

Synthesis – Theme 3: Integrating career development into wider society

A synthesis of the perspectives of countries and international organisations attending the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy Symposium 2019

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Abstract:

Career development exists in a range of contexts for different objectives and its mandate most often resides within multiple levels of government. The country norm remains that Ministries of Education are totally separate from Ministries of Employment or Labour and in most countries, universities and colleges are separate from both. The achievement of a transparent and readily accessible lifelong career development system is thus rendered very difficult and in fact not yet fully achieved by any one country.

At the same time, and perhaps given the current uncertainty and high levels of change and challenge in the labour market, most countries report that the interest in career development policy is growing. Many countries are responding to the challenges and the growing interest by experimenting with and/or adopting joined together approaches between education and labour. There is growing evidence of labour market expertise being welcomed into the education system and certainly strong outreach to include the employer community in program and service delivery within the school system. Innovative cross-sectoral approaches are also being tried and are showing promise.

The most common form of cross sectoral collaboration is National Forums. There are many impressive examples of forums that cut across many Ministries and some examples of such forums being evaluated for impact and effectiveness. There are also leadership initiatives within the career development sector itself, some of which are gaining prominence and recognition and being called upon by Ministries and Governments to contribute to policy discussions and action plans.

Increasingly the skills language of labour markets and employers is becoming prominent within the career development sector. While co-ordination remains the main challenge it is clear that the career development sector is paying increased attention to the demand side of the labour market.

The professional identity of career development professionals and recognition of its specialised expertise as distinct from other helping professions remains a challenge in many countries.

1. Introduction

This paper synthesises and summarises the perspectives articulated by the 33 countries attending the International Centre for Career Development Symposium in Tromsø in 2019.

The production of country papers and then thematic syntheses are at the core of the methodology used in the international symposia (Watts, Bezanson, and McCarthy, 2014). This synthesis and the other three thematic syntheses (covering the context and challenges for career development, aims for and access to career development services and leading innovative change for the future) will be made available prior to the 2019 symposium and will be used to underpin discussion during the four-day event and inform the development of country action plans and the 2019 communique.

This paper focuses on theme 3 'Integrating Career Development into Wider Society'. Within this theme, five key questions were posed for country reflection and response as follows:

- What ministries are responsible for career development programs and services?
- What leadership and co-ordination exist to ensure collaboration across sectors?
- What are the main challenges and obstacles to effective collaboration and leadership?
- How is professionalism developed and maintained while working with other professionals? and
- How is a professional service ensured?

When we think about the overarching theme of career development in the wider society, the tentacles of career development and the expected outcomes from its programs and services are multiple and complex. They include at least:

- **For individuals.** Career development can assist people to find direction, learn career management skills and create pathways to achievement and opportunity in education and work.
- **For the education system.** Career development can help to graduate students with higher rates of qualification and with learning and career plans, reduce dropout rates and help to engage parents.
- **For the labour market.** Career development can contribute to a balance between supply and demand, reduce unemployment, underemployment and dependency, and help individuals and the education system to engage with and meet expectations of employers.
- **For social policy.** Career development can support marginalised groups such as migrants and minorities to integrating successfully into the labour market and promote overall citizen engagement and well-being.

As this list shows, career development exists in a range of different contexts for different objectives and draws its mandate, directly or indirectly from multiple areas of government. Consequently, the question of how career development manages to interface and connect with wider society will inevitably include many community and government players. The reach of career development is wide and deep.

Given this complexity, it is understandable that no one country has created a perfect system. No one country has a single framework through which quality services across all sectors are quality assured (Hooley, 2019). The country papers submitted as part of this symposium process make the following points clear.

- **Policy interest in career development is growing.** Of the 33 countries participating, 30 indicated that policy makers are looking more closely to career development programs and services as a potentially positive and cost-effective response to rising social inequity, skill shortages, challenges with migration pressure, and heightened precarity and anxiety about the future of work.
- **Strategic leadership is critical, but hard to achieve.** Given the multiple layers, jurisdictions and mandates, strategic leadership is hard to achieve and sustain. However, it is important to continue to strive for this kind of leadership as it is critical for the sustainability of services.
- **There are a range of different interventions that can improve career development services.** There are many positive innovative responses to trying to do things better; some of these are structural; others are organisational and others are attitudinal.
- **There is a need for ongoing innovation.** Innovation and collaboration leading to change can be top down and bottom up. Grassroots initiatives are showing considerable promise.
- **There is enormous variation between countries.** Different countries organise leadership, strategy and structures in the career development system in very different ways. While all countries have a need for leadership in the sector the responses and contexts vary hugely.

