

In transition: employment outcomes of clients who completed vocational training at AMES Australia

Preliminary findings from a study tracking the employment outcomes of clients in Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

Introduction

AMES Australia provides a comprehensive range of settlement support, English language and literacy tuition, vocational training and employment services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers primarily resident in Victoria, and employment services in Western Sydney. The Research and Policy Unit at AMES Australia conducts research to inform policy and practical decision making around migration and settlement service provision.

This short report details findings from the AMES Australia 'Transitions to Employment' research project, which was conducted to investigate the employment outcomes and experiences of clients who completed vocational training at AMES Australia.

Vocational training at AMES Australia

AMES Australia offers vocational training namely, Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing, Home and Community) and in Early Childhood Education and Care throughout the Melbourne metropolitan region. These industry-specific vocational courses train and prepare clients for a job in the Aged Care or in the Early Childhood Education and Care industry in Australia. The courses are delivered full time for approximately six months and include a minimum of 120 hours work placement. Teachers in these programs hold relevant industry qualifications and are trained English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors.

Clients are required to have an intermediate level of English proficiency to be eligible to enrol in these vocational courses. This level of language proficiency is also required for work placement in a children's services centre or an aged care centre.

Research design

Respondents surveyed for this research were former AMES Australia clients who completed a Certificate III course either in Individual Support or in Early Childhood Education and Care in Semester 2, 2014 and Semesters 1 and 2, 2015. Data was collected through telephone interviews six months after the clients had completed the course. The survey was conducted by multilingual Research Assistants and in 63% of cases in the first language of the client.

During the three semesters included in this study, 290 clients were enrolled in the industry certificate courses.¹ A total number of 203 clients (or 70%) were surveyed for this research. Two-thirds of the clients were from Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care courses and one-third were from Certificate III in Individual Support courses. Clients were asked about their employment situation and for their feedback on the course.

Clients from eight Certificate III in Individual Support and fourteen Certificate III in Early Childhood Education were surveyed for this research. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the clients at AMES centres in Melbourne who were surveyed for this research.

¹A total number of 22 out of the 24 classes that ran during this period were surveyed. This excludes a small number of people who withdrew in the first month or for whom we did not have current contact information.

Table 1: Client distributions at AMES centres

AMES Centres	Certificate III in Individual Support		Certificate III in Early Childhood Education		Total Count	%
	Count	%	Count	%		
<i>Box Hill</i>	17	24	33	25	50	25
<i>Flagstaff</i>	0	0	23	17	23	11
<i>Footscray</i>	22	31	0	0	22	11
<i>Noble Park</i>	32	45	30	23	62	31
<i>St Albans</i>	0	0	22	17	22	11
<i>Werribee</i>	0	0	24	18	24	12
<i>Total</i>	71	100	132	100	203	100

Demographics

The majority of clients (80%) had tertiary qualifications; 54% had a bachelor or higher university degree and 26% had a trade or technical qualification.

Most clients were female (90%).

More than half of the clients were on a Family (including Spouse) visa (61%). Other clients were on Humanitarian (13%), Skilled (9%), Student (6%), and Temporary (4%) visas. A small number of clients were Australian citizens.

The clients came from diverse age-groups; 18-24 years (11%), 25-34 years (42%), 35-44 years (33%), 45-54 years (10%) and over 55 years (4%).

Clients were primarily from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds; they represented 38 countries. The top five countries of birth were China (23%), India (17%), Vietnam (8%), Sri Lanka (5%) and Pakistan (4%).

The residency period of clients in Australia ranged between less than six months and more than eight years. Table 2 summarises clients' residency periods.

Table 2: Residency period

Residency Period	Count	%
<i>Less than 6 months</i>	30	15
<i>6 months - <2 years</i>	54	27
<i>2 - <5 years</i>	53	26
<i>5 - <8 years</i>	30	15
<i>8 years and above</i>	36	18
<i>Total</i>	203	100

Employment history

The majority of clients (69%) had worked prior to migrating to Australia and came from a wide range of occupational backgrounds.

Table 3 summarises occupations² of this group. One-third of clients (34%) also had worked in Australia before enrolment in the industry certificate course at AMES.

