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OCCASIONAL PAPER

Career Development: A Time for Transformation

Seventh Annual Lecture

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Career Development: A Time for Transformation

Lynne Bezanson offers a powerful analysis of findings from the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review and reflects on the theme of transformation for career development services worldwide. She is a true inspiration to everyone who is commited to improving the quality and range of provision for young people and adults.

She is Executive Director of the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF). The Foundation actively works on projects that strengthen and support the career development profession as well as improve access for Canadians to quality career services.

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The Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) was established in 1998 by the University of Derby and five careers service companies in the East Midlands. The Centre aims to bridge the gap between guidance theory and practice. It supports and connects guidance practitioners, policy-makers and researchers through research activities and learning opportunities, and by providing access to resources related to guidance and lifelong learning.

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The OECD review

The OECD Career Guidance Policy Review, and the linked reviews by the European Commission and World Bank, at my latest count have covered 37 countries and are still growing in interest and impact. These studies (OECD, 2004; Sultana, 2004; Watts & Fretwell, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004) have significantly raised the policy profile of career guidance. As an OECD 2001 newsletter put it:

> *"Never before have such powerful organisations simultaneously had the current intense interest in guidance policy and its links with practice. This is not by accident. Guidance is a pivotal part of lifelong and life-wide learning."*

You will instantly recognise the impact such a quote might have and the potential attention it could garner. After all, if guidance policy and its links with practice are seen to be important at the levels of these multinational organisations, then they must be deserving of national, provincial, state and local attention in individual countries.

With an increased public-policy profile, attention is being paid to the case for increased mainstream services. At a macro level, the OECD study and its off-shoots have focused an unprecedented level of analysis on examining the adequacy and effectiveness of career development services. At a more micro level, they have allowed each country who participated to look at itself in comparison and contrast with 36 other countries: their policy approaches, effective practice examples, innovative service-delivery models, strengths and weaknesses. These are tremendous resources from which to draw examples and advocate for needed directions.

Whether career guidance actually does take hold as a higher policy issue has, of course, nothing to do with the OECD – it has to do with how seriously the findings are taken by policy developers, employers, career guidance leaders and, I will argue, individual practitioners, practitioners collectively and indeed our profession as a whole.

The OECD study has invited us to look at ourselves in comparison with other countries but it has also invited us to reflect on the state of practice of our profession. It has done so somewhat quietly, but the invitation has been issued. One of the recommendations in the final report called for transformation within the career guidance field. Transformation is not an insignificant concept!

Most of the work I have been involved in since the study was completed has been at the policy level, trying to use the study as leverage to get career guidance more centrally on policy agendas. I have not been involved nearly as much in looking at what the study was challenging our field to pay attention to. Whether career guidance actually does "transform" also has nothing to do with the OECD: it has to do with the degree to which our profession will use the study for its own analysis, evaluation, reflection and action - the degree to which we will take to heart the challenge to transform.

The study does not elaborate on what it means by transformation beyond "making career guidance available more flexibly in time and space and through a wider range of delivery methods". Neither does it elaborate on how to achieve these goals. That it, probably very wisely, leaves to us.

I have found myself intrigued and challenged by the concept of "transformation", its meaning and implications. I have been initially encouraged but increasingly frustrated by the amount of attention we have been able to sustain at the policy level as a result of the OECD study. In Canada, as a profession, it often seems that we take three steps forward and then quite quickly two steps backwards - never quite making it into the mainstream of policy dialogue and debate. This has caused me to reflect further on our own transformation.

In my remarks here I want to address some of the transformative challenges within our profession, as I see them. I am more than aware, in addressing a United Kingdom audience, that our contexts are different and that you are, in many important ways, leagues ahead of Canada

– in, for example, your institutional framework, level of provision, knowledge base and qualifications framework. I am also aware that you are continuously facing your own sets of ongoing challenges. I hope that my reflections on transformation will find resonance with your realities as well.

Transformation, as I stated earlier, is not a trivial challenge. What does transformation mean? Organisational-change research distinguishes between transformational change and superficial change. Transformational change is a comprehensive strategic approach that, when successful, results in shifts in organisational values and culture. Superficial change, in contrast, is a response to a specific presenting-problem issue. Superficial change may address a single issue successfully but does not change the culture – for example, a fitness program may be introduced into a workplace setting to increase employee morale, energy and sense of well-being, but leaving the culture of "a normal working week of 50 plus hours" intact. Transformative change would address work-life balance issues in the context of organisational expectations; while superficial change would introduce a welcome programme addition but not attempt to address the underlying issues (Lowe, 2004). The OECD call for transformation challenges us to look beyond superficial change to examine our values and culture, how we understand ourselves, our work and our contributions, and how we are shaping our profession.

