

Career Research & Development

The NICEC Journal

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Contributions are welcomed and will be subject to anonymous academic and practitioner review. Main articles should normally be 1,000-3,000 words in length. They should be submitted to the editor by post or email at the above address. Taped contributions welcomed.

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Aims and scope

Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published for:

- Career practitioners working in schools, colleges, connexions partnerships, higher education careers services, adult guidance agencies, companies, community organisations, etc.
- Trainers, lecturers, advisers and consultants working with career practitioners.
- Individuals working towards qualifications in career education, career guidance and career management.
- Government departments and business and community organisations with an interest in the work of career practitioners.

It sets out to:

- Promote evidence-based practice by making theory, policy and the results of research and development more accessible to career practitioners in their day-to-day work.
- Encourage discussion and debate of current issues in career research and development.
- Disseminate good practice.
- Support continuing professional development for career practitioners.
- Help practitioners to develop and manage career education and guidance provision in the organisations in which they work.



Career Guidance Challenges

Anthony Barnes, Editor

The implications for career guidance of the Harris Review, the employability agenda and the expansion of student numbers in higher education were discussed by Val Butcher and Rob Ward in the previous journal. They provide the backdrop to Hazel McCafferty's study in this issue of the impact of the duty interview. She found that students made significant gains in opportunity awareness and transition skills but very low gains in self-awareness. The importance of studies such as this is that they focus on the dilemmas and difficulties faced by practitioners in their day-to-day work. With embryonic developments in e-guidance and curriculum-based interventions, we need to continue the debate about guidance methods in higher education.

The pros and cons of the Government's Connexions policy continue to arouse fierce passions within the career guidance community in England. In his regular column, Bill Law is fascinated by the possibility of local action by helping professionals to make something more of Connexions than central policy-makers currently aspire to. He argues that the gap between policy and practice is there to be exploited. When Wales and Scotland each went their own different way from England, it was always going to be interesting to see five or ten years down the line which country had the better career development strategy. It does not seem to be much of a national priority in Connexions at the moment, but if Bill's right, there's everything still to play for.

Gerard Wulleman's paper on the reform of guidance in Flemish education is another interesting example of the public policy trend to more holistic approaches to support for personal, social and career development. Few doubt that it is a good idea providing it does not dilute the career guidance strand within it or weaken the necessary linkages with the world of employment and work.

The paper on the need for career advice in medical training is a reminder of a related issue - the need to overcome the fragmentation of the career guidance field in England. Why is it that career guidance work in different sectors is so disconnected? What happens in schools bears little or no relation to what happens in colleges, universities, employment and community settings. This is a challenge for career guidance professionals.

In this issue, David Andrews, Bill Law and I report on a survey of careers co-ordinators in schools. We look at how they move into the role, their experience of the role and their subsequent career progression. Careers teaching still suffers from the lack of a clear route in initial teacher

training and patchy provision in in-service training. We hope this report and the planned briefing, like the briefing on career advice in medical training, will have an impact on future policy in this area.

Cover photos (top to bottom)

Speakers and facilitators at the NICEC Cutting Edge II conference in Coventry, April 2003:

Norton Grubb, Jenny Bimrose and Bill Law;

Tim Oates and Wendy Hirsh;

*Jenny Bimrose, Malcolm Maguire and Richard Sweet;
Linden West*

Career Development of Careers Co-ordinators

David Andrews, Anthony Barnes and Bill Law

An enquiry into how school co-ordinators move into the role, their experience of the role and their subsequent career progression.

In 2002 the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) undertook an enquiry into the career experiences and career development of careers co-ordinators in schools. We were interested in finding out:

- what motivates teachers to become co-ordinators of careers work in schools;
- how careers co-ordinators are recruited and selected;
- about careers co-ordinators' experiences of the role;
- about the subsequent career moves of careers co-ordinators.

In particular we wanted to see what lessons could be learned so that schools might have the right people, doing the right job, to make sure that pupils and students could be provided with programmes of careers education and guidance (careers work) that were of the highest quality, and well led and managed. While the enquiry yielded some interesting responses regarding the career progression of careers co-ordinators, it also raised some significant issues about the nature of the role of careers co-ordinator in schools and how it is perceived by different parties. We plan to take forward further work on these latter issues through publishing a discussion paper following on from this report.

We hope that the outcomes of this project will be of interest to:

- current and future leaders and managers of careers work in schools, concerned with planning and developing effective programmes;
- school senior managers, concerned with appointing careers co-ordinators;
- advisers and providers of professional development, concerned with supporting careers co-ordinators;
- policy makers, in Government and government agencies, concerned with the future development of careers work in schools.

The project was sponsored by the Careers Management group and supported by the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers (NACGT). We are grateful to both organisations. We are particularly grateful to the 200 people who took the time to complete and return our questionnaires.

Introduction

Background and Context

Current Government policy for education and training is being driven by two main themes: inclusion and achievement. The recent policy statement on transforming 14-19 learning (DfES, 2003a), for example, aims to ensure that all young people have access to opportunities that enable them to fulfil their potential. It is recognised that for the reforms to work in practice young people will need effective careers education, linked to impartial advice and guidance. The recently published national framework for careers education and guidance (DfES, 2003b) asserts that careers education also has a vital role in helping young people make best use of the information, advice and guidance provided through Connexions. Indeed, the purpose of the framework is to improve the quality of careers education and guidance (careers work) for young people.

A key factor in school effectiveness is the quality of leadership from the headteacher. It could be argued, therefore, that the effectiveness of the careers work programme will be determined to a significant extent by the quality of leadership and management from the school's careers co-ordinator. If schools are to provide effective careers work it will be important that people with the necessary skills and qualities are appointed to the role of careers co-ordinator.

Previous enquiries undertaken by NICEC have highlighted the importance of the careers co-ordinator taking on more responsibility to lead and manage careers work in the school (Andrews et al., 1997), and of appropriate and relevant professional development being made available to those involved in leading and managing careers work in schools (Law, 2002).

The ad hoc way in which teachers become involved in careers work has been studied by Suzy Harris (1992). Surveys have found that few careers co-ordinators are appointed through a formal procedure (NACGT, 1999) and, crucially, there is very little information on whether careers co-ordinators see themselves as leaders and managers of a curriculum area, or about the extent to which headteachers and other senior managers view them as subject leaders. Little is known about the professional development made available to careers co-ordinators once they are in post, although surveys indicate that only a minority hold a professional qualification in careers work (OFSTED, 1998). Very little is known about the motivations of careers co-ordinators and or their career progression from the role.

The enquiry reported here set out to find out the answers to some of these unknowns, with the intention of increasing our understanding and informing future action.

Key questions

The enquiry sought to find out more about former and current careers co-ordinators in schools, including their motivations and expectations, and to add to our knowledge and understanding about how they are recruited, selected and subsequently supported in their role. It also enquired into careers co-ordinators' experiences of the role itself, including their feelings about the work and their views on any changes in the role, and into their aspirations and career moves after moving on from the role. The scope of the enquiry was extended to cover the views of headteachers and other senior managers in schools about the recruitment and selection of careers co-ordinators, and about the role itself and potential career progression routes. It also collected the views of other teachers, with no experience of managing careers work, about the role of careers co-ordinator.

Intentions

The purpose of the enquiry was to research current practice in order to inform future developments in both practice and policy. We already know that key factors in providing effective careers work are having in post careers co-ordinators who are prepared to take a proactive approach to leading and managing such work in schools (NFER, 2000), and having available relevant professional development opportunities. Our intention in enquiring into the career experiences and career development of careers co-ordinators was to support the future development of careers work in schools by recommending practical actions for those who manage and support careers co-ordinators, to ensure that teachers who become careers co-ordinators are appropriately recruited and supported, motivated to undertake the role effectively and enabled themselves to have fulfilling careers.

Methodology

The enquiry was undertaken in the academic year 2001-2002, by David Andrews and Anthony Barnes, NICEC Fellows, with consultancy support from Bill Law, NICEC Senior Fellow. It was funded by Careers Management and supported by the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers (NACGT).

Data was collected through four questionnaires: one for current careers co-ordinators (38 questions); one for former careers co-ordinators (40 questions); one for headteachers, deputy heads and assistant heads (16 questions) and one for teachers with no experience of having been a careers co-ordinator (13 questions). Each questionnaire consisted of a combination of multi-response and open questions. Using current membership data kindly provided by the NACGT copies of the questionnaire for current careers co-ordinators were sent to a sample of school across England, with copies

of the questionnaires for senior managers and for other teachers also enclosed. Using historic membership data copies of the questionnaire for former careers co-ordinators were sent to a sample of former members of the Association, again from throughout England. The approach taken was an attempt to sample as full a range of views as possible but not to try to gather a representative sample of responses. The report, therefore, consists of a qualitative enquiry rather than a quantitative survey.

A total of 198 completed questionnaires were returned.

Current careers co-ordinators	44
Former careers co-ordinators	50
Headteachers and senior managers	52
Other teachers	52

The project team then analysed the data and the outcomes are reported here. We are grateful to Matthew Barnes for inputting the data and undertaking the initial analyses.

Findings

About careers co-ordinators

Profile

Although the size and composition of each of the samples do not permit detailed quantitative statements some general features can be discerned from the data.

Careers co-ordinators tend to be experienced teachers, and aged over 40. It is unusual to find a co-ordinator with fewer than 10 years experience in teaching prior to taking on the role. Women outnumber men on a ratio of approximately 2 to 1, which may simply reflect the overall gender balance among secondary school teachers. The most common allocation of responsibility points is one or two. The most common job title is 'careers co-ordinator', although formerly a large proportion were called 'head of careers'.

No teacher trains initially as a careers teacher and the survey data shows no clear pattern of subject areas from which careers teachers are drawn. Current careers co-ordinators come from a full range of teaching subjects, dispelling the myth that careers teachers are former PE teachers who want to stay inside in the winter! If there is a discernible pattern among former careers co-ordinators it is that they include a higher than average number of teachers of geography, which would make some sense given the common area of interest in the local economy and labour market.

