

Schools and Careers Services

**Report on a NICEC/CRAC invitational policy
consultation held on 20-21 May 1996
at Stoke Rochford Hall, Lincolnshire**

**and sponsored by the
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NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling is a network organisation sponsored by CRAC. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research.

CRAC

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment.

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The structure of 'work' is changing rapidly. Young people leaving school and entering the world of work in the 21st century will experience very different forms of careers from those followed by their teachers and careers advisers. This has major implications for the careers education and guidance needs of young people and for the work of schools and careers services in meeting those needs.

The aim of the consultation was to review current strategies for the provision of careers education and guidance in schools, in the context of changes in the structure of 'work' and 'career', and to clarify directions for future development. The consultation was designed at a strategic level, to inform and influence policy and practice, both nationally and locally. It set out to take a longer-term view of the future of careers education and guidance for young people in schools.

Included among the 49 participants were representatives of policy-making organisations, professional associations and influential practitioners. The main work of the event was conducted in working groups, participants having been briefed through five specially commissioned papers.

This report records the main themes of the debate and the recommendations made. Although the consultation included contributions by colleagues from Scotland and Northern Ireland, the outcomes focus mainly on careers education and guidance in England and Wales. The report is written by David Andrews, Fellow, NICEC. It does not necessarily represent the views of the project sponsors, or of any particular participant at the event.

▼ From the strengths of the present

The school/careers-service partnership approach to meeting the careers education and guidance (CEG) needs of young people is seen as a great strength in our system. Schools bring to the partnership their intimate knowledge of the students plus expertise in curriculum and teaching; careers services bring knowledge of local and national opportunities plus expertise in guidance. This arrangement has served us well for the latter half of the 20th century, and strong forms of partnership have been demonstrated to represent best practice (NFER, 1995).

Nevertheless, as we approach the millennium, it is timely to ask the questions: does this arrangement still offer the most appropriate means of helping young people to develop the career planning and career management skills they will need for 'work' and 'career' when they leave full time education in the 21st century; and, if so, how should the partnership best be characterised? The partnership has always been a dynamic one, with the nature and balance of the respective roles changing and edges rightly blurred. The consultation aimed to look beyond the present arrangements and to clarify a vision for the future.

▼ The changing context

The five briefing papers, commissioned specifically for the consultation, provided a well-informed context for the discussion groups. Jim Hillage and Wendy Hirsh provided a comprehensive summary of the key trends in changing work patterns. Their paper described the disappearance of the youth labour market (which is inter-related with the changing pattern of 14-19 education and training). Compared with the time when school/careers-service partnership approaches were first adopted, young people are now leaving full time education at a later age but are still making decisions about education (and training) options at an early age. This is bound to have implications for the changing nature of careers education and guidance. The Royal Mail case-study provided by Annette Hutchinson neatly illustrated many of the points in this paper.

Audrey Collin provided a challenging debate on the changing concept of career, concluding that we will need to re-configure our ideas of career, that we should take account of a greater range of forms of career and, probably most significantly, that career will need to be interpreted as the individual's journey through life rather than as an objective pathway through the labour market. Teachers and careers advisers will need to think of careers in new ways so that careers education and guidance programmes in the future can prepare young people for the types of career they will experience in their lives rather than the types of career their teachers and careers advisers faced on leaving school.

Michael Young mapped in concise detail the key changes in 14-19 education. In so doing, he made a clear case that there is now an even greater need for guidance from age 13+, to be continued throughout 14-19 education (and beyond). It was pointed out, for example, that the most recent Dearing Review adds qualifications to the existing framework, thereby extending flexibility and choice – and underlining the centrality of guidance.

The fifth paper, by Bill Law and Anthony Barnes, looked afresh at the careers education and guidance needs of young people in schools today. It complemented the previous paper's case for guidance with an emphasis on careers education and career learning, and took the reader forward from learning about 'self', 'opportunities', 'decisions' and 'transitions'. An active, participative role was conceived for the student in such learning. The authors stressed the importance of learning about work and its impact on individuals' personal and social lives. They also highlighted the need to think about progression in individuals' career learning. Careers education and guidance can no longer (if it ever could) be reduced to a one-off event.

All five papers are being published in the *NICEC Careers Education and Guidance Bulletin* (No. 46, 1996).