2. Responsibility for career development policy

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) handbook for policy makers (OECD, 2004a, p. 74) cites the following system coordination features as key in a strong career development/career guidance system:

- Guidance systems operate in a flexible, open and complementary way across education, training, employment and community sectors;
- Guidance services within one sector are coordinated with services in other sectors at national, regional and local levels. Close co-operation and co-ordination exist between guidance provided outside the training and education system and guidance provided within it.

These recommendations are now 15 years old and most countries still struggle to get close to their achievement. The country papers suggest that there has been some progress, with many reporting important innovations in this area. Most significant among them are efforts to build service delivery models that bring together the Departments of Education and Departments of Employment/Labour such that seamless access to services is more accessible and transparent for citizens. The compulsory school system has often been criticised for its focus on post-secondary education without a commensurate focus on skilled trades and/or employment following school. Bringing services

together under a single ministry provides one way to improve the coherence of career development provision. Some examples of more joined together services include the following countries:

- **Croatia and Estonia** have both merged education and employment into a Public Employment Service with early positive results;
- **England.** Career guidance policy for young people and adults is now within the portfolio of a single Ministry with two branches but also with clear complementary roles and regular collaboration between both. National Careers Advisors are now co-located in Jobcentres to better serve the unemployed. The Department of Education remains the primary provider but staff meet regularly with other ministries directly connected with the labour market and collaboration with employers is a strong feature.
- **Finland** reports moving towards a single delivery structure for career development through the establishment of a joint Growth Service which is planned to be established in 2019.
- **Scotland.** There is an increased emphasis on 'joined up delivery' specifically focused on addressing smoother transitions between education and employment and targeting youth unemployment and underemployment. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has an all-age inclusive career service with SDS career advisors in every secondary school and drop in centres open to all in every community.

An anomaly across most countries appears to be the university system, which does not seem to be integrated with the K-12 system or labour and operates very independently. Given that the labour market is increasingly demanding higher-level qualifications, this separation remains a major challenge.

Many papers point to the rise of social inequality and unequal chances to participate in the labour market as well as growing uncertainty in the labour markets as being key issues that are having an impact on policy and practice. These conditions may be the catalysts for the countries which are moving toward closer structural collaboration between education and labour. Indications from countries which are amalgamating appear to be positive although most are still in relatively early stages of implementation.

These examples however remain exceptions as Ministries of Education and Ministries of Employment or Labour were cited in the vast majority of country papers as being the two principal but quite separate deliverers of career services. Bridges and cooperative mechanisms between them are not well articulated in policy and not widely implemented in practice.

Several country papers point to the challenge that such separations present for the disadvantaged and NEETS (those neither in education, employment or training). In many countries, these young adults no longer receive services from the education system and often face challenges accessing the employment assistance system. Several countries are tackling this by ensuring provision up to 35 (Ghana) or training guarantees up to age 25 (Austria, Finland, Hungary, Japan). The -3+3 approach in France is an interesting strategy whereby youth are supported through specific services three years prior to graduation and 3 years after. While not necessarily a lifelong approach, it may focus limited resources and succeed in addressing the needs of large numbers of young adults before they become longer-term NEETS. Scotland reports specifically targeting NEETS through a 16+ Data hub

and is one of the few country papers which specifically references addressing youth underemployment and assisting people to find work that is fair and provides workers with dignity and respect. Scotland measures young peoples' destinations annually to track the reach of its services to NEETS. It also has as a specific objective to achieve smoother and shorter transitions from school to work for young adults.

In large decentralised countries such as Canada and the USA, departments of education and labour are the mandated responsibilities of provinces or states. In Canada this represents 13 different jurisdictions and in the USA, 52 different jurisdictions. This results in no single lead in policy making, no shared vision and as pointed out in the USA paper, a 'siloes approach' to career services.