Professional qualifications in CEG

Of those who responded to the survey just over half held a professional qualification in careers work. This figure is higher than the equivalent finding in earlier surveys, with significantly larger samples. Among current careers co-ordinators the specific qualification is almost exclusively at Certificate level, while the former careers co-ordinators hold either a Diploma or a Certificate. It is possible that

this trend reflects the changes in provision of accredited courses in careers education and guidance, although this in itself might reflect a change in the commitment of schools to release teachers for training or the capacity of busy teachers to take on longer courses.

About becoming a careers co-ordinator

Initial attraction

Most postholders, both former and current, only thought about becoming a careers co-ordinator once they were teaching in a school and/or when the position became vacant. Hardly any teachers thought about such a career option either before or during initial teacher training.

For the majority of careers co-ordinators the original attraction was:

- working with individual young people;
- supporting pupils' progression into further learning or into work;
- raising aspirations and contributing to pupils' achievement.

"I enjoy dealing directly with pupils' development, whatever their ability, and assisting their progression"

For many former careers co-ordinators the nature of the work itself was also an attraction. Respondents identified features such as:

- the greater degree of autonomy;
- the greater variety of work;
- the opportunities for contact with the wider community;
- the opportunities for professional development.

"I enjoyed making contact with local businesses"

For current careers co-ordinators the nature of the work and the opportunities for professional development were less of an attraction. They identified:

- the opportunity to benefit young people;
- promotion.

"Making a real impact on the aspirations of pupils for life after school"

When teachers who had no experience of being a careers co-ordinator were asked if they had ever considered becoming one, a large majority said 'no', and when asked if they would consider becoming a careers co-ordinator in the future, most of them still said 'no'.

Although they are interested in working with young people, and the opportunities for professional development and promotion, the overriding factor in their decision making is their lack of interest in the nature of the work. What was identified as a strong motivator by former careers co-ordinators is stated as a negative factor by current teachers who have no experience of the role. The two groups are, however, not talking about the same things. When former

careers co-ordinators talk about being attracted by the work they refer to the increased autonomy and to networking with employers, training providers etc. When current teachers talk about being put off by the work they refer to the time it takes to organise activities and to the lack of support from tutors.

"Lots of staff think it's a bit of a thankless task. I imagine many staff don't realise what is involved."

(Teacher of modern foreign languages in an 11-16 school)

It could be, therefore, that the finding relates more to individuals in the role and those not in the role having different views about what the job involves. This interpretation is supported by the evidence that among the (minority of) current teachers who claim to know more than a little about the role of co-ordinating careers there is a higher proportion who would consider taking it on.

Recruitment, selection and appointment

Most careers co-ordinators are appointed internally: only a small minority are recruited externally from another school, and there has been no change to this pattern from past to present practice.

Candidates find out about the vacancy through internal adverts or direct approaches from headteachers. Approximately half the posts are filled by simply being asked to take on the role: only half of those who responded, both former and current careers co-ordinators, were required to submit written applications and attend formal interviews. Headteachers, however, say that when recruiting a careers co-ordinator they would advertise the post both internally and externally, and over two-thirds would require written applications and formal interviews.

A large number of careers co-ordinators come from positions as main grade teachers, sometimes with additional management responsibility in their subject area. In the past some would have been existing pastoral managers or heads of subject departments, but this is less likely in current times, probably reflecting the additional burdens today of these middle management posts.

Experiences, skills and qualities

When asked what they brought to the job careers co-ordinators, both past and present, listed:

- experience of careers work, of related areas of the school's work such as pastoral care, and of the world beyond teaching;
- skills such as interpersonal, guidance, communication, networking, organising, administration and management;
- qualities such as interest in the work and in young people, enthusiasm, commitment, patience, tolerance and flexibility.

When asked what they are looking for in a careers co-ordinator, headteachers identified similar lists of

experiences, skills and qualities but added to them: vision, self-motivation and innovation.

Motivation and expectations

The enquiry was interested in finding out about the career development of careers co-ordinators. A starting point was to find out what individuals wanted to get out of the job when they started. Both former and current co-ordinators list the satisfaction of helping individual young people as the principal motivation, followed by a broadening of their own experience and professional development, opportunities to link with the wider community and to develop careers work, and, lastly, promotion and increased pay.

"Doing something that mattered to pupils."
(Former careers co-ordinator in an 11-18 school)

In relation to future career intentions for themselves, most had not thought about it or had nothing specific in mind. Where they did have some intention it was to move into a more senior management role, but this was only a minority of careers co-ordinators. Compared with those who wanted to remain in the role, the careers co-ordinators who wanted to move on tended to be younger, with fewer years experience and with fewer management points. They were more likely to state promotion as an attraction for moving into the role and took more opportunities to participate in professional development. They were also more likely to see part of their role as linking careers work to wider aspects of the school's work and to view their time as a careers co-ordinator as helping their future career development.

Headteachers viewed the principal career progression opportunities for careers co-ordinators to be senior management roles, pastoral middle management roles or advisory work. Almost all of the headteacher respondents said that, in their view, the experience gained through being a careers co-ordinator would prepare individuals for senior management positions.

"It is a whole-school role which prepares well for senior management."
(Headteacher)

Training and professional development

Most careers co-ordinators have experienced several days training for the role, either prior to moving into the role or during their first two years in post. This is true for both former and current co-ordinators, although the proportion who had had no training was higher in the past, reflecting the increased access to professional development in recent years.

About being a careers co-ordinator

The role

Careers co-ordinators, past and present, and headteachers, all view the role of careers co-ordinator as being about organising and delivering careers work, planning

programmes and supporting teachers, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating careers work, and making strategic links with other aspects of the school's work. Significant trends are that careers co-ordinators in the past tended to place greater emphasis on teaching and less on monitoring and supporting the work of other teachers.

One further point of significance is that headteachers place greater emphasis on expecting careers co-ordinators to contribute to whole school strategic management than careers co-ordinators report doing in practice, although co-ordinators identify the need to do more to raise the profile of careers work and to integrate careers work more into the school's work overall. Another is that other teachers regard the job of careers co-ordinator to be predominantly concerned with organising specific activities, such as work experience and industry days.

Interestingly headteachers are evenly divided between those who think that the role of careers co-ordinator can be taken on by an individual who is not a teacher and those who think that it must be filled by a teacher. When headteachers say the role can be filled by a non-teacher they see the job as largely administrative. Those who take the view that the role should be filled by a teacher say this is because the postholder needs to understand the needs of young people and have an understanding of teaching and learning and of the curriculum.

Work satisfaction

Careers co-ordinators in the past, and careers co-ordinators today, are happy in their work, with both categories being split evenly between those who say they are 'very content' and those who describe themselves as 'reasonably content': only a small minority consider themselves 'discontent'. The main sources of job satisfaction are the positive response from young people and networking with adults beyond the school.

"More and more pupils saying "thank you"."
(Current careers co-ordinator in an 11-16 school)

By far the most significant sources of dissatisfaction are too much administration, insufficient time to do the job and constant changes. Some careers co-ordinators also report a lack of interest from their senior managers.

"I bitterly regret that I was unable to continue with my careers work. The expectations of my school were high and I was keen to deliver. Senior managers were unwilling to accept that time was needed for this and never re-assigned my other responsibilities. However, I will never regret those years when I was able to encourage and guide so many of my pupils."
(Former careers co-ordinator, who retired due to ill-health)

Other teachers acknowledge that they have only a limited knowledge of the role of careers co-ordinator but their impressions of co-ordinators' likes and dislikes about their job concur with what co-ordinators actually feel. Current co-ordinators are evenly split across three categories of

response to the questions about how they feel about the role now compared with when they were appointed: a third are more content, a third feel about the same, and a third are less content. Their responses are influenced primarily by the extent to which they perceive careers work to be valued or not, and their capacity to do the job in the time given.

"I feel respected as an individual but the role of careers co-ordinator is not valued."

(Current careers co-ordinator in an 11-16 school)

Time and other responsibilities

Careers co-ordinators are currently allocated, on average, two hours per week of timetabled time for their role (this compares with an allocation of three hours per week in the past) and spend an average of just over five hours a week managing careers work.

Careers co-ordinators are seen as middle managers in schools. Commonly the role is combined with other management roles, particularly that of co-ordinating work experience and work-related learning. In more recent times the role has also been combined with that of co-ordinating records of achievement/Progress File.

Changes

When asked how the job has changed over time careers co-ordinators report that it has grown considerably. The role is a wider management function, with a greater number of staff involved in delivery.

"More management-style approach, with development plans etc."
(Current careers co-ordinator in a grammar school)

"It has become more formal, with greater emphasis on accountability. This has made the job increasingly paper-based, with a clear need for curriculum planning and evaluation"
(Current careers co-ordinator in a special school)

They also report a growth in work experience, with the job of co-ordinating it now often being split into a separate role from that of careers co-ordinator. More recently they report the extension of careers education to the earlier years of secondary schooling.

When asked how they have changed over their time in post careers co-ordinators report that they have become better at working with others and have improved their skills of organisation, and that they have become more confident, flexible and assertive and more experienced. They have also, however, felt more frustrated, disillusioned and tired.

About moving on from being a careers co-ordinator

Current careers co-ordinators are divided evenly between those who want to carry on doing the work they are doing and those who aspire to moving on, to senior or other middle management roles in education or out of education into guidance related work or self-employment.

When the career moves of former careers co-ordinators are tracked, the two most common routes are retirement and advisory/consultancy work, followed by other pastoral roles such as head of year or head of sixth form, and a return to a main grade teaching position. Progression into a senior management role comes in fifth position. This is despite headteachers identifying it as the most likely career progression opportunity for careers co-ordinators.

There is a general feeling from careers co-ordinators themselves that their experience in the role helps rather than hinders their subsequent career development, mainly by providing a wider perspective on education and the opportunities to gain management skills and experience of working with a range of people and organisations.

"Broadened my understanding of the school curriculum and gave me a real overview of the curriculum-pastoral interface. As a careers coordinator you work very much 'whole school' 11-18... Whole-school perspective provided an unrivalled step to senior management rather than a single department focus."

(Former careers co-ordinator, now an assistant head)

Conclusions

The enquiry set out to investigate the career development of careers co-ordinators and while it has produced some interesting findings in relation to career progression the more significant findings centre around the nature of the role itself and how it is viewed from different perspectives.