Table 3: Clients' occupation before migrating to Australia

Occupation	Count	%
<i>Professionals</i>	69	49
<i>Clerical and Administrative Workers</i>	28	20
<i>Community and Personal Service Workers</i>	16	11
<i>Machinery Operators and Drivers</i>	7	5
<i>Self Employed</i>	4	3
<i>Technicians and Trade Workers</i>	4	3
<i>Managers</i>	3	2
<i>Other</i>	3	2
<i>Labourers</i>	2	1
<i>Sales Workers</i>	2	1
<i>Not stated</i>	2	1
<i>Total</i>	140	100

Reasons for doing vocational training at AMES

We asked the clients why they decided to do the course at AMES Australia. For most clients (74%) the reason was to get a recognised qualification to work in the course specific industry. Other frequently mentioned reasons were³:

- to learn more English (41%)
- recommended by friends (18%)
- something useful to do (18%)
- recommended by a counsellor at AMES (10%)
- to prepare for further study (9%)
- to meet jobactive obligations (3%)

Employment outcomes

At six months after completing the course, 82% of clients were available to work. That is, either they were employed or looking for work. Those not available to work had gone on to further study or were no longer looking for work due to family responsibilities and other reasons. Table 4 summarises the employment situation of the clients.

² Occupation categories based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations 2013 V1.2.

³ More than one response allowed.

Table 4: Employment situation six months post-course completion

	Count	%
Available to work	167	82
Not available, Further study	23	11
Not available, family responsibilities and other reasons	13	7
Total	203	100

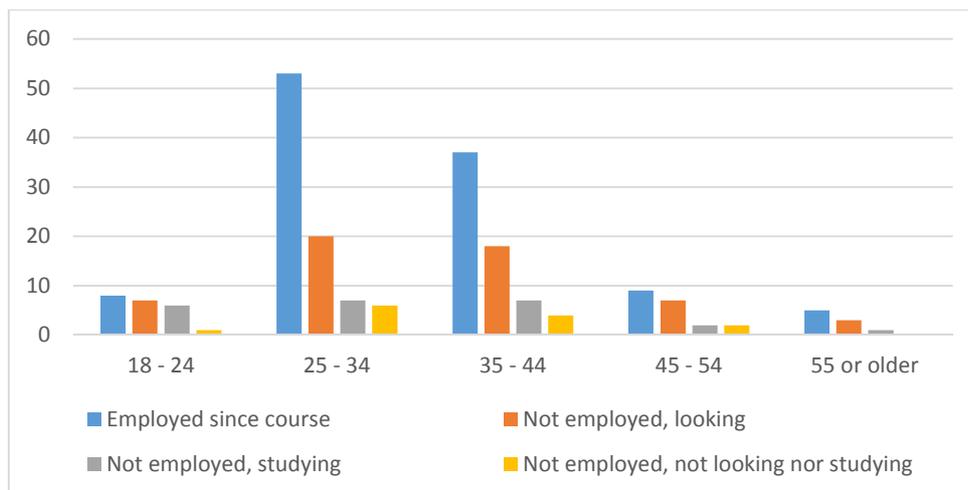
Of the clients who were available to work, 67% had found work within the first six months of completing their course; 33% were unemployed and actively looking for work. The percentage of clients who found employment was the same in both courses (67%). Table 5 summarises the employment outcomes of the clients who were available to work.

Table 5: Employment outcomes of those available to work

	<i>Certificate III in Individual Support</i>		<i>Certificate III in Early Childhood Education</i>		Total	%
	Count	%	Count	%		
Employed	41	67	71	67	112	67
Unemployed and looking for work	20	33	35	33	55	33
Total	61	100	106	100	167	100

The largest number of clients working at six months came from the 25-34 age-group, followed by 35-44 years group. Chart 1 shows the division of age groups and current activities of the clients. Across all age-groups, the majority of clients were working following the course.

Chart 1: Current activities and age-group



The percentage of clients who had gone for further study was higher for Early Childhood Education clients than that of Individual Support clients. Table 6 summarises the current engagements of clients from both courses who were not available to work.

Table 6: Post-course activities of those not available to work

	<i>Certificate III in Individual Support</i>		<i>Certificate III in Early Childhood Education</i>		Total	%
	Count	%	Count	%		
<i>Further study</i>	4	40	19	73	23	64
<i>Family responsibilities or other personal reasons</i>	6	60	7	27	13	36
<i>Total</i>	10	100	26	100	36	100

Of those who were employed, the majority were working in casual positions; 21% of clients had a permanent job. Table 7 summarizes the employment arrangements of the clients who were employed.

