

# Leading and Managing Careers Work in Schools: the changing role of the careers co-ordinator



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This paper has been written to promote discussion among careers work practitioners, school senior managers, providers of professional development for careers co-ordinators and policy makers about the nature of the role of careers co-ordinator in schools today and the support they need to work effectively. It arises from an enquiry recently undertaken by NICEC into the career experiences and career development of careers co-ordinators in schools. That project was led by David Andrews and Anthony Barnes, both NICEC Fellows, and was reported in the NICEC journal *Career Research and Development* (Issue No. 9. Summer 2003).

The job of careers co-ordinator in schools is changing and developing. For holders of this post to be enabled to undertake the tasks required of them and to ensure that pupils and students receive effective careers education and guidance they, and their managers and people who support them, need to share a common understanding of the nature of the role. This paper, written by David Andrews, is intended to help all interested parties move towards such an understanding.

NICEC is grateful to VT Careers Management and to the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers (NACGT) for sponsoring this work.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Throughout this paper, and the report of the original enquiry, the term 'careers co-ordinator' is used to describe the role of leading and managing a school's provision of 'careers work' (a term which itself encompasses careers information, careers education and careers guidance). The title 'careers co-ordinator' is the one that is currently most commonly used but in previous times holders of this post would have been called 'careers teacher' or 'head of careers'. The change in the title indicates a change in role and this paper will track that change and will go on to suggest that the more recent title 'careers co-ordinator' may no longer adequately describe the role as it is today.

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ENQUIRY INTO THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF CAREERS CO-ORDINATORS\*

The enquiry set out to investigate the career development of school careers co-ordinators. While it yielded some interesting findings about the career experiences and career progression of such postholders, the more significant findings centre around the nature of the role itself and how it is viewed from different perspectives.

Other teachers, careers co-ordinators themselves and headteachers view the role differently. Although all three groups identify many 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;
- headteachers see them as **leaders** and **managers** of an area of the school's work.

This paper will argue that, in practice, the role of careers co-ordinator in schools today encompasses all three sets of perceptions and will go on to explore ways in which the various functions could be organised within schools. The enquiry suggested that the role specification needed to be clear to all parties so that procedures could be established to ensure that people with the required skills and qualities could be appointed to the role and appropriate professional development and support could be planned and provided.

The enquiry also noted that the context for careers work in schools is ever changing and that developments such as Connexions and the reforms to 14–19 education impact on the role of careers co-ordinator. For this reason it suggested that the role might be not only re-focused and re-defined but also re-configured in relation to other middle leadership and management roles.

The enquiry recommended that NICEC should produce a discussion paper to re-specify the role, to explore options for how the functions set out in the role might be organised within a school and to consider the implications for professional development to support the role. This Briefing is that paper.

\* Single copies of an offprint of the project report can be requested from NICEC by sending a stamped (28p) and self-addressed A4 envelope to: NICEC, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX

## 20TH CENTURY CAREERS WORK: FROM CAREERS TEACHER TO CAREERS CO-ORDINATOR

It was not until the 1960s that schools started to pay serious attention to careers work. It was around this time that careers education lessons first appeared within the curriculum and schools began to establish careers libraries. Up to this time, careers work had been limited mainly to arranging interviews for pupils with the visiting Youth Employment Officer. It was, therefore, about 40 years ago when schools first identified the need for a teacher to take responsibility for careers work.

Originally the post was referred to as 'careers teacher' (the National Association of Careers Teachers, as it was called then, was founded in 1969), although some schools did raise the status to that of a junior head of department and used the term 'head of careers'.

The tasks originally undertaken by careers teachers included:

- establishing and maintaining a careers library, usually in a location separate from the main school library;
- planning and teaching a programme of careers education lessons, often only in the final one or two years of compulsory schooling;
- arranging a programme of careers interviews with the visiting careers officer.

The only person with whom they needed to work was the careers officer from the local careers service. Within the school, they did not necessarily have to work with any other members of staff, with the possible exception of the teacher responsible for the general studies programme in which careers education lessons were often located.

As careers work developed through the 1970s, the 1980s (the era of the Technical and Vocational

Education Initiative) and the 1990s (when careers education became part of the statutory curriculum in schools), careers teachers were often asked to take on additional responsibilities, including:

- organising work experience;
- administering the National Record of Achievement.

At the same time, the original tasks remained and became larger as careers libraries were integrated into the main school library, careers education lessons were linked to wider programmes of PS(H)E and tutorial work and careers guidance interviews were linked to a wider provision of individual support and guidance through, for example, tutoring and mentoring.