The country paper from India reports that there are at least 20 ministries running employment programs for young people but in most cases, not aware at all of initiatives other than their own. However, one province has brought together a coalition of 17 partners from different departments spanning banking, horticulture, animal husbandry public relations among others and focused on bringing information to students about emerging job and self-employment opportunities.

3. Leadership, co-ordination and collaboration within the career development system

National forums that bring together different ministries to advance career development policy and practice are the most common approaches to leadership. Austria's National Forum has been in existence for 17 years and has strong connections with the entire employer community. Three different ministries (Education, Labour, and Economics) rotate chairing the Forum meetings. Cooperation is described as an essential element of the social fabric and culture of Austria so such comradery and collaboration are to be expected. Many countries might wish for this to be bottled and sold!

A similar approach is taken in Finland where the National Lifelong Guidance Working Group is co-chaired by Ministries of Education and Employment and their steering committee is held accountable for the goals achieved. This is especially interesting, as most National Forums seem to be consultative and advisory in nature but not operational. Croatia has over 20 active stakeholders represented on its forum. Several countries report trying to restore Forums which were disbanded some years ago (Estonia, Serbia, Denmark). Reasons for disbanding were not clear with the exception of Denmark where the reasons reported were the lack of a sufficient evidence base and the low enrolment of youth in vocational training. Ireland also emphasized the need for a stronger and more comprehensive evidence base for adult employment services including evidence for the success of matching learners to courses, progress toward employment indicators, upskilling of employees. Emphasis on the need for more solid evidence and the consequences of the evidence base being perceived as weak are noteworthy and cautionary for the field.

Norway's National Forum for Lifelong Guidance consists of 30 different stakeholders. They also have a National Coordination Group tasked with coordinating policy development and implementation in the different sectors. At the county level, regional partnerships have been established specifically to strengthen cooperation between divergent providers and to improve overall access. Skills Norway is explicitly working towards a lifelong integrated delivery system and has been assigned to serve as a

national co-ordinator for lifelong guidance. At the same time, they have only been given “soft power”, that is to work by consensus and agreement. How this evolves, its success and impact, merit careful monitoring.

The papers did not provide any detail on the accomplishments or effectiveness of these national fora. Their durability and the sustained participation of multiple partners are however evident.

Employer regional groups are another model of leadership targeted at bringing more employers into the school system. England’s Industrial Strategy 2017 is focused on good jobs, increased earnings and increased employability. Within this strategy, they have established an Enterprise Adviser network that now has 2091 Enterprise Advisers working in more than 2000 schools to stimulate more employer led activity. They have also established 20 Opportunity Areas and 20 Career Hubs which are clusters of schools and colleges working on employer outreach. Korea has an intense career experience semester available to all secondary school students. Scotland has adopted a Skills Planning Model intended to align closely with employer needs. Involving employers is a priority in their model. They are also supporting local networks which identify local skill needs in collaboration with the employer community. These leadership initiatives are led by Ministries or departments of government.

Additionally, and citing Scotland again as an example, within Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is an evaluation and research team of three full time professionals whose role is to evaluate services and conduct research. This team conducts surveys on customer evaluations of service, conducts focus groups, surveys students, centre users, and head teachers. In this way, SDS has evidence of its impact and data to inform and improve its services. This may be a first and is most noteworthy.

It is also important to note leadership initiatives that are more grassroots and being led by leaders in the career development community itself. Qatar is one example where they report no national leadership from policy, but career development professionals have established a national level ‘stakeholder engagement platform’ which is providing the foundations for national collaboration and leadership. They have already undertaken four concrete projects to build a more seamless delivery system for career services.

Canada has a well-established Canadian Council for Career Development¹ with representatives from career development professional associations from every province along with career service provider organisations, private and public, research faculties in universities and government department representatives. With no government financial support, the 3CD is now strongly established, recognised and consulted as the national voice for career development in the country.

These examples point to the capacity within the profession to exert leadership and effect change without dependency on leadership from governments.