Table 7: Employment arrangements

	Count	%
<i>Casual</i>	76	68
<i>Permanent</i>	24	21
<i>Self-employed/ABN</i>	9	8
<i>No response</i>	2	2
<i>Fixed-term contract</i>	1	1
<i>Total</i>	112	100

Only 20% of clients were working 35 hours or more (full-time) per week. The majority of clients were working part-time; 33% were working 11-20 hours per week, another 33% were working 21-34 hours per week. A small number of clients (11%) were working less than 10 hours. Of those who were working part time, 44% said they would like to work more hours.

Most clients (84%) had found work as Community and Personal Service Workers work in the area of their industry certificate qualification.⁴ Table 8 summarizes the current occupations of clients who were employed.

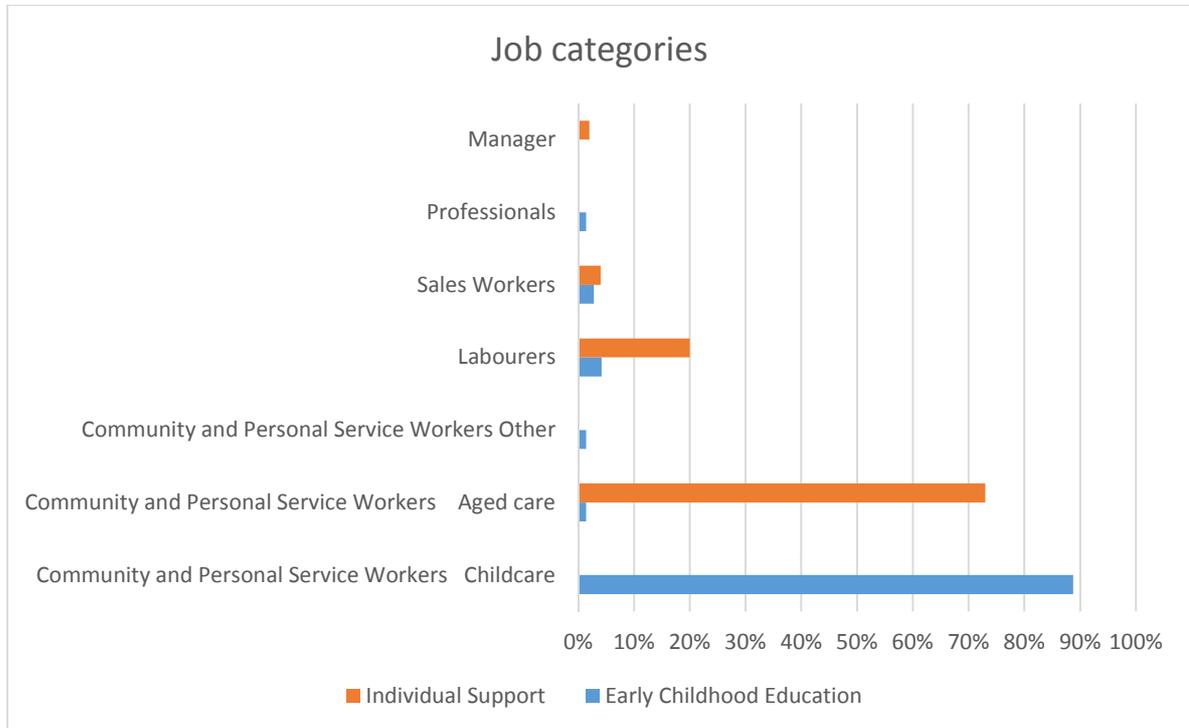
Table 8: Job category of the clients

Job Category	Count	%
<i>Community and Personal Service Workers</i>	94	84
<i>Labourers</i>	9	8
<i>Manager</i>	3	3
<i>Professionals</i>	3	3
<i>Sales Workers</i>	3	3
<i>Total</i>	112	100

⁴ The ABS categorises Community and Personal Service Workers as those who assist Health Professionals in the provision of patient care, provide information and support on a range of social welfare matters, and provide other services in the areas of aged care and childcare, education support, hospitality, defence, policing and emergency services, security, travel and tourism, fitness, sports and personal services.

Of those who completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, 89% were working in the child care industry. However, the percentage is lower for those who had a Certificate III in the Individual Support/aged care industry (73%). Of the clients who completed a Certificate III in Individual Support, 20% of them were working as labourers. Chart 2 compares the job categories of the clients for both courses.