Career progression

It would seem that careers co-ordinators are generally experienced teachers who have moved into the role because of their interest in working with young people, are broadly content with their jobs and not always looking to move to other positions. Some observers might regard this as a lack of ambition, while others might argue that careers co-ordinators have settled into roles they find fulfilling.

"Not a job for people going places... No clear progression from careers co-ordinator - a dead end, or plateau."

(Former careers co-ordinator, now retired)

"I'm happy where I am."

(Current careers co-ordinator in an 11-18 school)

We know of several former careers co-ordinators who have moved on to advisory and consultancy roles in careers education and guidance and into positions as headteachers, but the evidence collected through this project suggest that such pathways are not at the forefront of current careers co-ordinators' minds. One development that has occurred since collecting the data for this enquiry has been the availability of Advanced Skills Teacher posts in careers education and it will be interesting to see what impact this might have on those individuals' subsequent career paths.

More formal procedures for appointing careers co-ordinators are being implemented but the evidence suggests that there is still some way to go before the approaches that headteachers claim to support - involving advertising the position, requesting written application and arranging formal interviews - are adopted in practice.

Support for the role

The take-up of professional development opportunities is increasing, with Certificate courses becoming the most common form of qualification. Although more careers co-ordinators now have training for the role, it is still the case that no more than half hold a professional qualification in careers work. It is also the case that there is no Initial Teacher Training route into careers work, although such routes are being developed for citizenship.

The findings go on to demonstrate that co-ordinators are not currently given the time needed to do their job. During the course of the project the Government, and all but one of the teachers' unions, signed a national agreement on tackling workload, which provides a clear opportunity to improve the situation (DfES, 2003c). The agreement requires that, from September 2003, routine administrative tasks are transferred from teachers to support staff, and that teachers with leadership and management responsibilities are allocated time in the school day to support them in fulfilling their duties.

How the role of careers co-ordinator is seen

There are significant differences in emphasis between other teachers, careers co-ordinators themselves and headteachers on how the role of careers co-ordinator is perceived. Although all three groups identify a lot of common tasks, other teachers see careers co-ordinators primarily as *organisers* of specific activities, careers co-ordinators see themselves as *co-ordinators* of programmes and *networkers* within the school and with the wider community, while headteachers see them as *leaders* and *managers* of aspects of the school's work. Trainee teachers in initial training know very little about the role.

It could be argued that these differences can be explained as follows.

- The most visible parts of the careers co-ordinator's work to other teachers are organised activities such as work experience, industry days, mock interview sessions and careers conventions. It is not surprising therefore that this is what other teachers think the job is mainly about.
- Careers co-ordinators themselves obviously recognise the work they do in co-ordinating their programmes of careers work and networking with others to contribute to these programmes. The findings indicate that co-ordinators are beginning to recognise that they also have a wider brief to lead and manage, and that these parts of the role are increasing.

- Headteachers say that they want careers co-ordinators to have a vision and to be innovative, and they identify contributing to strategic management as an important part of the role. This is not, however, always communicated clearly to careers co-ordinators as several report a perceived lack of support from their senior managers. Headteachers themselves are not always clear about whether the role is one of strategic leadership and management as half think that it can be filled by a non-teacher since it is largely administrative. Nevertheless, the role is more likely these days to be combined with related roles such as RoA co-ordinator which suggests that headteachers are recognising some strategic management links. Where headteachers are clear that the role is more than just co-ordination and involves leadership, this is not always seen by their careers co-ordinators.

In practice the role of careers co-ordinator probably encompasses all three sets of perceptions - they are organisers, co-ordinators, networkers, leaders and managers. The different functions do not, however, all have to be allocated to one individual: they could be shared among several individuals and combined with parts of other roles.

We suggest that it would be helpful to identify the range of functions that need to be undertaken and to explore different ways in which those functions could be allocated within schools, so that:

- role specifications could be clear;
- procedures could be established to ensure that people with the required skills and qualities were appointed to the roles;
- appropriate professional development and support could be planned and provided.

There seems to be more consensus around the co-ordinating and networking aspects of the role, but less around the strategic leadership and management functions. Headteachers need to clarify for themselves whether they want careers co-ordinators to be leaders and managers, and then communicate this clearly to careers co-ordinators, via role specifications, appointments procedures and support for professional development.

A useful first step would be to take advantage of the national agreement on tackling workload, to reallocate from the current job description all the administrative and organisational tasks to a careers support assistant, in order to release time to focus on co-ordination, management and leadership. Headteachers and careers co-ordinators could then work together to re-define the role of careers co-ordinator, paying careful attention to the leadership aspects and to making it manageable as a role. There is a range of options for how the co-ordination, management and leadership functions might be allocated within the

management structures of schools, including, possibly, combined with some of them with different roles. Once roles have been agreed they should provide the basis for appointing the best people and for planning appropriate professional development.

Emerging context

Since work started on this project Connexions has been introduced across England, and the Government has set out an agenda for transforming secondary education. Both these developments have an impact on the outcomes of this project.

Many schools are establishing the role of Connexions co-ordinator/manager, to manage, at strategic and operational levels, the various aspects of the school's work that relate to Connexions, e.g. pastoral care, careers education and guidance, PSHE, citizenship, inclusion, etc. This will have a knock-on effect on the role of careers co-ordinator. The policy statement on 14-19 education suggests that schools should develop greater co-ordination between PSHE, citizenship and careers education. This too will have implications for the role of careers co-ordinator and how it relates to the roles of co-ordinating PSHE and citizenship. Further, schools are to be required to provide work-related learning for all pupils in Key Stage 4 and this again will impact on the role of careers co-ordinator.

The suggestions above are that the role of careers co-ordinator might be *re-focused*, on teaching and learning, and on leadership and management, by allocating the administrative tasks to a careers support assistant, managed by the careers co-ordinator, and *re-defined*, to reflect the full range of functions, including strategic leadership and management. These developments would need to take account of the new context and so the role might also be *re-configured* with other, related roles, for example those concerned with the management of Connexions work within the school and of those aspects of the curriculum concerned primarily with young people's personal and social development, including careers education and guidance, PSHE, citizenship, personal finance education and learning about work and enterprise.

Recommendations

- (1) Providers of professional development and policy makers should continue to make available to careers co-ordinators professional development, including accredited qualifications in careers education and guidance, and should explore the possibility of developing an Initial Teacher Training route into careers teaching.
- (2) Headteachers and careers co-ordinators should work together to implement the contractual changes in the National Agreement on Tackling Workload, to release careers co-ordinators to spend more time on leading and managing teaching and learning.

- (3) NICEC should produce a discussion paper, re-specifying the role of careers co-ordinator and exploring options for how the functions might fit within school management structures. The work should draw on the outcomes of this enquiry, together with existing guidance on the careers co-ordinator's role, e.g. *What Do Careers Co-ordinators Do?* (NACGT), *National Standards for Subject Leaders, exemplified for the role of careers co-ordinator* (NACGT), *Occupational Standards for CEG* (DfEE), and on the National College for School Leadership's 'Leading from the Middle' programme of professional development. The paper should present a range of models for how the role might be organised within school management structures and should make recommendations about appropriate professional development to support the role. It should conclude with questions for discussion with the NACGT, the two headteachers' professional associations in England and other interested parties.

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Informing Choices: The Need for Career Advice in Medical Training

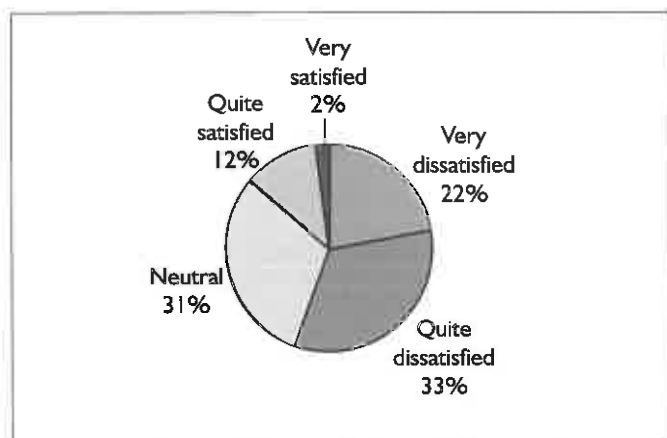
Charles Jackson, Jane Ball, Wendy Hirsh and Jenny Kidd

How should the support provided to doctors and medical students to help them make career decisions during their training be improved? Experience elsewhere suggests that unless such support is developed to meet the specific requirements of doctors and medical students, it is unlikely to achieve all its objectives. This NICEC Briefing summarises the key findings from a research study that set out to find out exactly what these requirements were and how best they might be catered for.

Drawing on the results of a survey of the medical career advice and guidance needs of a nationally representative sample of doctors in training and final year medical students, the Briefing demonstrates that doctors have real problems finding their way through their career and training choices. Existing career guidance provision is often fragmented and poorly resourced. We argue that a proactive and educational approach to career advice and guidance provision is needed. This will require a fundamental change of mindset so that medical career advice and guidance is positioned as a part of medical training.

Existing career advice

Figure 1: Satisfaction with career advice



A major finding from the survey was the considerable dissatisfaction with existing career advice and guidance provision. Over half (55%) the survey respondents reported that they were quite or very dissatisfied with the career advice and guidance they had received, while only 14% were quite or very satisfied (figure 1).

Final year students were even less satisfied with their career advice and guidance than other respondents (64% dissatisfied).