Careers teachers still needed to work with the careers officer (now called a 'careers adviser') but, within the school, they now needed to work with several other members of staff, for example: the librarian; the PS(H)E co-ordinator; the heads of year, including in 11-18 schools the head of sixth form; the records of achievement co-ordinator, and, beyond the school, they needed to network with employers, FE colleges and training organisations. Furthermore, the curriculum model for careers education had developed from discrete careers lessons taught by the careers teacher to ones where careers education formed part of a wider programme of PSHE taught by a team of teachers or tutors. It is no surprise, therefore, that as the job of 'careers teacher' developed into one of working with other teachers in middle management roles to co-ordinating a programme, and of preparing materials for other teachers to use, the title changed to 'careers co-ordinator'.

## 21ST CENTURY CAREERS WORK: CAREERS CO-ORDINATOR OR CAREERS WORK MANAGER?

As careers work has continued to develop in the new century none of the tasks identified in the previous section of this paper has disappeared. There are still activities such as work experience and careers interviews to organise, there are still programmes of careers education to co-ordinate, and links still need to be made with the tutors and mentors in the school and, in the wider community, with employers, training providers and further and higher education establishments. Also the school still needs to liaise with Connexions to agree a range of services to complement and add value to its own provision of CEG. The careers co-ordinator today is still very much an organiser, a co-ordinator and a networker.

For this job to be undertaken effectively, however, it is not sufficient for the careers co-ordinator simply to co-ordinate, i.e. to plan with others and monitor delivery. There is also the need to work with the senior management team to set policy priorities for careers work, to support those involved in providing careers education and careers guidance, to keep the programme under review, to evaluate the provision and to develop careers work. This is more than co-ordination; it is leadership and management.

Moreover, as schools develop more integrated approaches to those aspects of the curriculum concerned with young people's personal development (e.g. CEG, PSHE, citizenship and personal finance education), as they plan careers work and work experience as part of a wider provision of work-related learning and as they develop more coherent approaches to individual guidance and support (to include tutoring, mentoring and careers and educational guidance), it is imperative that the careers co-ordinator works closely with other middle leaders responsible for these related aspects of the school's work.

For pupils and students in our schools to be assured of the good quality careers education and guidance they need to support their progression through learning and into work the following functions will need to be undertaken in schools.

- 1 Advise the senior leadership group and governors on policy, priorities and resources for CEG
- 2 Establish and maintain a comprehensive, up to date and accessible provision of careers information (probably as part of a Connexions resource centre within a main library area)
- 3 Plan a scheme of work of careers education, including work experience, from Year 7 to Year 11 (or 13), co-ordinated with PSHE, citizenship and work-related learning
- 4 Lead school-based training for teachers and tutors involved in teaching careers education and provide on-going support
- 5 Monitor the effectiveness of teaching in careers education and secure pupils' and students' progress in career learning
- 6 Work with heads of year and the Progress File co-ordinator to establish a coherent provision of individual support and guidance that includes guidance on options in learning and work, and that enables the assessment of pupils' and students' further guidance needs
- 7 Work with the Connexions co-ordinator to refer pupils and students with career guidance needs to an appropriate Personal Adviser
- 8 Liaise with relevant external agencies including Connexions, employers, further and higher education and training providers
- 9 Review the overall provision of careers work, and evaluate an aspect of the programme, each year. Use the outcomes of the self-evaluation process to prepare an annual development plan for careers work, to contribute to the school development plan
- 10 Report on the effectiveness of careers work to the senior leadership group and to governors, and present strategies for further improvement
- 11 Manage the work of the careers support assistant
- 12 Maintain own continued professional development for careers work.

These are the jobs, specifically related to careers work, that need to be done in school today. They are a combination of organising, co-ordinating, networking, managing and leading. If they were to be brought together as a single role that is currently called 'careers co-ordinator' a more accurate title would be 'careers work manager', or 'careers work leader'.

## **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES FOR CAREERS WORK**

The twelve functions listed in the previous section could constitute the basis of a job description, or role specification, for the leader and manager of careers work in a school. There are, however, several options for the way in which these functions might be arranged and four possibilities are discussed below.

### **A SINGLE ROLE OF CAREERS WORK LEADER**

The twelve functions could be allocated to one individual who becomes the leader for careers work in the school. This model represents a continuation of current arrangements in most schools. It has the advantage of one person being clearly identified as responsible for careers work. In practice, at the moment, most individuals in this post are not allocated sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities and they are not always appropriately located within the school's overall management structures to work effectively with the other middle leaders.