Chart 2: Employment sector and job category



The majority (60%) earned \$21-30 per hour, 3% earned more than \$30 per hour and 15% said they earned less than \$20 per hour.⁵ Twenty-one percent of clients preferred not to answer the question about their income.

Methods used to find employment

Clients who were employed used a number of methods to find work. Twenty-seven percent of clients stated that they found work through the work placement organised by AMES Australia, which was part of their industry certificate course. This indicates that work placement is significant in finding employment which provides clients with an entry point to the industry, enables them to make professional contacts and gain practical industry experience. Work placement further gives clients exposure to workplace culture and practices.

Other methods that helped clients to find their current employment were:

- personal connections (19%)

⁵ Current National Minimum Wage for adults is \$17.70 plus a 25% loading for casuals (\$22.12). Fair Work Commission Australia 2016, <https://www.fwc.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/minimum-wages-conditions/national-minimum-wage-orders>

- job search website e.g. Seek, Gumtree, Indeed (14%)
- someone at AMES (e.g. employment consultant, teacher) (12%)
- approaching employers directly (e.g. handing out resumes) (7%)
- own business (6%)
- employer’s website (5%)
- *jobactive* provider (4%)
- volunteering (2%)
- recruitment agency (2%)

Challenges in finding employment

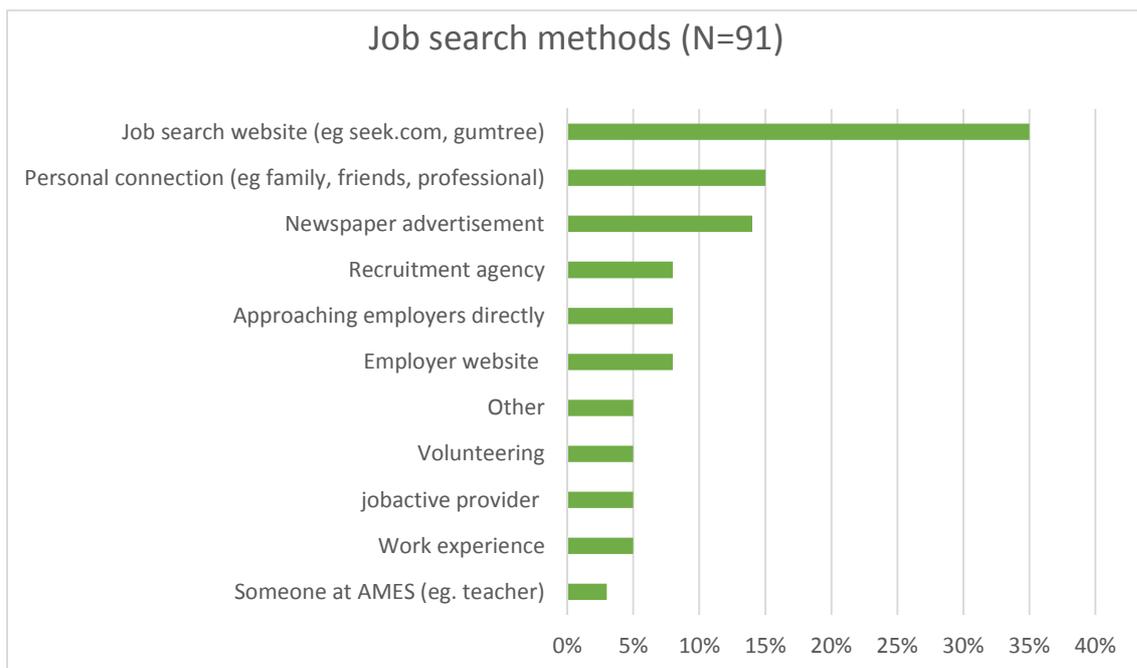
Clients who were available to work but could not find employment in the first six months were actively looking for employment at the time of the survey. They stated the following as the major barriers in finding employment:

- lack of local experience
- inadequate job search skills
- lack of networks
- lack of confidence in spoken English
- increased social isolation

A significant number of clients (37%) said they did not have anybody to assist them in looking for work. During the survey, 21 people (10%) asked for further support from AMES Australia to help them look for work.

The job search methods of clients who were looking for work were different from those who already found employment. The majority of clients who were still looking for work were largely using general job search websites. Chart 2 below shows the methods used by clients who were currently looking for work.