The survey also found that:

- 86% of respondents agreed that most of what they know about careers in medicine has come from personal experience
- 66% of respondents agreed that there were many areas of medicine that they know too little about

The Research

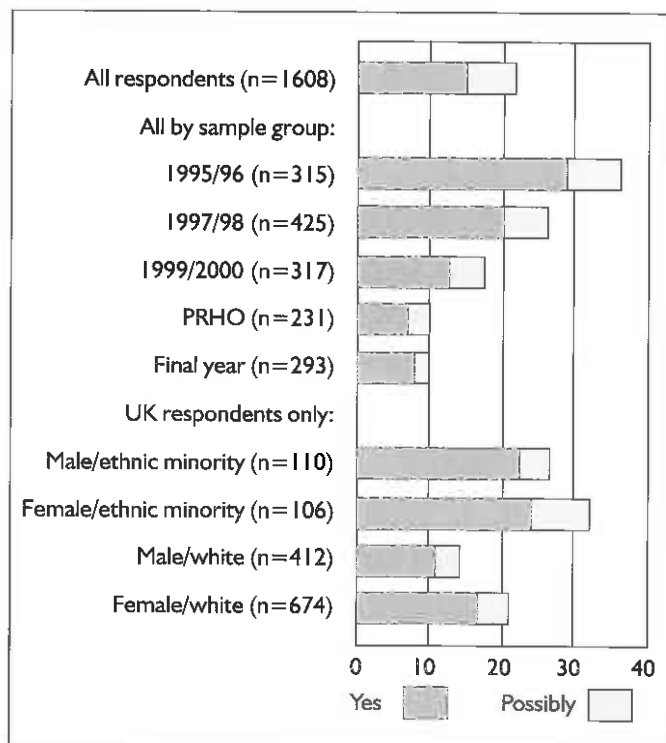
The research set out to develop an understanding of the career support needs of doctors in training from the doctors' perspective. This was achieved through conducting a national survey of final year medical students and doctors in training. Questionnaires were sent to final year medical students, House Officers (PRHOs), and three samples of doctors in training (eg Senior House Officers (SHOs) and Specialist Registrars (SpRs)) stratified by year of first registration.

The survey achieved a 42% response rate with 1,740 questionnaires returned. Both UK and overseas doctors working in England were included in the sample which was taken from the BMA membership records.

A number of providers of career guidance and policy-makers in the field of medical education were interviewed. This generated contextual information that could be used to frame the survey findings and to understand the issues affecting the development of existing career support.

Impact of lack of advice

Figure 2: Negative impact of lack of advice



Lack of advice was identified as a problem by many respondents. 16% of respondents reported that lack of advice had led them to make decisions that they now regretted and a further 5% said that lack of advice had possibly led to this happening (figure 2).

The proportion who said that lack of advice had, or possibly had, led to poor decisions during their training increased across the sample groups. While only 10% of final year medical students and PRHOs reported that lack of advice had, or possibly had, led to decisions they now regretted, 36% of the 1995/96 cohort reported that it had.

Among UK respondents there was a trend for female respondents to be more likely than male respondents to report that lack of advice had had an effect on their decisions. However, the trend was more marked for respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds of both sexes.

These findings were reinforced by many additional comments written on the survey questionnaires which spoke of the difficulty of getting advice. They indicate the cumulative negative impact of lack of effective career support especially at the post-qualification career stage.

Training experiences

Many doctors are spending a long time as SHOs. 14% of UK doctors and just over a quarter (27%) of overseas doctors were still SHOs five years after registration. Of those survey respondents who had become Specialist Registrars, 15% were in temporary or locum positions.

Lack of flexible training opportunities was a major cause of dissatisfaction. 42% of female respondents and 15% of male respondents had been put off training in certain specialities because of lack of flexible training opportunities, potentially aggravating shortages in some areas.

This impact was greatest for women with children, about half (49%) reporting that they had been put off training in some specialities.

The survey indicates that there will continue to be a strong demand for flexible training opportunities, most of which will occur at a relatively late stage in respondents' training. Among female respondents:

- 41% of the 1995/96 sample group planned to undertake some of their future training on a part-time basis, 26% were unsure whether they would or not, while the remainder were not going to
- 62% of those with dependent children planned to undertake some of their future training on a part-time basis compared to 30% of those without children

Although 56% of respondents were quite or very satisfied with the overall quality of the training they had received, nearly two thirds of doctors in training (63%) were dissatisfied with the time spent on education/training compared to service provision. In addition, only 8% of SHOs experienced opportunities to train and develop to a great extent, and only 12% of SpRs and Clinical Research Fellows felt they had the opportunity to develop specialist skills to a great extent.

Figure 3: Use of major sources of career advice



Sources of career advice

Three sources of career advice were used more frequently than any others. The most frequently used were senior doctors (eg Consultants, GPs), mentioned by 85% or more in each sample group. The other two frequently used sources were more experienced peers (eg in next grade) and the peer group (eg those in the same grade). Both of these were mentioned by 63% or more in each sample group.

Overseas doctors in the SHO grade and above were less likely to use these three major sources of advice and guidance than UK doctors in the same grades but more likely to use family and friends who are doctors (figure 3). UK respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds were also less likely than other UK respondents to use senior doctors as a source of career advice (79% compared to 90%) but more likely to use family and friends who are doctors (42% compared to 31%).

Postgraduate Deans Offices, tutors at Medical School and Faculty Regional Advisers are seen by medical schools and postgraduate deaneries as key structures for career advice. However, there was relatively low use of these three sources which might be expected to be significant sources of pastoral and educational guidance. Excluding final year students, who were not asked about use of the Postgraduate Deans Office or Faculty Regional Advisers, only 30% of respondents had used one or more of these sources with little variation in this percentage by sample group.

The five sources of career advice and guidance rated most useful by those who had used them were:

- More experienced peers (93% rated as useful or very useful)
- Senior doctors (87% rated as useful or very useful)
- Family and friends who are doctors (83% rated as useful or very useful)
- Peer group (80% rated as useful or very useful)
- BMJ Classified (now BMJ Careers) Career Focus (79% rated as useful or very useful)

Overall, the survey revealed a clear trend for respondents at all levels to look for advice within the profession and via informal rather than formal contacts. It also identified that there are significant groups of doctors, eg overseas doctors, doctors from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, whose needs are not being met by existing provision.

Wanted: a level playing field

There is a widespread perception that careers in medicine are not pursued on a level playing field. These views were held particularly strongly, but not exclusively, by certain groups of respondents, for example overseas doctors and UK doctors from minority ethnic backgrounds. These two groups also appeared to have less access to the largely informal support networks that are currently the main sources of career advice and guidance.

Overseas doctors and doctors from minority ethnic backgrounds were particularly concerned about appointment procedures at the SHO grade and selection for Specialist Registrar training. The survey found that:

- 46% of overseas SHOs were dissatisfied with the way appointments are made to SHO rotations compared to 36% of UK SHOs
- 91% of doctors in training from outside the EEA and 78% of doctors from other EEA countries agreed that it is more difficult for doctors who are not from the UK to get access to specialist training programmes compared to 59% of UK doctors in training.

46% of PRHOs were also dissatisfied with SHO appointment procedures, perhaps reflecting a contrast with the more systematic procedures being introduced in many localities for PRHO appointments.

Half the overseas doctors in training agreed that there is too much patronage in the way people are selected for posts at the SHO level as opposed to 26% of UK doctors in training. UK PRHOs and doctors in training from minority ethnic backgrounds were also more likely to agree with this statement, with 54% of these respondents agreeing compared to 40% of other UK respondents.

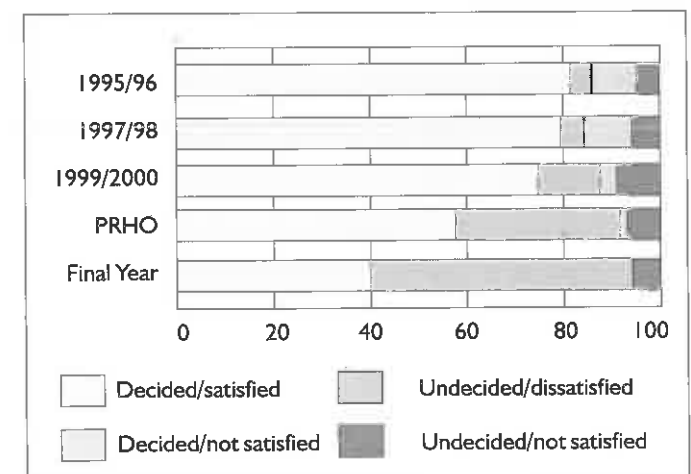
Other groups can also feel disadvantaged by the current training system. For example, 64% of GP Registrars and 54% of SHOs on the GP Vocational Training Scheme felt they were made to feel like second class citizens during hospital rotations compared to 33% of SHOs who were not on the scheme.

Finally, as we have already noted, lack of flexible training options primarily disadvantages women and, especially, women with children.

The current career situation

Figure 4: Career situation

On the basis of their replies to questions about their current career situation, respondents were grouped into one of four categories:



- Decided and satisfied with their career decision-making: 69% of respondents
- Undecided and satisfied: 19% of respondents
- Decided and not satisfied: 6% of respondents
- Undecided and not satisfied: 6% of respondents

Although over half of final year students were undecided but satisfied, the proportion of respondents in this category fell off quickly across the sample groups. The proportion of respondents who were not satisfied with their career decision-making increased from 6% of final year students to 16% of the 1997/98 cohort and reduced only slightly to 13% of the 1995/96 cohort (figure 4).

The same pattern existed for both UK and overseas doctors, and was not affected by gender, even though female final year students and PRHOs were slightly more likely to fall into the undecided category than their male peers. UK respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be in the not satisfied group than other UK respondents.

Over half (54%) of all respondents reported that there was an area of medicine which they had seriously considered and had now decided not to pursue. 42% of final year medical students and PRHOs had already decided not to pursue an area, while nearly two-thirds of the 1995/96 and 1997/98 cohorts were in this situation.

Respondents who were not satisfied with their career decision-making were more likely to have rejected an area of medicine and to be from minority ethnic backgrounds. Overseas doctors were also more likely to report that they had rejected an area of medicine.

More final year students and PRHOs had rejected areas of medicine than had definitely decided on the area they wanted to pursue, indicating that many early career decisions were about ruling out areas rather than deciding on a specific area in which to work.

Review of existing provision

Our interviews with staff at medical schools and postgraduate deaneries indicated that they were aware of the poor career support available to doctors in training. They were fairly confident that the current system deals adequately with students and doctors in training in real crisis, but do not know how many doctors find their way into jobs they do not like and which may not use their skills to best advantage.

The current system of career advice relies mainly on one-to-one support by medical schools/postgraduate deaneries and access (formally or informally) to senior doctors in varied specialties. This system is very fragmented and confusing. It is seldom communicated clearly to students or doctors in training and those offering advice may or may

not be trained for this role. It is not 'joined up' across the various stages of medical training.