I want to address four transformational issues. I hope you will think them worthy of your critical reflection.

My four transformative issues are:

- Moving from fragmented services to a holistic service framework.
- Accountability – moving from simplistic to simple, and from one-dimensional to "true"-dimensional.
- Shifting from a service-supply focus to a service-demand focus.
- Changing a weakly professionalised field to one with clear professional standards for practice.

Transformation 1: Moving from fragmented services to a holistic service framework

I have long been troubled by how the scope of our services has been separated into career and labour market information (always print or web-based and therefore self-service) and all the rest – that is, any kind of human career services support to individuals or groups. This separation between information self-service and supported services has, in almost all OECD countries, become a framework for policy decisions on who can access what level of service and from whom. It has always been based on the more than dubious assumption that for a large percentage of the population needing career assistance, information is in itself sufficient. From this separation, many service-delivery models have been built whereby, according to need, we can eke out a little more of this service or a little more of that – or alternately none of this or none of that.

I have been troubled by this but frankly I did not see an alternative option. Certainly the OECD report was clear in stating that information services are essential but insufficient. This however did not appear to be changing the face of publicly funded services, which in many cases seemed to continue on the path of a lowest-common-denominator approach to service allocation. I was struck by this same challenge in a recent article written by Tony Watts and Ruth Hawthorn (2004) in which they point out that the new IAG National Policy Framework in England barely uses the "G" (guidance) word. The article states:

> *"Hitherto policy has been based on universal access to information, advice and rationed access to guidance. Now, however, it seems that universal access is to be confined to information and that access to advice is to be rationed. The boundaries between universal and targeted provision remain blurred, but they are now drawn between information and advice."*

This is a telling example of the erosion which can occur through adopting and even endorsing a piecemeal service approach. Continuous eroding of the continuum of services towards increasingly self-service information is, from a

human services perspective, moving to the lowest common denominator.

This is the conundrum which is created by a service model based on a separation of fundamental components within a quality basic guidance service.

Recently I was asked to collaborate on a paper for the ILO on the development and delivery of guidance services in developing countries (Bezanson & Turcotte, 2004). The fundamental question which my co-author Michel Turcotte and I grappled with was: "When resources are very limited, what components of a career guidance system makes most sense to recommend and what components would give the best return on the limited investment available?" The easy answer (and perhaps the one ILO was expecting) was to focus resources on building a career, labour market and learning information component, because - as we all know - without information there can be no career guidance system at all. But we did not go there. Instead we asked ourselves this question: "What are the most basic career guidance needs of individuals which must be met in order to be able to defend that a career guidance system exists?" This led us to a very different model.

We suggested that four fundamental career guidance needs must be addressed in order to be able to claim that a career guidance system exists. These are:

- The need to establish a personal direction for working life which is consistent with the culture and economy of the societal context: this demands opportunities to explore the self (interests, aspirations, abilities) and work and learning options.
- The need to find and use education/training/work/self-employment information which is relevant to the existing and future opportunity structure.
- The need to acquire skills to make decisions about learning and work, access existing work opportunities, manage work transitions (planned and unplanned), and develop labour market resiliency.
- The need to access support in trying to resolve issues/barriers, either personal or systemic, which interfere with or preclude full participation in learning and work opportunities.

We suggested that services to meet these fundamental needs could be built on a continuum from very basic, using limited resources, to very comprehensive, using expanded resources. For example, a learning framework, such as the Blueprint for Lifework Designs, could be adapted for a developing-country context, and a very select number of outcomes could be initially selected for development and inclusion at the school level. The Blueprint is a comprehensive taxonomy of career development learning outcomes considered to be important and relevant across the lifespan. It was originally developed in the USA, and later significantly revised in Canada; the latter version has subsequently been adopted and adapted in several other countries. There are of course other learning taxonomies that could be used. The point we were trying to make in our paper was that it is not necessary to try to meet all the learning outcomes in a given taxonomy at once: it can be a gradual process, moving from "most important to know" to "nice to know" as resources become available. Over time, further outcomes could be added as the country's resources permit. Such a framework could facilitate decisions about the highest priority needs for a given population or community in its own context and within its unique challenges.