One stop career centres

At the service delivery level, a range of countries are developing the one stop career centre model. Croatia is rapidly expanding its careers centres and will be providing access across the country through 22 centres by 2022. One-stop centres are the norm in Scotland and common in some

¹ See <http://cccda.org>.

Canadian provinces and in the USA. The demographics of clients served in one stop centres were not referenced in any paper but this data could be very informative regarding the reach of services. Once again, the value of a Research and Evaluation Team as describe in the Scotland paper is highlighted.

Finland's experiment must be noted. They have established cross-sectoral One-Stop-Guidance Centres in 60 pilot centres spread across the country. The Centres are staffed by professionals drawn from employment services, youth services, school practitioners, social workers and health professionals. Services are coordinated on site but staff remain employees of their host organizations and continue to be paid by them. Services are targeted at young people but are not exclusive to them. The early results from the pilots are quite staggering. In a sample size of close to 500, 96% said their experience was positive and they felt they were helped to make decisions about their own lives. Strong partnerships, high levels of trust and strong multi-sector management are reported as keys to success. It has long been the case that many people get lost in the system after being referred to other points of service for help beyond the mandate and competence of front-line staff in school or employment settings. In such a multi-disciplinary setting, referrals to specialised services are accessible on site.

4. Challenges for leadership and collaboration

The lack of coordination across the several sectors delivering some aspect of career development is the major challenge cited by most countries to the implementation of effective career development policy. Even those countries which appear to have a more integrated systems approach to delivery (e.g. Finland and Scotland), complain of lack of coordination. These countries may not get high levels of sympathy from many delegates!

The USA paper pointed out that the divisions between so many jurisdictions means unequal access for people seeking services, be they youth or adults. Getting the attention and commitment of policy makers was also cited as a significant barrier. Slovenia specifically stated that despite having a National Group for Career Guidance for a period, they could not get or sustain the interest or involvement of senior policy people. Therefore, nothing gets implemented. This was coupled with shifting political priorities and the need to be constantly adapting to new priorities and educating new people to the field and to their role.

Within the career development profession, disparate professional identities were identified as a significant challenge resulting in a 'we-them' attitude which damages the coherence of the professional field and highlights the importance of career development being recognised as a distinct professional field of practice and not an offshoot of other disciplines such as psychology, social work or rehabilitation. The USA paper specifically points this out by highlighting disparate professional identities with career coaches, counsellors, psychologists and social workers all having unique credentials and resulting in divisions among those who engage in career development work. Protection of 'turf' was also cited as a barrier to collaboration across sectors.

A sobering thought was provided in the papers from countries recently torn by conflict (Syria, Kosovo) which stated that without political stability, limited progress can be made. In both

countries, significant progress was underway before conflict erupted. The progress has now been destroyed and must be rebuilt from scratch.

5. Cooperation between the career development field and other stakeholders

Career development is by its nature a boundary crossing activity which links up different stakeholders. Because of this it is important to reflect on how the career development field works with the range of stakeholders who are critical to its success.

Most of the examples of increased cooperation with other stakeholders were examples of outreach to employers. Several countries reported that employer connections were becoming stronger and that there was more attention to the demand side by the career development sector (Japan, USA, Croatia, and Estonia). The provision of work experience for students was also cited with Japan reporting that 98% of its students have a minimum of three days of work experience and this is coordinated through their Chambers of Commerce and a number of NGO's. Japan also describes a recognition program titled 'Youth Yell Certification System' with financial incentives for employers who recruit and train youth, particularly at risk youth. A number of Awards for Excellence are in place to stimulate educational initiatives by business communities.

There is also an increasing emphasis on accurate labour market information and collaboration with labour market analysts. Scotland uses a Skills Planning Model to respond to industry demand and is focusing on specific information on skill shortages and clear pathways for navigating to these opportunities. It would be helpful to know more from Scotland about how clear pathways are identified. In many countries, skill shortages are prevalent along with large numbers of unemployed highly educated and skilled workers. Pathways to opportunities are not clear. In Canada, a Labour Market Information Council has been formed and is actively exploring new sources of LMI to provide more reliable and in-depth knowledge of transitions. Their findings are some months away but the Council is questioning how LMI is collected and delivered in the context of the changing labour market.

