The relationship between qualifications and the labour market, and the nature of educational pathways

Leesa Wheelahan
Global Partnerships: Building a Better Future
WFCP World Congress
October 24 – 26, 2014
Argument

- Educational pathways are shaped by the relationship between qualifications & structure of jobs
- Nature & structure of pathways will differ between industries
- Policy implications – a uniform approach to policy isn’t helpful
Australia has 2 sectors of tertiary education
All qualifications serve 3 purposes

1. *In the labour market* - entry or upgrade
2. *In education* – as a transition to higher level qualifications
3. *In society* – to widen access to tertiary education, support social inclusion & social mobility
Thinking about pathways differently

- Links between education & work not strong
- Skills mismatches
- Pathways shaped by many factors, including structure of occupations
Students change their field of education

Source: Nick Fredman
Four types of pathways

- Business
- Nursing
- Pure disciplines
- Engineering

Links to qualifications within field of education:

- High
- Low

Links to jobs:

- High
Signalling or screening device?

• Signalling device
  – Occupational labour markets -
  – Entry & progression specified by the profession/ occupation
  – Qualifications specify what people can know & do (broadly)
  – Content & skills clearly mapped

• Screening device
  – Internal labour markets
  – Entry fairly open, internal progression through ranks
  – Qualifications indicator of capability & attributes (broadly)
  – Content & skill less tightly specified
The capabilities approach

The interaction between education & work

Individuals with capabilities
Careers

Preparation of individuals for work:
Individual, social, economic, cultural & environment resources

Jobs
Occupations
Vocational Stream

Structure of work: families of linked occupations
Conclusion

- Policy needs to be differentiated
- Recognise qualifications serve diverse purposes
- Emphasis will vary depending on whether qualifications used as screening or signalling device

- Capabilities approach – conceptual basis for qualifications that links work & education