We argued in our paper that there is a choice to be made here. Our suggestion was to give strong consideration to choosing to start small but build holistically. To illustrate our point, we gave one example of a core service package requiring limited investment of resources in the later school years which could include:

- Classroom activities to promote reflection on personal responses to subjects, hobbies, use of unstructured time, and activities, and to make connections to possible learning and work alternatives.

- A basic career, training and learning resource library with internet access located either in the school or in the community.
- A number of career and labour market information research assignments which are built into curriculum and require use of the resource library and/or internet.
- A classroom program such as The Real Game which teaches career literacy and career management skills.

Our argument was that the return on investment is likely to be much greater by investing in very modest ways in addressing a holistic set of needs and building towards a comprehensive and complete delivery system over time. We both felt excited by the framework we were proposing, as it seemed to offer a fresh perspective: an alternative to the dichotomous self-help/in-depth continuum of services, which seems to be constantly eroded at one end.

Many years ago a former boss of mine, Stuart Conger, proposed introducing the idea of an annual "career check-up", modelled on the annual medical check-up. It strikes me that this is a useful metaphor to emphasise the importance of a more holistic model of service. We could not imagine in a medical context being told that the universal service consists of being invited to do a key-word search in a medical reference CD or to review a "Be Your Own Physician" do-it-yourself manual. We know and expect the doctor to be the interactive expert who will lead us to the correct information and point us in the right direction. But somehow the metaphor has not been grasped in the same way in career guidance service provision.

The component which is most frequently excluded in a system which separates information and human assistance is the need to determine a personal direction for working life which is consistent with the culture and economy of the societal context. This demands opportunities to explore the self (interests, aspirations, abilities) and work and learning options.

I am increasingly persuaded that this is the single most critical component in assisting individuals to manage their learning and working lives successfully. Mark Savickas (2003) has recently pointed out that the word interest is readily divided into its Latin roots – inter est – meaning it is within and between. Mark makes the salient point that it is not an individual's career goal that defines his/her direction, but the intrinsic pattern of the connections and directions of inter est, what is within and between, that emerges as a goal.

A transformative change would move us away from a rationed model of service to a holistic model of service. The question we all of course would raise is "how could we do this with the ever-increasing limits on resources?" There is no facile and easy answer to that. However, the OECD recommendations call for us to develop a wider range of delivery methods. Perhaps it is here that our research and development efforts need to focus: on developing creative, cost-effective but holistic tools and methods.
I have seen a few of these, including: a web-based career counselling programme in Australia; a paper-and-pencil 30-minute exercise developed at Université Laval in Canada; and an on-line and in-classroom career focusing process, again in Canada. In the UK, I understand that learndirect is seeking to build an on-line National Resource Service to capture tools that will extend the repertoire of techniques used by guidance workers; and that CeGS, in co-operation with a range of stakeholders, is experimenting with new tools such as a Decision Making Readiness Instrument for young people and adults. There are undoubtedly other promising developments, and more are needed. The emergence of more multi-dimensional approaches and resources is much more challenging than producing information resources but, I think, offers much more likelihood of making a difference. This is a very promising transformative direction in moving to a basic but holistic service model.

What other promising directions are needed to claim or reclaim a service which has evolved, or which we have allowed to evolve, into a fragmented rather than holistic model? This is a transformative question.

I know, as do all of you, that any proposition that we return to extensive one-on-one counselling to deliver the majority of career guidance services is simply unrealistic. The transformation (and it

is a challenge) is to work from a model of holistic outcomes and to research innovative delivery methods to achieve them.

Transformation 2: Moving from simplistic to simple accountability – from one-dimensional to “true”-dimensional

The second most neglected component in the holistic model and perhaps the least well understood is the need to acquire skills to make decisions about learning and work, access existing work opportunities, manage work transitions, planned and unplanned, and develop labour market resiliency.

The learning and skills components lead me to my second issue needing transformation. The OECD study makes the following observation:

> *“the development of individual career management skills increasingly lies at the heart of career guidance practice”.*

This emphasises how far our field has moved from an old model of decision-making to a new model of acquiring a set of critical career development skills in which the ability to make well-informed decisions is only one.