▼ A vision for the future

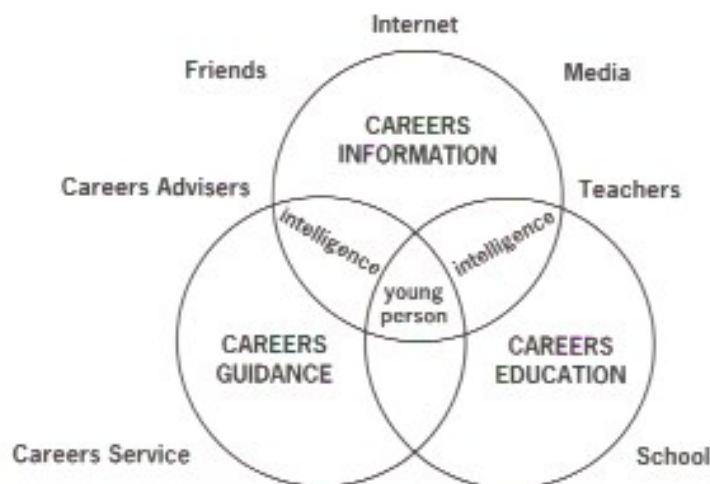
The working groups were asked to reflect on the changes in work, career, education and training, and on the consequent careers education and guidance needs of young people, in order to articulate a vision for the aims and key elements of careers education and guidance provision in the year 2001. They were then asked to identify the respective contributions of schools and careers services and to characterise the nature of the relationship between the two partners. This task was followed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements and of the helps and hindrances among recent initiatives to support the development of careers work in schools. Any sources of potential influence to bring about the changes needed were also to be identified.

In considering the future, all the groups reaffirmed the existing aims and components of careers education and guidance. It was argued that the original DOTS analysis and its subsequent reworkings still stand, with the modification that there is now greater emphasis on preparing for lifelong transitions. The desired outcomes of careers education and guidance could perhaps best be described in terms of skills – the skills required for self-managed careers. There is much debate about the core, or key, skills of communication, application of number and information technology. To these should be added the skills of career planning and career management, and learning to learn. These skills need to be underpinned by a knowledge and understanding of ‘work’ and ‘career’. One important specific skill young people entering work in the 21st century will need is that of being able to read labour market information and to turn it into labour market intelligence.

The groups reaffirmed the school/careers-service partnership approach to helping young people. Discussion focused less on the partnership itself and more on the changing contributions of the partners. Schools were perceived as being the main developers of the skills of career management. Once these various skills were identified (e.g. obtaining and analysing information, making decisions, implementing plans of action, making transitions) it could be seen that these were central to the whole of education. Nevertheless a distinct role was identified for careers education and guidance. It is in **discrete** careers work that young people are helped to apply these skills to their own career development, i.e. to make connections between the skills developed in the curriculum and their own life choices. In **integrated** careers work, young people are helped to see how what is learned in the school curriculum can be applied to work and other future life roles. While schools were seen as having the primary responsibility for career learning – for developing the key knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills – the contribution of the careers service was conceived as going beyond the provision of guidance to include supporting schools with their tasks of careers education. It was also acknowledged, however, that in supporting schools and teachers in curriculum development careers services will need to continue to draw upon the expertise within LEA advisory services.

Although schools and careers services are the two principal partners, it was recognised that there are other partners which contribute to meeting the careers education and guidance needs of young people in schools, e.g. parents, employers, further and higher education providers. An additional role for the two main partners is to bring these other partners into the network.

In addition to the careers education provided predominantly by schools, and the careers guidance provided predominantly by careers services, young people’s career development is heavily influenced by the careers information which comes partly from careers teachers and careers advisers, but also from friends, family and the media. We live in an information-rich society, and the amount and availability of information will continue to grow. A key role for schools and careers services will be to help young people understand, analyse and interpret the careers information they will receive.



The groups' analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of current provision and of the helps and hindrances among recent initiatives yielded lists on which all items – e.g. service-level agreements, careers service targets, GEST funding, earmarked development funding, the strengthened Ofsted framework – could be listed as both strengths and weaknesses, or helps and hindrances, depending on how they had been implemented locally.

On sources of potential influence for the future development of careers education and guidance in schools, four main points were raised:

- 1 **The benefits of bringing other partners into the process.** Using parents and governors to influence developments could, for example, pay dividends in schools where careers education and guidance is not currently taken seriously.
- 2 **The advantages of clearly defined outcomes.** Having clear outcomes for careers education and guidance assists planning by the main partners, facilitates discussions about resource requirements, and provides a basis for reviewing and evaluating provision. One model for defining outcomes would be to take the general guidance offered in *Looking Forward* (SCAA, 1995) and use this as a basis for agreeing more specific objectives through a local forum, which could then be modified by school governing bodies to suit particular circumstances. Care would need to be taken not to make this an over-bureaucratic exercise or to lose sight of the key skills young people need to be helped to develop.
- 3 **The need for consistency and coherence between careers work, the school curriculum and the world of work.** Careers education and guidance provision is likely to be more secure where there is congruence between the careers programme and the rest of the curriculum, and between the curriculum and the world of work. For example, decision-making skills fostered in the careers programme will have less impact if other areas of the curriculum do not encourage such skills. Similarly, transition from school to work will not be facilitated if there is a too marked clash of cultures between the world of school (secure, technologically-primitive, insular and rigid) and the world of work (insecure, technologically-advanced, global and flexible).
- 4 **The power of quality standards and awards.** Throughout England and Wales, local areas are establishing schemes for setting quality standards for careers work and offering accreditation awards. The evidence suggests that these are proving to be powerful motivators for development and improvement, especially when linked to staff-development strategies.

▼ What next?