An emerging issue in many countries is what appear to be rising stress levels and increases in anxiety and depression among youth. There is some evidence to support a direct connection between stress, rising anxiety levels in young people and their perceived prospects for their futures. In a Canadian national survey of youth aged 18-24, nearly 90% reported feeling uncomfortable levels of stress (Sun Life, 2012). When asked why they were feeling so stressed, 86% in this age group attributed the stress to underemployment. A 2011-2012 study conducted by the Toronto District School Board found that 73% of students between Grades 9-12 worry about their future (Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheet: Part 1, 2013: 2, p. 2). Hope seems to play an important role. A recent research study led by Dr Norman Amundson (University of British Columbia) and Dr Spencer Niles (Penn State University) used the Hope-Centered Career Inventory (HCCI) to survey 1,756 students as well and conducted in-depth interviews (Yoon, Niles, & Amundson, 2015). Their research led to the recommendation that career development professionals need to find ways to enhance hope in students as a key part of career counselling and education. By fostering hope in students, they can

help students engage in valuable school activities, which in turn, help students develop a sense of vocational identity and achieve successful academic performance.

Switzerland has already identified mental health as one of their priorities within career development. Scotland has indicated a need to move in this direction. Canada has done some innovative work with high risk, low hope social assistance recipients with very promising results through a program titled 'In Motion and Momentum'. Mental health is emerging as a new and very challenging leadership frontier for career development practice in collaboration with mental health professionals.

Several countries cite the contributions of NGOs to specific career development projects (Mongolia, Austria, and Syria). No papers cited any examples of connections with media.

6. Professionalism in career development

The following policy issues were cited in the OECD handbook for policy makers (OECD, 2004a, p.45) and they bear reflection as we think about this issue:

- National reviews of training for career practitioners take place very infrequently or not at all;
- Significant differences occur in the quality and types of career services that people experience... due to significant variations in the training of career practitioners;
- Too often, qualifications in related fields (for example psychology or pedagogy) are regarded as sufficient for career practitioners even though such qualifications pay little or no attention to career competencies;
- In most countries, there are no graded or integrated learning pathways that enable practitioners to progress from non-expert to expert status.

The papers suggest that these same issues are still relevant today. As the field continues to make progress as a profession, it is valuable to keep them as benchmarks against which to measure progress.

The country papers show that there is inconsistency in the professionalism of career development professionals globally. There is a lack of clarity on the distinct scope of practice and competencies of career professionals and the distinctions between career development professionals and others in the helping professions, specifically psychologists and teachers.

Creating agreed and understood standards and guidelines for career development professionals is one way to provide a framework for practice. While the nature of these standards and guidelines will vary from one country and culture to another, there is a core of competencies to which many countries can agree. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance standards and guidelines² are one such set of standards that can assist countries as they move forward to try to bring continuity and a standard of practice to the field. There are others as well

² See <http://iaevg.net/iaevg.org>.

including the recently revised Australian standards³ and Canada's ambitious national project to create a new competency framework for 2020 for career development professionals.⁴

Some countries are already well advanced and have high standards and qualifications for practice as well as the training infrastructure to support practice (e.g. Finland, Scotland, Denmark, Switzerland, and Germany). Most countries however are 'in process'. Many countries have established voluntary standards and guidelines and voluntary certification procedures, which over time are achieving a high level of professional excellence (Canada and USA). Many other countries are still at very early stages and are focused on providing teachers with a sufficient foundation in career development to be effective with students. Still other countries count on highly trained psychologists and social workers (Chile, Croatia, and France). Professional requirements for these professions vary from country to country and it would be interesting and helpful to know the extent to which career development theories and practices are specifically included in their professional preparation.

The focus on teachers and teacher training is encouraging to note in so many country papers. England is training Career Leaders in every school to provide schools with dedicated leadership and infrastructure for the delivery of career development. One of their key roles is the implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014). Kosovo is focusing its efforts on teacher training and ensuring that at least one teacher per school has the needed career development training. Korea is putting in place a requirement that all teachers must have at least one course in career development.

