**DEFINING CAREER LITERACY**

**NCDA Leadership Academy Action Project (Phase 1)**

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**I. OVERVIEW**

From a routine search of scholarly literature, it seems the term “career literacy” is used in other countries more so than the United States. There are multiple factors involved with developing a term, including national workforce and economic needs and educational competencies (K-12 and beyond). Below are a few key points from existing literature to begin a dialogue though further literature review and research is needed.

**PLEASE NOTE**: Career Vision has trademarked the term “Career Literacy” and define it as: Career Literacy™ is the basic knowledge and skills that we all need to help us read the 21st Century work environment.” <http://careervision.org/career-literacy/>

**II. TIMLINE & “CAREER LITERACY” DEFINITIONS**

2009

Australia government task group uses phrase “career literacy” and publishes paper on how to improve it. (Summary in Scholarly Resources)

DEFINITION: Career literacy includes the skills of understanding one’s own strengths and weaknesses, and needs and wants; of being able to identify relevant opportunities, and access information on them; of being able to take career-related decisions; and of being able to present oneself effectively in order to gain access to courses   
or jobs (Career Industry Council Australia, 2009b).

2012

Green Ways publishes resource guide for women on “economic security and career literacy” <http://www.jff.org/publications/preparing-best-economic-security-and-career-literacy-resource-guide>

(Summary in Scholarly Resources)

2015 (?) - Paul Nichols used the term in 2015 at the VCA conference but has used the term in earlier discussions. Paul was not available to talk to confirm his initial introduction of the term. This will be updated as soon as possible.

2015

July 1: William Symonds presented on the career at NCDA’s Annual Conference (2015). His slides are available at <http://globalpathwaysinstitute.org/events/career-literacy/>

He will be presenting on the topic again at this year’s conference (Session #201, June 30, 2:15 – 3:30 pm).

(Scholarly synopsis included below)

September 30 – Massachusetts Institute for College and Career Readiness hosted a webinar: Starting a National Conversation on Career Literacy”

<http://sites.bu.edu/miccr/webinar-career-literacy/> (W. Symonds hosted)

November 2 – Concodia University (Nebraska) defines career literacy as resource webpage. <http://online.cune.edu/defining-career-literacy/> (Catrin Blake) – looks like she took from Symonds

DEFINITION “providing students with the capacity to make informed decisions about choosing a career and deciding the best course of action to reach their goals.”

**III. SCHOLARLY RESOURCES**

Green Ways (2012). Preparing for the best: Economic security and career resource guide. Retrieved electronically on February 17, 2016 from http://www.jff.org/publications/preparing-best-economic-security-and-career-literacy-resource-guide

As suggested in the title, this is a resource guide for women and provides tools for economic and career planning. It contains a specific “train the trainer” (p. 13) career literacy curriculum with modules and goals to connect economics with career development.

Hooley, T. (2012). How the internet changed career: framing the relationship between career development and online technologies. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, *29* (1), p 3 -12.

Hooley specifically referred to “The seven C’s of digital career literacy” (Fig. 1, p. 6) which provides a supplemental framework for career literacy definitions. He recognized information literacy, digital literacy, and career management as integral to developing this model.

Symonds, W. (2015) Reimaging the role of career development. Keynote address at the National Career Development Association’s Annual Conference, Denver, CO.

Symonds defined career literacy as “equipping students/adults with the knowledge, tools, and support they need to make good career decisions: now and in the future” (slide 15). Using various quantitative data, he set the stage for why the nation is in need of this “movement” as traditional career terms (such as “guidance” and “development” are limited (slide 15) in the U.S. He supported this movement based on college retention rates, U.S. poverty rates and related this to America’s ideals of opportunity. He also referenced a skills “gap” and a lack of counselors.

Tatham, P. & McIlveen, P. (2009) Improving the career literacy of Australian students. In TAFE Directors Austrailia and the Career Industry Council of Austrialia Round Table: Improving the Career Literacy of Austrailian Students, 10 August 2009, Melbourne, Austrailia.

Citing that individual career choices “will have a direct impact on the quality and growth of Australia’s human capital” (p. 1), Tatham and McIlveen argued the need for Australia to mimic European countries which have established a lifespan perspective of career development with access to everyone.

Specific to career literacy, the authors identified three key areas and eleven competencies:

**Personal Management**

Build and maintain a positive self image

Interact positively and effectively with others

Change and grow throughout life

**Learning and Work Exploration**

Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals

Locate and effectively use career information

Understand the relationship between work, society, and the economy

**Career Building**

Secure/create and maintain work

Make career enhancing decisions

Maintain balanced life and work roles

Understand the changing nature of life and work roles

Understand, engage in and manage the career building process (p. 5)

Overall, this report provides a framework for the U.S. to build upon. In addition to considering the benefits for Australia, recommendations for “social inclusion” (p. 6) are included.

**IV. IMPLICATIONS/SUMMARY**

We are behind as a nation (compared to other Western nations) in terms of collaborative, national movement to prepare students and individuals for career preparedness. The current models discussed lack focus on developmental and technical emphasis. Most of the current information focuses on K-12 and young adulthood though Tathem and McIlveen (2009) note a lifespan approach. Symonds (2015) recommendation for a “national movement” is supported by data and provides a useful beginning for justifying NCDA’s involvement of a definition of career literacy.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS**:

Goal: Develop NCDA definition of Career Literacy (or related term)

Short-term recommendations:

* Before adopting the term, NCDA should verify legal trademarks on the term.
* Consider alternative term that would reflect systems, development, or other aspects and would not be confused with other types of literacy or career preparedness or readiness e.g. “career competency”
* Include a framework for literacy that addresses (lifespan) developmental theory (e.g. Super) and academic/technical skills and levels (e.g. K-12)
* Continue to review literature (scholarly and non-scholarly) to determine the need for defining such a term and the role of the term (from Symonds)
* Follow Tatham and McIllveen’s (2009) competencies model to start a conversation; further incorporate with career theory and research to strengthen.
* Ask NCDA Officers, Educators, Researchers and Past-Presidents (i.e. stakeholders) how they define the term and qualitatively review the information to find themes and consensus.
* Continue to probe other nation’s policies and recommendations, to include personal conversations with career development researchers

Long-term:

* Incorporate this definition in counselor education and CDF training curricula.
* Partner with international career development and policy organizations which would coincide with NCDA’s relationship with the CCE’s Global Career Development Facilitator.
* Promote NCDA membership categories as resources for national and global career literacy

Talking points:

As we move toward a skills-based and competency-based learning emphasis, where will “career literacy” fit into liberal arts education?

How does career literacy relate to college and career readiness? Career preparedness. What are the differences and how do we emphasize them?

Where does “underemployment” fit in with workforce and other economic contexts? (An often unrecognized national problem).

How will we integrate technology into a model or definition of career literacy (see Hooley article)?

How will we catch up to other nations? And, possibly, further lead other nations?

What influence could we have on K-12 and post-secondary educational programs and academics in order to match workforce expectations?