The fragmentation of responsibility for these activities between medical schools, postgraduate deaneries, Royal Colleges, trust managements, clinical directorates, the BMA, the GMC, the Department and others is a major issue affecting the development of existing career advice and guidance services.

There is not only fragmentation at a national level but also at a more local level between the key players at different career stages, eg between undergraduate medical schools and postgraduate deaneries. This makes it even more difficult for doctors to know who or where to go to for career advice.

This fragmentation limits the co-ordination of existing services and hinders the development of new ones. It means that there is no agreement about roles and responsibilities between the various organisations that could be taking initiatives in this area. It is likely to lead to both duplication of effort and failure to provide essential career interventions.

Provision of career support is also made much more difficult by weaknesses in the workforce planning process, which can lead to sudden changes in demand for doctors in certain specialties, and lack of integrated information on job and career opportunities.

The lack of national figures on the number of training places being offered in the various specialties has made it very difficult for doctors in training to estimate the degree of competition for SpR training in different disciplines. This was a major concern for the survey respondents. As it can take several years to pass exams required as a prerequisite for entry to higher specialist training, unless there is some degree of continuity in SpR training opportunities, it is impossible for doctors in training to plan ahead. They risk committing to career plans that will take several years to come to fruition, perhaps involving completing a higher degree, without any certainty about whether there will be an SpR training opportunity available.

Developing a new strategy

The main message from this research is that a proactive and educational approach to career advice and guidance provision is required. Medical career advice and guidance should be positioned as part of medical training and making sure that doctors have the opportunity to acquire the skills to manage their careers should be an integral part of that training. This implies a fundamental change of mindset in the whole approach to career advice and guidance for medical students and doctors in training.

Equipping doctors to manage their own careers requires the development of interventions to enable individuals to:

- Develop career management skills

- Understand their interests and appraise their strengths and weakness
- Develop action plans for their career development and make more informed career decisions.

This new approach needs to be backed up by the development of self-help (eg web based) career materials for doctors.

These developments need to be underpinned by a variety of forms of career information (eg about career options, career paths, training requirements, levels of opportunity/competition). The existing informal support mechanisms, which are the main vehicle for on-going career support, also need to be enhanced, by building career advice more firmly into the roles of doctors in touch with junior grades. As part of this process, training initiatives to improve the career support skills of experienced doctors need to be extended. The possibility of extending such training to receivers of career advice, possibly as part of career education initiatives, should be explored. Consideration should also be given to offering formal career mentoring programmes to overseas doctors and doctors from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In order to provide a source of impartial and independent advice, a network of advisers trained in career counselling and with detailed knowledge of medical training should be based in the main teaching hospitals.

Much of the factual information required could be made available using the internet and by enhancing existing websites.

All these initiatives are required to support the majority of doctors in training, who experience difficulty with their career planning, as well as to meet the needs of those who are disadvantaged within the present system.

There is also a need to establish a mechanism to co-ordinate work in the careers area at a national level. These efforts should actively involve those already developing innovative practice in medical schools but also bring the key national and local players together, including the relevant professional bodies, to share experiences and reduce development costs.

Four arguments for change

1. The wider issue of medical morale. Many of the medical students and doctors in training in this study managed their careers in spite of the system rather than with any active support. They frequently felt they could have made better career decisions. They wanted more active support for career decision-making than they received. The kinds of support advocated here would not be expensive compared with the formidable costs of medical training and could generate significant benefits in terms of morale.
2. The dependence of the NHS on large numbers of overseas doctors. The survey provides evidence that these doctors feel marginalised, but that they also have additional advice and guidance needs. A more diverse medical workforce will have even greater need for career advice and guidance to ensure that medical careers are pursued on a level playing field.
3. The persistent problems of combining medical training with family life. These are aggravating shortages in certain specialties, distorting the deployment of the increasing numbers of female doctors, and – most seriously of all – potentially undermining the general future supply of students willing to study medicine. Although improved career advice and guidance will not solve the problem of work/life balance in medical careers, it will help people prepare for and cope with it.
4. Deployment of skills. Doctors are very expensive to train and it is important that they find their way into areas of medicine that they are good at as well as ones they like. In other organisations with highly skilled workforces, the deployment and development of scarce skills is the main driver for paying attention to career choice and investing in improved career advice.

This research has demonstrated that doctors have real problems finding their way through their career and training choices. It is wasteful and ineffective to keep ignoring this problem when a proactive and educational approach to career advice and guidance could make the complex career choice process less painful and more effective. More informed career choices by medical students and doctors in training would offer multiple benefits. Waiting until doctors encounter career problems is costly both to the individuals involved and the health care system in this country.

Summary of changes needed

1. **A new role for careers education:** Careers education should become an integral part of the medical school curriculum.
2. **Improved career information:** High quality career information is required about career and training options including national data on training places.
3. **Development of self-assessment and planning tools:** Tools to facilitate self-assessment and career planning should be developed and used as part of the curriculum in medical schools and postgraduate education. Their development should be centrally funded by the Department.
4. **Trained career contacts and improved support networks:** Initiatives to improve the career support skills of experienced doctors need to be extended. Career mentoring programmes for overseas doctors and doctors from minority ethnic backgrounds should be considered.
5. **Availability of impartial and expert advice:** A network of advisers trained in career counselling and with detailed knowledge of medical training should be put in place.
6. **National co-ordination:** National co-ordination is required to ensure that these proposed developments take place, to disseminate emergent good practice and to provide funding to support local initiatives.

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Further information

The full report, *Informing Choices: The Need for Career Advice in Medical Training*, is available on request from:

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The Duty Interview: an erosion of guidance or a successful innovation?

Hazel McCafferty

As careers advisers in higher education struggle to meet the demands of their clients, resources are stretched and shorter interviews are offered. In this study, the description 'duty interview' refers to the short guidance interventions offered at a higher education institute where clients were limited to twenty minutes of careers adviser time for all appointments. Brief interviews were initially introduced as they seemed to be the fairest way to cope with the student demand.

This study set out to find out whether the needs of the client could really be met through such a short intervention.

Defining the duty interview

There has been an increasing trend towards shorter 'duty' interviews throughout higher education careers services. Despite the proliferation of the term 'duty interview' in higher education only Watts has attempted a definition, referring to them as being used 'partly to diagnose students' guidance needs' and also as a means to 'signpost them to appropriate resources' (Watts, 1997). He also described the trend of 'long individual guidance interviews' as 'increasingly being complemented by short 'duty adviser' interviews' going on to say that 'this is viewed by some as a serious and regrettable erosion of quality; by others as a welcome move towards a more student-driven system' (Watts, 1997).

The increased use of shorter interviews could be for a number of reasons. Recently, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services and the Association of Graduate Recruiters described 'in-depth guidance as under threat' (AGCAS/AGR, 2001). They attributed the increased prevalence of the duty interview to the limited resources which higher education careers services command. So as small numbers of career advisers in an institution strive to meet the guidance needs of individuals, they stretch the resources available by shortening the interviews. This argument implies that the duty interview is a negative consequence of cutbacks.

However, there could be reasons other than economies of scale for the duty interview becoming increasingly relied upon, including:

- the type of enquiry posed by higher education students, such as CV checks, lending themselves to a shorter contact;

- higher education students may be able to articulate their needs more readily than younger students, so perhaps needing less time for exploration at the start of interviews;
- students themselves preferring shorter interviews, which they can access more immediately;
- finally, and perhaps most controversially, careers advisers may themselves prefer to see students for less time as they may not have the counselling skills to enter into the in-depth interviews which longer slots of time might demand.

Proving effectiveness

Researching the effectiveness of careers interventions is as complex as the interventions themselves. However, despite the difficulties of proving our effectiveness, we need to be seen to be actively evaluating what we do. This is partly to meet external demand for accountability, for example, when Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Higher Education, spoke of the need for 'standards to rise' (June 2000) but it is also to enhance the service which we provide. Lau (1995) makes an important point about why services should be continually evaluated:

'as students' opportunities increase and job opportunities change, it is quite likely that the usage and effectiveness of different kinds of guidance will also alter' (p.219).

Despite the need for evaluation, the lack of it when implementing a new approach to guidance seems endemic in the work of most careers practitioners. As Watts and Kidd stated:

'Since the Second World War, little attention seems to have been paid to evaluating the effectiveness of careers guidance in Britain despite the major changes which have taken place in approaches to guidance – moving from primarily a diagnostic and advisory approach based on the trait and factor theories to a careers education and counselling approach based on the developmental theories.' (1978, p.235).

Holland *et al.* (1981) also made the point that despite a plethora of recently created careers interventions little evaluation was taking place. Furthermore, they complained that practitioners frequently laid on the 'treatment' that they thought was best for their clients.

Just as the types of guidance vary, so must the means of assessing it. Killeen and Kidd (1991) usefully summarise

possible measures for evaluating guidance into four categories:

- *Process Measures*: a simple count of activity.
- *Client Reaction Measures*: the client's own feelings about the guidance that they receive are recorded. Although Killeen and Kidd acknowledge that the feelings of the client towards the process itself are important if they are to engage fully, they doubt the objectivity of this measure.
- *Vocational and Educational Measures*: the final destinations of the client are taken as the ultimate measure of success, these measures might include 'job satisfaction, job changing and course completion'.
- *Learning Outcome Measures*: these are measures of the knowledge, skills and attitudes, which may be engendered by guidance or, in fact, what the client has really learnt by attending an appointment.

This study used a combination of methods to evaluate duty interviews in the context of the number of clients seen, their reactions to the process and also their learning from the process:

- Semi-structured interviews with three careers advisers;
- Feedback from twenty clients before and after their interviews;
- Review of six interviews.