Most country papers cite teachers as the major provider of career education and support in elementary and secondary schools. As part of professionalisation agendas there is both an attempt to ensure access to training and certification for career development professionals and a movement to ensure that teachers, who will always be more numerous and will always have access to more children, youth and young adults are also trained to facilitate career awareness, development, growth and skill building with students. The multiplier effect done well can only enhance the field and its impact.

There is concern in Canada about career courses delivered by teachers who have little to no training as well as some concern about the content and relevance of the content of these courses. The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (representing the four Atlantic provinces of Canada) commissioned a study of secondary students to explore their preparedness for their next steps following graduation. Eight focus groups were held and among the key findings were that few students had explored more than one option; many expressed anxiety about making poor decisions; they did not feel supported in development of a meaningful career plan and while the career development course was considered important it was largely found to be not useful and they reported it was dominantly online work and test inventories. The Canadian Broadcasting System (CBC) hosted a podcast on a similar topic but with only three Alberta students. These students reported that their career course was not applicable to the real world and was a 'pretty simple course'. These may be exceptions but it is doubtful if Canadian students would be the only students voicing concern when it is well known that in many countries, teachers assigned to the careers

³ See <https://cica.org.au/>.

⁴ See <https://career-dev-guidelines.org.>

course have no career development background whatever. The movement in Korea to require all teachers to have at least one course in career development is most encouraging.

Based on the country papers it seems that there is a clear global motivation to further professionalise the field. Across different countries there will be multiple routes to achieving professionalisation, but the global intention is clear.

On a related but somewhat separate theme, four country papers cited a growing interest and emphasis on what might be called values-based services and they merit noting and consideration. With respect to labour market opportunities, Croatia specifically cited an increased emphasis on the performing arts as crucial to Croatian culture; in the Canada paper, the province of Quebec was cited as placing a special emphasis on support for cultural artists and for seasonal workers. These are rarely mentioned as priorities and merit some reflection. Technology and trades dominate the public discourse about future work opportunities to the exclusion of the arts. The Japan paper provided some final reflections that also merit thought as follows:

Should adaptation be the ideal goal for career development programs to pursue? What about self-esteem, courage, resilience and other fundamentals? We need outer armament to cope with the unpredictable but we also need to enrich our inner strength. How can we foster such human nature within career development programs? Food for Thought!

7. Conclusions

From the perspective of a student or citizen, access to a co-ordinated and transparent system of programs and services spanning education, training, employment and the labour market would be highly desirable. In practice however, this is very hard to achieve and multiple jurisdictions responsible for components of a career development system remain the norm. The challenges inherent in a siloed system are however increasingly recognised as problematic and there are several innovative and promising initiatives in several countries testing how to move to a much more integrated and readily accessible system.

Growing inequality and unequal chances are consistent themes as is anxiety about the future and a prevalent belief that young people will be disadvantaged relative to previous generations. There are labour market skill gaps in many countries and a lack of clarity about where these gaps are and how to access entry points to begin the address them. National Forums are one coordinating mechanism with considerable promise but their security seems variable. Several countries report their Forums being disbanded and that they are in the process of trying to re-energise them. Other countries are working to influence from within the sector itself. Influential and informed voices from the career development sector are essential in order to exert policy influence and whether these informed voices come from the national level or the level of the career development professional community itself, these voices are critical. Career development programs, policies and services must be, and be recognized to be, part of the solution in managing learning and work in such a turbulent and uncertain labour market.

Getting and keeping the attention of policy makers continues to challenge and a frequent refrain is an evidence base for the impact of career programs and services on labour market and economic

goals that is insufficiently robust to attract and secure policy attention. Our language has also been cited in previous symposia as problematic for users of our services. The diversity of titles used to describe individuals working in career development is one example. Many countries are now using labour market terminology focused on acquisition of skills and this may be of assistance going forward. Both of these issues merit further consideration.

A lifelong career development/career guidance system has been held up as the gold standard for many years but given the complexity and multiplicity of jurisdictions involved, it has yet to be achieved. Alternate models of excellence that meet the needs of the public but that still are transparent and accessible are being tested in several countries. These new forms of leadership, coordination and collaboration are encouraging innovations. More leadership and experimentation are needed going forward if the career development sector is to be increasingly influential in policy and relevant in practice.

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