who lead innovations. These people will have an entrepreneurial disposition as well as a constantly evolving skill set.

Proactivity will be the defining characteristic of agile employees and set them apart from the bulk of their workmates who are disengaged and reactive (this is a big claim, but it will be supported in a later brief). Learning is easy once it becomes an enjoyable habit, so why don't most employees do it? Because, in the past, it has been easier not to do it. This and future generations will not have the luxury of being a passenger.

Workforce Endurance in the Age of Agility

Old Model

A single specialised skill or degree once led to enduring value and longevity in the workforce.

New Model

Continuous waves of learning and skill upgrades create adaptability to changing conditions, increasing value and longevity in the future workforce.

VALUE IN THE WORKFORCE

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Source: Doliette Review I Issue 21 I *Navigating the future of work: Can we point vusiness, workers and social institutions in the same direction?* I by John Hagel, Jeff Schwarts, and Josh Bersin I July 2017

Jobs to be Done

Christensen's Theory of Jobs to Be Done[v] is a rare beast because it makes a simple idea sound simple. The theory calls on business leaders to understand what really motivates their consumers. What job do consumers really want done? One of Christensen's first articles on Jobs to Be Done included the following:

The great Harvard marketing professor Theodore Levitt used to tell his students, "People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole!" Every marketer we know agrees with Levitt's insight. Yet these same people segment their markets by type of drill and by price point; they measure market share of drills, not holes; and they benchmark the features and functions of their drill, not their hole, against those of rivals. They then set to work offering more features and functions in the belief that these will translate into better pricing and market share. When marketers do this, they often solve the wrong problems, improving their products in ways that are irrelevant to their customers' needs.[vi]

The article drew on examples from cars and financial plans to milkshakes, where marketers made incorrect assumptions about what motivated the consumer to purchase a good or service. Ultimately, consumers shift to an alternative that delivers on the jobs they want done.[vii] This thinking was the subject of work by Simon Senek, who emphasised focusing on why isations do what they do rather than how they do it. Failure to do this leads them to focus on doing the wrong job, albeit very well. They become very successful at doing the wrong thing, until a new competitor does a better job of giving consumers what they need, by which time it is too late.

We believe this observation applies equally to schools. The traditional model of schooling was developed during the First Industrial Revolution, and although it has been refined (better facilities, smaller classes, more positive relationships between students and teachers), most schools continue to operate as if the world beyond the school gate has not changed. The purpose of these discussion briefs is to discover the job that needs to be done for this and future generations of learners, and then ask ourselves how well we are doing and whether we need to refine our approach. If we are doing very well, we can all celebrate, but if there are areas where we can improve, we must act accordingly. It may well be that, in addition to fostering agility in our students, we (as a school) need to become more agile ourselves.

As the second America Succeeds report observed:

In a business context, agility is loosely defined as an organisation's ability to sense changes and respond accordingly to deliver value to customers. It's not as much about a specific methodology or framework as it is about harnessing an agile mindset…

Agile education systems are better positioned to serve the unique needs of every student in normal times. In the face of a major disruption, they could be positioned to greatly outperform their more traditional peers.[viii]

Many of our graduates, we hope, will find themselves working in organisations with this 'agile mindset'. What better way to prepare them but to have them (particularly in the senior years) experience being part of such an organisation while at school, not as passengers, but as participants? This is a concept to be developed as we progress through the briefs.

The report continued:

Over the past four decades, the primary purpose of schools has been to maximise academic achievement. Yet in that time, the world has greatly changed. What a student needs to thrive in the world today is agency. It's an idea well-summarised by Devin Vodicka, Chief Impact Officer at Altitude Learning:

In the Agency era, the purpose of school is to ensure students can think critically and creatively, collaborate effectively with others, apply skills and knowledge to solving real problems, and find meaningful ways to contribute to the world. While these are often referred to as "soft skills" they are better framed as essential, foundational skills in this new era. In an age of automation, these skills are the least likely to be replaced by machines. In the context of rapid change, they are already the ones giving individuals and organizations the edge.[ix]

We wish all students in every school, both in Australia and overseas, the best as they come to terms with VUCA. But as members of the team at CCPS, our priority is to work with you to ensure our graduates have that edge.

The next discussion brief looks at a set of transferable skills that build agility. There are some things we are yet to discover, but we believe we are asking the right questions, which puts us well ahead of many other schools.

Extension Activity

Here's a link to a long video (35 minutes) that focuses on developments in AI. It's worth watching because a) It is (at least was for me) mind blowing; b) it demonstrates the innovative process and the contribution people who are not 'in the field' can make because they bring a different perspective; c) it illustrates the idea of Job to Be Done for the amputees (the consumers); and d) if you look closely, you will get an idea about the jobs that might flow from these kinds of innovations.

Reference List

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(v) Christensen. C.M., Dillon. K., Hall. T. et al. 2016. Competing Against Luck: The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice.
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(vii) Sinek, S. 2009. Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action. New York: Portfolio/Penguin

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Pelican's Nest
Early Learning Centre

City Stars
Kindergarten

Caloundra City
Private School