Vocational and educational measures were deliberately excluded from the study despite their use as ultimate tests of success in the past. As a number of authors point out including Killeen and Kidd (1991) and Clarke (1984) they are not without their problems. Inevitably, there has to be a delay between delivering guidance and measuring the clients' final destinations. Between these two points, it is difficult to assess the factors that may have interceded to influence the clients' actions in addition to the careers guidance. The data being measured could be erroneous; for example, low levels of job changing could equally indicate a lack of achievement as success in a particular field as the result of guidance. Finally, as Killeen and Kidd point out, 'recommendations may merely confirm existing, realistic intentions and conflict with unrealistic ones' (1991, p.1). Thus the measures say more about the client's level of compliance and the practitioner's ability to predict this, rather than any real benefits for the client. These measures often demanded proper controlled experiments, which for 'practical and ethical reasons....are difficult to achieve' (Killeen and Kidd, 1991, p.1).

Central to the study were the 'Measure of Guidance Impact' questionnaires developed by the National Foundation for Educational Research. These allowed not only the clients' subjective views of the process to be gathered, but also enabled the objective measurement of the effectiveness of the guidance, in the areas of self-awareness, opportunity

awareness, decision making and transition skills (the 'DOTS' model), thus incorporating the advice offered by Killeen and Kidd to focus on learning outcome measures.

The questionnaires given to clients were designed to show whether the duty interviews were resulting in enhanced career awareness for the clients, but not why some clients' career awareness might be enhanced by a greater margin than others. With this in mind, it was decided that all of the interviews would be recorded, to allow for the possibility of listening to those interviews which had either an extremely large or a small change in their MGI score. Ultimately, six interviews were chosen for analysis.

The Bedford model for assessing careers adviser's skills against seven dimensions (1982) was selected for assessing the interviews, as this would give a structure to the observation. This model seemed particularly apt for this study, as like the MGI it focused attention on the progress made by the individual as the result of an individual guidance intervention. Whilst focusing on this, it had the added benefit of showing how the progress made by the client related to the skills of the adviser.

The skill of 'challenging' was added as research since Bedford's had shown it has a vital role in the careers counselling process (Beven, 1996; Ali & Graham, 1996; Kidd *et al.*, 1996). Hence the following list of eight skills was used to assess the interviews:

- Establishing the purpose of the interview;
- Creating a friendly atmosphere;
- Gathering information;
- Identifying the young person's needs;
- Giving information;
- Summarising progress;
- Clarifying next steps;
- Challenging.

Key results from the study

The results from this study showed that attending a duty interview can increase client career awareness and so benefit the client in their career planning. On average, clients' career awareness using the four planes of the DOTS model increased by 4.7 points on the MGI score. A related t-test was undertaken to check whether these results could have occurred by chance alone (Robson, 1999; Hinton, 1999). It was found that the scores had a less than one in one hundred chance that they could have occurred by chance alone and so these findings would appear to be highly significant.

Whilst there seems to be a definite and significant increase in the scores, it should be noted that when piloting the MGI test, NFER (1993) found that on average their clients' scores increased by 10.9 points on the MGI scale following careers interviews. These results were from a survey including 807 participants.

There could be a number of reasons why the results obtained in this study were lower than those found in the NFER pilot:

- The client groups were different. The participants in the NFER group were mostly under the age of 35, which compares well with the sample in this study. Only 10% of them were at NVQ 4 level or equivalent and perhaps even more significantly 75% of the NFER population were unemployed.
- The length of guidance delivered in this study was short. The NFER study did not give any details of the specific length of the interviews delivered. However, it did report that 75% of them were up to an hour.

Clients gained most in terms of opportunity awareness (averaging a 57% increase in scores) and transition skills (averaging a 67% increase in score). However, clients with a low level of self-awareness tended to benefit least and in fact there was only an 11% on average increase in their scores.

Clients valued the convenience of the duty interviews. 90% of the clients rated the interviews as very easy to book, it would be hard to see how this could be maintained without some provision of shorter appointments. Furthermore, clients could be seen as often as they liked, thus potentially allowing clients to see appointments as part of a career planning process.

Whilst recognising their convenience, advisers sometimes disliked the feeling of 'being rushed' and referred to the interviews as often 'over-running'.

There was a direct correlation between careers advisers' guidance skills and gains made by the students. The skill most often used by careers advisers was that of giving information, whilst the skill least used was that of gathering information. The prime cause for interviews failing to increase client career awareness was the careers adviser spending insufficient time in exploration and contracting and so misunderstanding the needs of the client. In this study, 65% of the clients stated that when booking their appointment they were doing so with a specific issue in mind such as revising their CV and only a minority of students had a career in mind.

Enhancing the service

This study has shown that duty interviews can have benefits for the client as they can increase their career awareness particularly in terms of improving their opportunity awareness and transition skills. Clients also value the convenience of this approach to guidance.

However, whilst the duty interview does have its benefits, the study also highlighted some potential disadvantages. Careers advisers can feel under pressure to perform and so perhaps not spend adequate time with their clients exploring their guidance needs. Furthermore, those clients

with a low level of self-awareness tend to benefit least from this approach to guidance.

With limited resources and enhanced demands from clients, it seems likely that duty interviews are an innovation that will remain with higher education careers services. The following areas for action might enable services to actively maintain the quality of their careers guidance.

- *Encourage students to attend little and often...*

Far from engendering a culture of dependency, this can enable students to see career choice as a process, which they are central to. To enable this to work well, services need to keep records of their client contact in order to monitor the progress being made (developing an IT system for booking and recording appointments with information which careers advisers can easily access prior to seeing clients is a practical solution). Advisers also need to become very skilled at agreeing clear and achievable plans of action with their clients.

- *Encourage students to prepare for interviews*

Again, this will help students to take responsibility for their own career planning. Such preparation could take the form of students being shown how to use careers library resources by trained reception staff before interviews. Clients could be asked to reflect on key issues before attending their interviews such as: what plans have they had to date, why have they chosen to book a careers interview and what would they like to achieve by the end of the interview.

- *Train careers advisers with specific skills to prepare them to deliver duty interviews*

This study showed the direct relation between advisers' skills, particularly in terms of forming contracts, and positive outcomes for the client. Yet, none of the advisers had received any specific training in order to deliver shorter 'duty interviews', despite these forming a significant part of their workload. Careers advisers need to understand the central importance of the contracting process to the duty interview. They need to be reassured that they cannot meet all the needs of their clients in the time a duty interview allows, and that it is perfectly acceptable, and probably very helpful to the client, to arrange to see them again. Services should consider implementing training plans and peer observation policies, which focus not only on longer interventions, but also support the delivery of short interventions.

- *Ask why?*

Consider whether short interviews are always the best policy. If high numbers of students are accessing the service for particular issues such as CV checks then regular clinics and group sessions might provide better provision. Undertake regular evaluation of the range of products and models of delivery from other services.

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Guidance in Flemish Education

Gerard Wulleman

Guidance provision in Flemish education is closely associated with the mental health and well being of pupils. Three years ago, a new system of Centres for Pupil Guidance (CLB) was created which invite comparison with the recent introduction of Connexions in England.

Individual well being and mental health

Mental health is a very important issue in school life, both for the individual and for the school as an institution. Schools are supposed to prepare students for adult professional and social life. To do so, in the old days, they only had to pass on knowledge and concentrate on cognitive purposes. Nowadays, what is expected of schools is spread over a much wider range of educational purposes. It is clear that support for personal development in present-day society is much more complicated, not only for parents but for schools as well. This challenge requires different pedagogical approaches in schools and the creation of a psychological environment that promotes feelings of wellbeing in students and teachers as well.

The school careers of European children take about 10 years during which a lot of social behavioral patterns are initiated. School life, for example, gives social structures to which pupils have to conform. By doing this pupils learn that social life brings rights and duties with it. School structures are also different from family structures that rely on affective relationships and from peer group structures that rely on power relationships. For some children, school structures are the only stable ones while the experience of other structuring depends on emotional attitudes and impulses.

To cope with increasing educational requirements, schools have to develop systematic guidance, which is an important tool to match the educational ambitions of the school with the individual educational needs of the pupil.

Wellbeing is not enough for mental health but is an important foundation for it. Mental health also implies personal responsibility and self-reliance. Students should not only learn subjects but they also have to explore their real strengths and weaknesses, and the expectations of the outside world. Guidance should protect students from threatening or curbing frames of reference from parents or teachers and arm them against self-delusion. Therefore, guidance should develop two different but complementary strategies: an emancipatory strategy and a safety-inducing one. Both strategies help to stimulate positive attitudes and

promote mental health during pupils' school careers and into adult life as well.

Emancipation and emotional safety

The emancipatory strategy works towards an optimal development of personality strengths and towards a reduction of the harm caused by personality weaknesses. Guidance activity tries to encourage and push the pupils towards identifying and exploiting their real talents, not the talents that are attributed to them by themselves or their parents or peers. The same goes for their real limitations.

The second strategy tries to help pupils explore their identity and strengthen their self-concept and self-confidence. This identity must ensure a comfortable psychological feeling which arms the pupil against continuous and threatening challenges.

Emancipatory ambitions and a well-balanced emotional safety are necessary to enable creativity, which is necessary in a continuously changing world, and to protect the person from the pressures of the outside world.

Both guidance strategies complement each other and should not be separated. An over-strong emancipatory strategy might threaten the identity and wellbeing of the individual whereas an over-strong safety strategy might lead to the avoidance of challenges and result in passivity. Schools show their emancipatory concerns in their educational approach and didactical methods and their concerns about emotional comfort in their efforts to create a favourable social and emotional climate.

Support for guidance in schools

The Flemish government strongly encourages schools to develop a guidance policy and provides them with supplementary educational help, particularly those with a lot of underprivileged children.

In order to assist schools in their guidance policy, the Flemish parliament reformed pupil guidance by integrating the former centres for medical school inspection and the former centres for educational assistance and vocational guidance (PMS-centres) into new "Centra voor Leerlingen Begeleiding" (CLB; i.e.: Centres for Pupil Guidance). 75 of these new centres were created in September 2000.

All children and pupils from nursery school up to the threshold of higher education belong to the target group of the CLB which means a population of about 1,350,000 pupils. Particular attention and special guidance, however,

must be focused on disadvantaged pupils who are threatened in their learning and development especially because of their social background.