Chart 2: Job search methods for those available to work

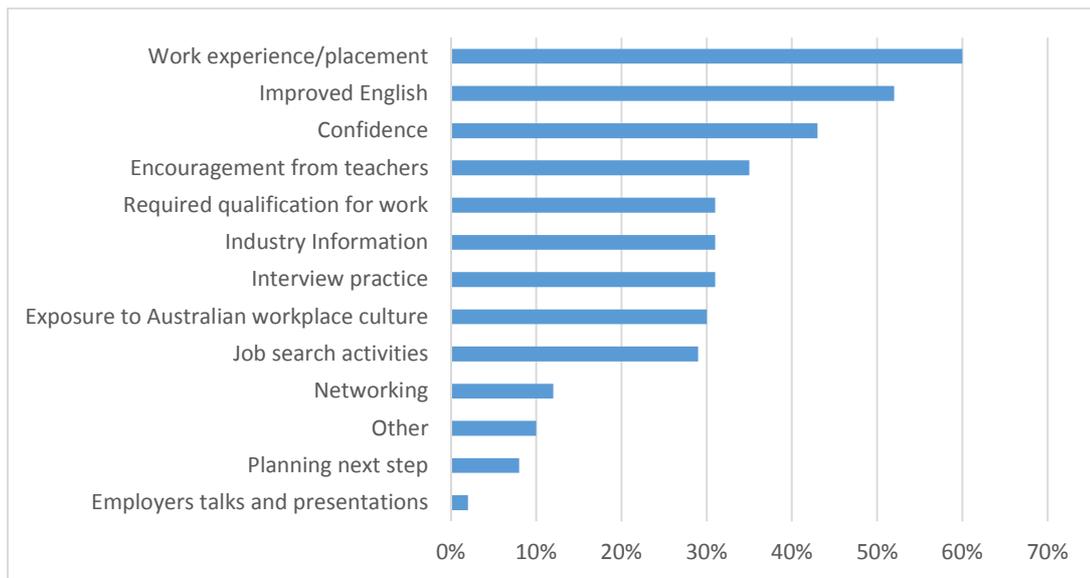


* More than one response allowed

Course feedback

Clients provided a range of feedback on the program and about their experience in the course; 96% of clients found the course helpful. They also identified which components of the course they found effective in searching for and securing employment. The majority of clients (60%) found the work placement component of the course most useful.

Chart 3: Course components that were helpful in finding employment



* More than one response allowed

A sample of the feedback provided by clients was as follows:

I am very happy with everything we did in the course and the teachers were really helpful, that is why I found the job straightway after I finished the course.

At the beginning, I felt that the study load was too much but gradually I realized that all the contents were relevant and students should learn those things to get the qualification. I am very satisfied what I have learnt.

A few clients however, found the Certificate III level vocational content did not provide them with sufficient required skills at the appropriate level to perform the work effectively. Some also provided feedback that the level of English requirement for the course was either too high or too low.

Although most clients found work placement the most useful component of the course, some clients thought that the work placement period was not long enough. A few clients however, were of the opinion that the work placement period was too long.

A number of clients suggested that AMES Australia should offer higher level courses such as a Certificate IV or a Diploma in Individual Support and in Early Childhood Education and Care. Other clients commented on the hurdles they faced while looking for work after the course finished and their need for additional support from AMES. In the words of a client:

The course was really formal and we had enough time to learn in both classroom and workplace. Only one thing, if AMES could build a stronger and broader network and help students find jobs after they finish the course.

Summary findings

Eighty-two percent of clients were available to work at six months after completing the course; 67% of them were employed and 33% were actively looking for work. This means two in every three clients who were available to work had a job at six months after completing the course.

The courses had a high level of success in facilitating entry into work that was directly related to the areas of training. Of the employed clients, 84% were working as Community and Personal Service Workers.

The work placement component of the course was a key factor in finding work; 27% of clients who secured employment were offered the position upon completing the work placement.

Of the employed clients, the majority (68%) were working on a casual basis and relatively few were in permanent positions or self-employed.

Of the clients who were working part-time, 44% said they would like to work more hours.

Eighteen percent of clients were not available to work due to further study or family responsibilities and other personal reasons.

Clients who were looking for work needed more post program support to find employment.

For those who were looking for work, major barriers for finding work were related to insufficient local experience, lack of confidence in spoken English, lack of networks and increased social isolation.

A more detailed report on this research study will be available in 2017.