The accountability issue we need to address is that the actual skill and learning outcomes resulting from quality career guidance services are not well understood or documented. This was brought home to me recently when a senior policy person in a government department in Canada had occasion to visit a classroom where The Real Game was being delivered. He was astounded to see the emphasis on skill acquisition and that students were actually learning practical career management skills. For him, the acquisition of career management skills was not a deliberate and essential process within career development practice. No doubt he, and many many more, still think in terms of the decision-making paradigm. This old-paradigm thinking reduces the degree to which the increasing complexity of our field is recognised and respected. I concur fully with the OECD observation that career management skills lie at the heart of our practice, along with acquiring a meaningful personal direction. However, we need a framework to guide our accountability methods in this heart of our practice, so that our field is recognised for the learning and skill-acquisition results that it achieves. We also need to accept the professional obligation to measure what we do, how much our clients accomplish and what impacts result.

What is needed is an accountability framework which is meaningful and useful to researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. To a large extent this must be driven by the practitioner community who, along with the students and clients they assist, are the only ones who know the complexity inherent in the outcomes which are achieved. This complexity includes the presenting client issues, how they were addressed, what was achieved, and what variables were instrumental in achieving the impacts. This is simple, but far from simplistic! Researchers are needed to translate this complexity into data-gathering tools which are appropriate, streamlined and time-efficient (again, simple but not simplistic). Policy-makers need then to act on the aggregated data responsibly when they make decisions on programmes and services.

There is some important evaluation work under way here at the Centre for Guidance Studies, and also in Canada from the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice. The Canadian group has a study under way which is asking practitioners to record three outcomes they are achieving with their clients which they are required to report on, as well as the evidence they gather or use to ensure that these outcomes are actually being achieved. Practitioners are also being asked to report on three outcomes they are achieving which they are not required to report on (the hidden results) and what evidence they have that these too are actually being achieved. Our hunch is that some of the most important and meaningful outcomes are well-known to practitioners but are not being gathered and reported on at all.

A parallel study is being conducted with policy-makers and employers in which they are being asked what outcomes they expect from the specific career development programmes they invest in, what outcome data they are actually receiving, and how they use these data in decision-making. They are also being asked

what data they wish they had but currently do not have. From this the researchers are intending to construct an accountability framework which will be useful in itself and also in addition be a precursor to a much larger study that will address what conditions (processes, programmes, interventions) produce what results with specific client populations and sub-populations. This is longer-term but is very encouraging. We have never had this kind of comprehensive evaluation framework to guide and report on our interventions and results.

As a profession, we are often criticised for not being able to make the case that our services make a difference and are cost-effective. In my view, a major reason why outcome measurement and accountability have not been an embraced part of career guidance practice is that the outcomes for which practitioners are held accountable have been largely quantitative – those outcomes easiest to count: number of placements, number of training seats filled, number of clients seen, number of individual interviews, reduced time on benefits. These indicators capture either the *"busyness"* of practitioners (how many clients, how many workshops) or simple numbers (numbers applying to post-secondary; numbers in training programmes). They give limited if any attention to quality, complexity, and degree of client change or extent of skills acquired. Again, they represent a simplistic model.

A framework of learning outcomes which captures both quantitative and qualitative indicators and which is endorsed within the profession as well as by critical stakeholders would be more than embraced! Part of our needed transformation is much clearer articulation of the learning which clients and students actually acquire as a result of participation in career guidance and of the processes and programmes which are integral to their acquisition. We also need to think more creatively about ways of engaging employers and learning providers to work together with guidance professionals in order to create simple and meaningful approaches to gathering and analysing data as well as reporting the key findings. With the amount of attention and commitment to this issue in both of our countries (and others as well), we can have considerable confidence that the tools to support this transformation will become available, not tomorrow but within the next few years. This is another transformative direction.

As long as policy-makers remain surprised to discover that career guidance services result in measurable learning outcomes, we have important educational and accountability tasks to accomplish. The transformational challenge is to develop and make full use of an accountability framework which is both simple and true in the sense of capturing meaningful data, and to have this framework embraced by the field and understood and used by stakeholders.

Transformation 3: Shifting from a service-supply focus to a service-demand focus

Another shortcoming in our profession which has frequently been pointed out is a research and service-delivery focus which has been largely on supply of programmes and services (that is, what we provide) and not on demand (that is, what the consumers of programmes and services are actually asking for). For example, I am aware of only a few studies which have addressed what adolescent students want and need most from career guidance in their schools; similarly, I am not aware of much research among the unemployed or employed adult populations about the kinds of services they most need. At the same time, with respect to the unemployed, massive numbers of programmes have been developed for them, requiring huge investments of public funds.