Important operational principles are:

- Guidance is free and is demand-driven, i.e. it is given at the request of pupils, parents and schools. The CLB works independently and has to act in a multidisciplinary way.
- The CLB is required to work with the parents and schools. These are explicitly defined in the Parliament Act as carrying the primary responsibility for upbringing and education. However, pupils from the age of 14 years can ask for help themselves even when the parents do not agree. The work of the CLB is focused on supporting the tasks of the parents and the schools and is therefore subsidiary. This is a very important principle which calls not only for a close cooperation but for a commitment as well. Some schools were not used to calling for external help in their own educational organisation and this is what they should do now.
- Schools have the final responsibility in guidance policy but the centres offer them guidance services which the school can accept or refuse. Each school is obliged to discuss a guidance policy with the CLB of their choice and sign an agreement with them. The mutual agreement between the school and the centre and the way the collaboration is organised must be laid down in a guidance policy contract. This contract also includes the offers that were refused by the schools
- Some services of the centres are compulsory for the schools especially in the field of preventive health care and in the case of frequent truancy.
- The CLB must cooperate with other services in the health care and welfare sectors.
- The CLB must develop a high-quality policy in a structured way.

In the decree concerning the new centres their mission is defined as follows:

contribute to the wellbeing of pupils now and in the future. ... so that they can acquire and strengthen throughout their school career, the competencies which shape the foundation for their current and the permanent development and for their social participation.

To carry out this mission the guidance of the centres takes place in the following domains:

Learning and studying

School and vocational career

Preventive health care

Emotional and social behaviour

Both prevention and remedy are aims of guidance activities of the centres, except for the health care domain where medical treatment is not allowed.

Guidance can be organised at school level, at group level and at an individual level. Problems can occur in more than one domain at the same time and threaten the well-being of pupils at school. Moreover, one could expect problems in one field to interact with the other domains too.

Learning and studying

In the learning and studying domain, guidance is concerned with improving the capacity to learn in every respect. At the school level the CLB may improve and support didactical processes, help teachers to assess the initial educational levels of pupils and help teachers to stimulate positive learning attitudes.

At class or group level the CLB can shape the acquisition of appropriate learning habits and at the individual level, among other guidance activities, CLB workers examine individual learning problems by psychological testing, cooperate in making a plan for remedial teaching and refer pupils to special needs education

Educational and vocational career guidance

Educational and vocational career guidance focuses increasingly on lifelong learning and adjustment. When considering career planning, the perception of a profession by the young people is nowadays much more incorporated into a career concept that includes other dimensions such as a career as a partner, a career as a parent, as a consumer of leisure time, as a participant in culture, and so on. That is why career guidance is integrated in the overall guidance of young people's personality development. Career guidance relates to health aspects, cognitive attitudes, emotional and behavioural components and helps the person to respond to changing professional and social expectations. These aspects are of course important issues in achieving mental health.

At the school level, CLB supports career education and provides adequate information about the educational offer and the labour market. At class or group level, the CLB can train pupils to evaluate themselves and to make choices while at the individual level career counselling or individual assessment or testing can be provided.

Preventive health care

The educational approach is at least as important as the medical approach in preventive health care. In this domain, however, the centres have some concrete obligations. The CLBs have to carry out medical examinations in some classes and guarantee differentiated sensorial, biometric and medical examinations of specific groups if required by specific health or educational situations.

The compulsory general consultations aim to establish a general overview of the health of pupils, while the specific consultations are limited to specific aspects (e.g. growth, noise levels of workshops in technical schools which might cause hearing problems, etc.)

The CLB also have to supervise the vaccination condition of the school population and to administer vaccinations. When an infection occurs in a school the CLB should take prophylactic measures. The compulsory activities not only allow the detection of factors threatening the individual health situation but are also a tool for risk analysis in the population and a base for health education themes. However, these medical assignments, especially the vaccination programmes laid down by the Health Authorities, take much more time of the medical and paramedical staff members of the CLB than was expected in the beginning.

At the school and/or class level, health education and guidance includes support in developing addiction prevention programmes, advice concerning hygiene, safety, etc. At the individual level, the guidance may consist in changing bad eating habits with children and youngsters with obesity, in improving the personal hygiene or specific hygiene aspects such as dental hygiene, etc.

Emotional and social behaviour

There is an ever increasing demand by parents and schools for guidance in respect of pupils' emotional and social behaviour. Psychosocial and behavioural problems often create tensions and put schools, classes and groups and parents under pressure. The CLB support the schools in reducing stress factors in their socio-educational organisation and in reducing pressures caused by learning demands and examination requirements.

At group or class level, CLB usually help with relationship and sex education programmes, with anti-bullying programmes and with training pupils in social and communication skills. They also help teachers cope with disturbing behaviour. Children with psychosocial difficulties are given individual guidance or they can be referred for special therapy. Usually, pedagogical assistance to their parents is incorporated in the guidance. CLB can provide special group sessions for pupils with a specific problem, e.g. for pupils with an embarrassing fear of failure.

Interdisciplinary teamwork

The activities of the centres reflect a holistic vision of pupil guidance, in which interdisciplinary teamwork is essential. The multidisciplinary approach is crucial to the functioning of the CLB. Each CLB consist of teams which are assigned to one or more schools, and a team is made up of a medical doctor, a psychologist or pedagogue, a paramedic worker and a social worker. A staff member can belong to more than one team. There is also a small clerical staff.

The calculation of the number and types of personnel is based upon the pupil populations in the schools which have a contract with the CLB. In addition, every pupil has a weighted coefficient and this coefficient is fixed between 1 to 7 depending of the type of education, and in line with the expected educational demands of specific pupil groups, e.g. a pupil in special need education receives a weighted coefficient of 7. Other elements with an impact on the number of staff members in the CLB are the proportion of underprivileged pupils in the population and the distance between the school and CLB. In 2002, more than 2,500 staff members were employed in 75 CLBs. The CLB-budget for the same year was 116,330,000 euro.

These centres have now been functioning for three years and the new structure really offers the possibility to provide a wide range of guidance. CLBs and schools have learned to look ahead and work together in elaborating a vision of guidance which takes into account the characteristics of the pupils in each school.

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Connexions - Mind the Gap!

Bill Law, NICEC

We can worry too much about what the Government is trying to do through Connexions. Thinking about what we can achieve through it is more promising.

Connexions links a range of human resources to the needs of learners: team members include social-, welfare-, youth- and voluntary-workers together with teachers. Furthermore, Connexions uses terms which allow us to face up to the impact of upbringing, early learning, neighbourhood conditions and cultural values. These strategic frameworks for help and diagnosis are new to policy and are promising.

But, in all the reams of DFES material, there are big and significant gaps. For example, there is little of any use on:

- knowing how to work with learners' cultures - their beliefs, values and allegiances;
- responding to the ways in which different learners have, not just different levels, but different kinds of needs;
- linking different needs to the most important feature of Connexions - the variety of its learning resources;
- shaping these resources into a workable programme;
- working out how programme planning must be different in each different neighbourhood;
- seeing how learning from Connexions can be used to help all 14-19 year-olds (and for that matter all 5-105 year-olds);
- appreciating how we may just 'fit' people into what is happening, or how we could enable them to forge their own responses;
- finding the right people for appropriately managing such programmes at neighbourhood level.

I like the gaps. Politicos and their officials should stay away from this sort of stuff. How would they know what to say? But we know. The gaps are our way in; they are where our thinking will make the critical difference.

And there is a lot of new thinking to do.

A driver in recent policy for careers work has been the pre-emption of 'producer capture'. George Bernard Shaw jolted the fear with his jibe - 'all professions are a conspiracy against the laity'. In contemporary talk professions are 'producers', the laity 'users'. Politicos seek to use the expanding apparatus of accountability to protect users from exploitative providers. Educators, social-workers, medicos and IAG (information, advice and guidance) people are among the usual suspects (though, so far, not lawyers or estate agents).

In Connexions, the policy requires that providers attend to what young users say they want. And, more impressively, its APIR framework (Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review) uses the concept of need as a basis for organising the work.

On the provider side, some of what has been happening can only be characterised as scrambling for resources. We may defend this as protecting user interests; but we can deceive ourselves about that. Unsupportable claims of 'we know best' come into the issue.

Such claims crop up particularly among people who try to help: social-workers are commonly challenged by those who are sure they know better; and, although 'parents-not-admitted' signs have gone, some manifestations of teacher-parent competition persist. Helpers are understandably sensitive about the perceived value of their help. At times this borders on fear. And where the defence is a claim to exclusively superior knowledge (say, about career development), it is a lunge in the direction of producer capture.

We should at least consider the possibility that we - in careers work - are as capable of attempted producer capture as doctors and social workers are.

Suspicion and consequences

Some social workers and youth workers have their suspicions. Such evidence is patchy and anecdotal; but there are claims of not being understood or valued by IAG people. There are social workers who have said that they find it difficult to gain access to careers-work thought and practice. And some claim that, when they do, much of what they find is old-fashioned and inappropriate.

If such attitudes are at all prevalent, the consequences will be serious. Most seriously, mutual suspicion hampers team building which relies on the ability to explore who is in a position to do what. This ability is essential to any effective local programme.

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Current policy displays little understanding of this fact. On the contrary, a drive for a targeted yet universal service strips out ideas of helping specialism. Personal advisers with careers-work experience are being prevented from announcing their specialism. It is easy-enough to argue that 'universal' can mean that any helper must be ready to help any learner; but it is harder to see how 'targeted' can mean that people with a special kind of need will get a special kind of help. That would require a referral service at the universal point of entry, signposting a differentiated map of specialised resources for targeted help.

In extreme form, current policy uses the 'undifferentiated mass' theory of Connexions. It is a black hole where team-building should be. It strips off specialisation.

Worries about words

Words are important. The terms 'career', 'guidance' and 'Connexions' merit attention.

The word 'Connexions' lacks any well-defined focus for action. It vaguely connotes 'links'. The links refer to connections between what is going on in a person's life on the one hand and his or her life chances on the other. It implies that connections must also be made between the various sources of help that are needed, when what is going on is going badly.

But that is just about all we can get from the term in its present usage. There is little about how these ideas can be made to work. The guidance accompanying APiR is patchy and superficial. It offers few useable ideas about how a diverse range of resources can be linked to a diverse range of needs. Least of all is said about what mainstream schools and colleges can do. There is a lot more to say about what Connexions can really mean - more than the producers of DfES material seem yet to understand.