For this model to succeed the careers work leader would need to be supported by a careers work support assistant who could undertake the more routine organisational and administrative tasks within the various functions. (The careers work leader could not be replaced by an administrator as there are important tasks that need to be led by a teacher, for example planning the careers education curriculum and monitoring and supporting tutors teaching careers education). The careers work leader would also need to be part of a middle leadership group focussing on students' personal development and guidance and led by the appropriate member of the senior leadership group.

### **SHARING THE FUNCTIONS AMONG SEVERAL MIDDLE LEADERS**

The functions could be allocated to several individuals. For example, responsibility for the Connexions resource centre could be placed with the librarian, responsibility for the careers education scheme of work could be placed with the PSHE co-ordinator, etc. This model has the advantages that the functions can be made manageable and the elements of careers work can be integrated with other aspects of personal development and guidance. A disadvantage is that no one member of staff has clear oversight of the total provision of careers work.

### **MAKING THE FUNCTIONS PART OF A LARGER ROLE**

The functions could all be allocated to a single post-holder but as part of a larger role say, for example, in

the current context, that of Connexions co-ordinator or manager. This model has the advantages that careers work can be integrated with other aspects of personal development and guidance and that the post-holder might also be a member of the senior leadership group. A disadvantage is that the individual may not have sufficient time to pay due attention to careers work.

### **LEADER FOR CAREERS WORK WITHIN A 'PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE' DEPARTMENT OR FACULTY**

A fourth option, which would build on the various advantages identified above and reduce the disadvantages, would be to have a single designated post of careers work leader but within a broader department or faculty for personal development and guidance, which also includes leaders for PSHE and citizenship, Progress File and, possibly, work-related learning. The department would be led by someone with overall responsibility for these related areas of the curriculum and include strand leaders for CEG, PSHE and citizenship. In this model links would be forged but someone would still take responsibility for careers work. The department could work as a team and could have allocated to it a support assistant to take on some of the non-teaching tasks and thereby enabling the strand leaders to have time to lead and manage their aspects of the curriculum.

The bringing together of these different co-ordinator roles into a new department would be similar to the developments in science in the 1980s – when biology, chemistry and physics departments in schools were integrated into a single science department but with members of the department responsible for the separate sciences – and in design and technology in the 1990s.

In this model the head of personal development and guidance would need also to be a member of the middle leadership group focussing on guidance and support, and would be managed by the senior leader with overall responsibility for pupils' personal development, guidance and support.

A possible implication of the model is that the leader for careers work could be spending most of their time co-ordinating and managing careers work and teaching in the personal development and guidance department, and, therefore, have less time available for teaching another subject. This may, however, be an appropriate consequence of paying proper attention to the role.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CAREERS WORK

At the moment, no teacher trains initially for careers work. Professional development is made available through local Connexions partnerships and in many areas includes accredited courses in leading and managing careers work offered by higher education institutions. An NVQ in CEG co-ordination is also being piloted.

These forms of professional development will need to be continued. Teachers will still need access to training in careers work and in how to go about leading and managing this aspect of the school's work. To accommodate the different models for organising the role identified earlier it would make sense for programmes of professional development to be organised on a unitised or modular basis, allowing teachers to select the elements relevant to their particular role. The units should however still fit within a coherent framework that could lead to a whole qualification.

At the time of writing several areas are piloting courses for accredited teachers of PSHE and several initial teacher training centres are offering a citizenship route. It would be worth exploring the possibility of establishing a careers education route in initial teacher training as well, particularly if schools were to adopt the fourth model identified above for organising the role. We could then have leaders for careers work for whom careers work would be their main focus of activity rather than an addition to other subject roles.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This paper sets out to promote discussion to help careers work practitioners and those who support them (including school senior managers, LEA advisers/inspectors, and providers of professional development) move towards a common understanding of the role of leading and managing careers work, and then to identify appropriate models for organising the responsibilities within schools and supporting the role through professional development. These issues will also be of interest to policy makers in the DfES and government agencies such as the Teacher Training Agency, Ofsted and QCA. The questions that follow are intended to facilitate that discussion.

- 1 Do you think the twelve functions listed in this paper represent what needs to be done in schools to lead and manage careers work?
- 2 a Which of the four models for organising the role do you favour?  
b Can you identify a different model for organising the role that is more appropriate for leading and managing careers work in schools today?
- 3 How should we move forward with professional development for leading and managing careers work?
- 4 What opportunities can you identify for moving forward on these issues?
- 5 Are there any barriers to progress and how might these be overcome?

### FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have views which you wish to share with others please send them to:

David Andrews, NICEC Fellow, PO Box 36, Offley, Hitchin SG5 3BB and a follow-up paper, summarising the comments received will be published.

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