In the final phase of the consultation the working groups were asked to put forward recommendations for actions to take us forward from the present to a future in which all young people could have access to high-quality careers education and guidance appropriate to the demands and opportunities in adult and working life in the next century.

Participants were asked to think in terms of three categories: (i) short-term recommendations, concerned with refining or extending current initiatives; (ii) medium-term recommendations, concerned with policy and practice over which participating organisations had some control; and (iii) long-term recommendations, concerned with future policy and practice over which participants probably had little direct influence.

▼ In the longer term

The consultation resolved that for careers education and guidance to be truly effective it needs to be seen as central to the work of schools – to be helping students plan and manage their learning and careers, and understand the life relevance of their curriculum. It was recognised that for this to happen there would need to be a significant change in the focus of education in schools, from imparting subject knowledge and understanding to developing the whole person. This would be characterised by:

- a shift in emphasis from teaching to learning;
- a stronger focus on skills and attitudes, to balance that on knowledge and understanding;
- greater use of information technology;
- more work-based learning;
- a community focus to the work of schools.

It was also acknowledged, however, that this would represent a major change in the culture of schools. While we should keep this in view as a long-term aim, more short-term and medium-term activities could help to improve the present position.

▼ For more immediate action

A recurring theme was that the school/careers-service partnership approach continues to offer the most appropriate way forward and that what all the interested parties need to do is take action to make the partnerships work effectively. Several specific recommendations were proposed (where these were addressed to particular organisations, this is indicated). Some relate to the short term, others to a slightly longer timescale. Those for immediate action are as follows:

- 1 The contractual work of the careers service companies is currently too rigidly defined in terms of 'output' targets, while the contributions of schools are not prescribed sufficiently. Greater flexibility should be introduced into the careers service targets; conversely, the forthcoming legislation should be used to make schools more accountable for a consistent and coherent delivery of a core student entitlement. For example, schools should be required to report on their careers education and guidance programmes in their prospectuses and to report on their destination statistics. Schools also should be encouraged to nominate a governor to have oversight of careers education and guidance. Further, the legislation should cover all schools, maintained and independent. (DfEE)
- 2 Funding mechanisms should be reviewed and means found of attaching funding to effective partnerships. (DfEE)
- 3 Advice and examples of good practice should be published on linking school aims to school CEG policies, school development plans to school/careers-service SLAs, policy to practice. (DfEE)
- 4 Links should be established between the inspection of CEG in schools and the inspection of careers service provision. (DfEE and Ofsted)
- 5 The direction and targeting of Continued Professional Development and InSET should be examined, with a view to establishing a more coherent approach to the various funding routes and to promoting more joint careers-teacher/careers-adviser training. (DfEE)

- 6 The proposal in the Dearing Review of 16-19 Qualifications to review and relaunch the National Record of Achievement should be viewed as a significant opportunity to better align the processes of recording and reviewing achievement in schools with those of career action planning. (DfEE)
- 7 A more co-ordinated and coherent approach to the various initiatives aimed at supporting the development of careers work in schools should be developed at the local level. (Careers Services/TECs/LEAs)

Actions which might take a little longer to initiate, but to which attention could begin to be paid now, are as follows:

- 8 School senior managers should be actively engaged in the debate on the central role of careers education and guidance. Research should be undertaken into the learning outcomes of CEG and the links with raising levels of achievement. The findings should be disseminated through senior managers' journals and networks. (DfEE/NICEC and other research bodies)
- 9 A review of the existing arrangements for the in-service training and professional development of careers staff should examine ways of linking staff development to the development of careers work in the school. (DfEE)
- 10 A national system of tracking individuals and feeding back (to providers of education, training and guidance) information on subsequent achievements and destinations should be established. (DfEE/Careers Services/TECs)
- 11 A more fundamental review of the targets for careers service companies should seek to identify more appropriate performance indicators. (DfEE/Careers Services)
- 12 There will continue to be an important role for the specialist careers teacher – to lead, co-ordinate and monitor this aspect of a school's work. A review of the recruitment and career development of such teachers should be undertaken, and should take into consideration the Scottish model of promoted posts for guidance teachers. (DfEE/Scottish Office)
- 13 There should be a re-examination of the place of CEG in the curriculum and its relationship with other life-relevant aspects of the curriculum. The accreditation of careers work in schools and/or students' career learning should also be explored. (SCAA)
- 14 Local over-arching frameworks for the provision of all-age careers guidance should be established and might include opening up CEG in schools to members of the adult community. (Careers Services/TECs/LEAs/Schools)

The main message from the consultation was that careers education and guidance will continue to be important, that we have achieved a great deal and that our basic approach is right, but that we have some way to go to offer all our young people a high-quality provision which meets the demands of work and career as they are currently developing. There is considerable attention on this area at the moment and it is the responsibility of all parties to make the provision as effective as possible. The citizens of the 21st century deserve no less.

▼ References

- National Foundation for Educational Research (1995) *The Role of the Careers Service in Careers Education and Guidance in Schools*. Sheffield: CSB QADU, Employment Department.
- School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (1995) *Looking Forward - Careers Education and Guidance in the Curriculum*. London: SCAA.