Worries about the words 'career' and 'guidance' are sharper. Is there policy hostility to the phrase 'careers guidance'? (A Government minister is said to have claimed that 'because my children are intelligent, they do not need careers guidance'!) Most likely, the rejection of 'careers guidance' is part of the drive to reduce complexity in provision - consistent with the undifferentiated-mass theory. It pre-empted producer specialism.

We must defend complexity; our understanding and use of complexity is our hope of effectiveness. The very idea of 'connections' is an acknowledgement of the need. We will, of course, defend our own position; but, our defence will have greater credibility when it is conducted on behalf of all kinds of specialism in the team.

All of that said, we may be compounding our own problems. We have allowed the term 'career' to become associated with decisions made by free-standing, self-aware and appropriately-informed individuals, prepared to anticipate

and deal with the consequences of their decisions. This is the DOTS analysis - associated with our own well-defined repertoire of provision. We need also to understand how social and youth workers will extend this analysis, and its range of help.

Producer authority is best manifested in a willingness to learn when new learning is required. Not, now, to move our thinking on would be a futile attempt at producer capture.

New ideas

And there is some moving on to do. The understanding of career has in recent decades grown deeper, wider and more dynamic. There are more ways of understanding socially and personally constructed meaning and purpose. The way in which deeply-laid feelings are interwoven into the process are more fully appreciated. There is a growing awareness of the impact of significant others, and of the importance to career of internalised culture. We are in a better position to appreciate the importance of learning progression, and of the way that can be distorted by early learning. We more clearly see how people's responses to working roles are linked to what they do about roles as consumer, partner, investor, friend, and citizen. And we better understand how crime may feature in some attempts to achieve a sustainable way of living.

Some of the breadth and depth of such understanding is represented in the best of guidance work. But the way in which its dynamics can bring about change is less well represented. And possibilities for enabling change are critical to Connexions.

As to social workers and youth workers, we may safely assume that knowing how to work with meaning, feelings relationships, culture and distorted learning will feature in their repertoires. I wonder if they find some of our well-structured, firmly-categorised, key-boarded and paper-and-pencil-bound methods, a bit limiting. Can they really believe that we 'know better'? Should we let them?

Managing centrally and locally

One of the biggest gaps in policy concerns local management. There is no need to argue for another layer of management. More bureaucracy would be suspect from everyone's point-of-view.

But 'local or central?' has been a recurring issue in careers work. Some IAG leaders welcomed moves to make careers services a child of central government. It had, for a time, the effect of getting careers services out of the scramble for limited, local-authority-controlled, resources.

Nonetheless, there are pros-and-cons: an important advantage of a neighbourhood framework for negotiations is that people arrive at priorities on the basis of visible conditions, that everybody must recognise. Effective local

negotiation is, in this respect, particularly critical to Connexions. If it really is to involve a network of resources, engaging a range of linked learning needs, that network must come from and respond to local conditions. The implications for locally managing provision are massive.

In modern usage 'managing' means everything from wheeling-and-dealing for resources, to enabling a processes of change. But 'big wheels' and 'local facilitators' are not at all the same thing. We are going to need a distinction between institution management at one end of a spectrum and network management at the other.

A feature of this need is that Connexions connects a community of help - a network. It does so both within and beyond institutional boundaries. Furthermore, much of the help that it calls upon is, in one sense or another, volunteered. Managing 'helping people' calls, in any event, upon a special kind of managing skill; but managing 'helping networks' calls for a very special kind. It is a quite exceptional challenge - probably beyond the reach of most wheelers-and-dealers.

Let there be no more than is necessary of centralising institutional bureaucracy. But we need a great deal more of neighbourhood networking management.

Connexions papers are silent on the matter.

Learning needs

Connexions seeks a significant shift of concern in careers work. This is away from occasional choices and towards continuing needs. It therefore needs explanations of why and how things go badly. The APIR is at its most impressive for the breadth with which it trawls for that understanding.

It is least impressive for the way in which it arbitrarily compacts evidence into a one-dimension diagnosis. The diagnosis is at three levels; they are roughly characterised as the need for 'a lot', 'some' and 'a bit' of help. After a fashion, it is a model for linking need to provision.

But it is unsustainable: a one-dimension diagnosis of need cannot engage a multi-dimension framework for help. It is, at the same time, expanding the diversity of resources and collapsing the basis for harnessing them.

Connexions needs the three levels of delivery in order to hold onto the claim to universality - there is something for everybody. But it is much the same stuff for everybody: the 'undifferentiated-mass' theory suggests a 'conveyor-belt' model for delivery. According to the number of factors diagnosed, APIR suggests (with slight variations) 'basic help', 'a bit more help', and - at best - 'more of the same'. It misses the opportunity to articulate what social workers, teachers, guidance people, volunteers and others can do to respond in different ways to different needs.

Learning needs must be diagnosed not only by level but also by form. Different people (in different cultures) learn and mis-learn in different ways. We badly need to know how to organise different sorts of help for different forms of need.

As understanding of these possibilities grows (and it will) there will be medium- and long-term consequences. In the medium-term, programmes will be developed to support different helpers in the provision of different sorts of help. We will learn to map a network of help so that routes to different kinds of help are clearly signposted.

Systems of links, referrals and cooperation will be established. In some localities it is already happening. But it can only happen at neighbourhood level. It is what programme management is for.

In the longer-term, overlapping matrices of needs and provision will bring about the realisation that most people experience some kind of learning need, calling for an appropriate kind of help. That will put us on route for a service which assigns resources to finely-identified needs, rather than to crudely-identified populations. The phrase 'to each according to his need' calls from afar. It speaks of a service equitably responsive to the needs of the many and the few.

Policies and programmes

Government needs an arena in which it can show how it can improve things. Loss of control on economic levers causes politics to turn elsewhere. Education was an inevitable target.

While governments cannot design educational programmes, they can provide frameworks for programme development. Connexions broadly indicates a direction for development. But that direction can be pursued by many different programmes. And should be.

A programme can be usefully understood as input, process and outcome. Policy provides some of the ideas and all of the funding for the input. It also provides some of the outcome measurements. But, at programme level, central policy cannot take account of local needs and inputs. And there are more outcomes from Connexions than policy can anticipate. Some may not be measurable in policy terms; and some will prove more significant than policy envisages.

But the central feature of programme design is arriving at a process for transposing inputs into outcomes. Process is best expressed in verbs: it is real people doing local things. Policy cannot specify much of this. This is the main reason why there is never an exact correspondence between what policy seeks and what practice delivers. From the local point of view, this is often a good thing.

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Programme is, then, a gap much of which policy should leave empty. Programme development is our job - based on a defensible professionalism and an understanding of local learning needs.

Needs, equality and universality

The notion of 'needs' can be troublesome. It implies a deficit, putting the user at a disadvantage: people are thought of as in difficulty because of some lack. At best they become objects of pity - which is a form of condescension. We might then try to help them to fit into what is currently available. That would be a form of producer capture - they act, on our terms.

These issues must not be evaded. Where people are in difficulties because the social, economic and education system has failed, it is not they who need to adjust, it may well be policy, professional and employment-and-training providers who need to change.

There has been, in guidance, a discourse about this. It is about how helpers may - when they are most trying to offer help - collude with a damaging system. More than any other programme, Connexions needs this discourse to be restarted. It is genuinely philosophical and usefully subversive. We should not expect politicians to do it for us.

But, before we climb back onto the barricades, we should remember that careers work got started on the basis of providing for people thought to be in need. Work experience, Progress Files and active learning each got their start this way. So did careers guidance. Connexions is not the first in careers work to begin by concentrating resources on the needy.

The strategy has this strength: Connexions is the only careers-work policy in a generation to be explicitly linked to equal opportunity - our primary policy concern. While 'competitiveness', 'economic benefits' and 'raised standards' were, at best, tangential to our purposes, concerns for how people gain access to life chances are central.

The charge of condescension may be more damaging where Connexions is conceived as a service for a troubled and troublesome minority. But this is no more than a starting point. The history of our work is a history of realising that the learning needs of the most obviously needy give us the clue to the needs of the rest. All helping professions advance in this way.

At closer quarters we can do this: working out in inner city or leafy suburb who needs what kind of help. With or without policy mandate, we could do it now for all 14-19 year-olds.

With serious investment, it could be done life-long. NICEC Fellow David Andrews remarks that Connexions would have taken on a different shape if it had been first directed

at adults. He is right: the greater depth, breadth and momentum of adult learning would have been impossible to ignore. Connexions will eventually catch up with David's thought.

Actually it is no more patronising to suggest that all people need to learn than it is to suggest that hungry people need to eat. But what they then do with their new energy is another matter. That is the philosophical question and another gap.

Any hope for Connexions?

I have not yet met a person managing a local Connexions programme who does not agree that the programme must achieve more than policy requires. And all agree that, when you know that the targets can be met, then the most creative and most relevant work can be developed. That's what happened with TVEI, the year-9-10 Initiative and the National Curriculum. All outflanked and transformed what policy first proposed.

And worry about universality is not going to help. We never really had it: too many people, in one or way or another, slipped through our hands. Despite the inevitable protests, it is a moot point whether universality is what is now needed. Better to think of the problem in terms of responses to need; and better still to think of it in terms of a repertoire of responses to a variety of needs. In such a discussion, universality will become a redundant concept.

Policy habitually leaves gaps. We will put our mind to them. That is how the most interesting ideas emerge after the launch event. Sometimes long after.

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More

On issues for Connexions. *Young Learners at Risk: The Career-learning Café - The Magazine - Making It Work.*

On network management. *The Reforming Careers Coordinator: The Career-learning Café - The Memory.*

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The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) is a network organisation initiated and sponsored by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC). NICEC's aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research. It conducts applied research and development work, of national and international relevance, related to career education and guidance in educational, work and community settings. Career education and guidance consists of a range of processes designed to help individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their lifelong progress in learning and in work.

There is a NICEC home page on the CRAC web site:
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Colley, H. (2003). *Mentoring for Social Inclusion: a critical approach to nurturing mentor relationships*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Jackson, C., Ball, J., Hirsh, W. & Kidd, J. (2003) *The Need for Career Advice in Medical Training*. Cambridge: NICEC.

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