In a special issue of the Career Development Quarterly on "Career Counseling in the Next Decade", Spencer Niles (2003) raised the questions of whether our career interventions devised in the middle of the last century are still useful in the current context, and whether current career counselling models provide adequate strategies for helping clients cope with current career concerns. How current are we with respect to client needs? How relevant are our interventions in a 2004 context? These are important questions for us to ask ourselves, individually and collectively.

A recent training experience I had in Iceland with a group of career counsellors working principally in school settings made me think very much about these questions. One of the issues I had been asked to address was the potential use of the Canadian Blueprint for Lifework Designs within their setting. The Blueprint, as I mentioned earlier, was developed by a large number of career development experts in North America. It is an excellent contribution, providing a common framework and vocabulary, and is being used to guide career guidance programme development and delivery in many educational systems. When I point out that it was developed by experts, I do not intend this as a criticism. It is an illustration, however, of a tool developed by product developers and career guidance experts (the suppliers) rather than being built heavily on input from students and clients (demanders, if you will).

I asked each counsellor to write on index cards the three most common concerns, issues and problems that students were presenting to them in their counselling offices. I gathered all the cards and later that evening sorted them into categories or themes, simply as a way to begin to look at the learning components within the presenting issues. What fascinated me was the consistency across counsellors, schools and parts of the country in the issues being presented. Three issues were overwhelmingly cited:

- Fear of academic failure; test and exam anxiety; not knowing how to study.
- Conflicts with parents; not knowing how to talk with parents but wanting to do so.
- Lack of sense of direction regarding what to do after high school.

In discussing these themes the following day, it became evident to all of us that this was the first time that the counsellors had shared the common issues they were facing. More consequential, however, was the discussion which revealed that only one school had any structured programme in study skills and stress management; and that no schools were offering any programmes to promote better communication between teens and their parents, either for parents or for the teens. Neither are these learning issues currently in the Blueprint learning taxonomy. The traditional focus on finding a direction after high school was of course a key part of their career guidance programming, and central in the Blueprint.

I think this raises some interesting questions about the roles of career guidance in the schools. It touches directly on the point made by Spencer Niles about our currency with client needs and how we know. In a sense, this small exercise resulted in a mini-needs assessment, and in these counsellors beginning to create their own Blueprint of learning issues, based on student demand for service.

A demand-driven programme needs to be constantly attuned to existing and emerging needs and adjusted to meet these needs to the extent possible. A supply-driven programme, in contrast, can be very stable and concentrated on delivering the highest quality programme among a set of relatively fixed programme and service offerings. Where are we and where do we need to be with respect to the balance in our services between demand and supply? Another important question for reflection.

In Canada, it is estimated that most of the time and energy of guidance counselors in schools is consumed by trying to meet the needs of the 20% of the student population who are making decisions and plans for post-secondary education and the 10% of the student population who have a range of personal and psychological challenges in their lives. This is often referred to colloquially as the top 20% and the bottom 10%, which is very discounting terminology, but makes the implications for the very large 70% in between more stark and startling. How many of the 70% might be helped to succeed by innovative group or classroom or web-based but supported programmes addressing issues such as those which emerged in the small Iceland example – or another needs survey in another setting?

The OECD study suggested that part of our transformation is offering a wider range of delivery options; perhaps it is also about ensuring that our delivery methods are designed for the identified needs of now, rather than a different time. Norm Amundson (1998) has raised this concern both theoretically and practically in his book Active Engagement. As

Norm points out, there is a plethora of information about how the work world, workplaces and work expectations are in many ways quite unrecognisable from the work world of the mid-20th century; however, our delivery methods, apart from the medium of ICT, remain very recognisable indeed. There has been very limited change and innovation in career counselling delivery settings and methods.

The OECD study noted that in almost all countries, services to employed adults were either very limited or non-existent, and recommended this as an area for much-needed policy attention in developing a lifelong guidance system. With respect to the adult employed population, we are seeing increasing numbers of studies in Canada highlighting dissatisfaction, turbulence and mental health issues in the workplace. A wide-reaching study of career development in the Federal Public Service in Canada was recently released in which 2,500 men and women participated, including over 250 in-depth interviews (Duxbury et al., 2004). The results are sobering and even alarming.

Only 49% of survey respondents indicated they were very satisfied with their career progress to date; only 35% believed they would be able to meet their own career goals if they remained in the public service for their full working careers.

	Important to me	*Available to me*
Doing work that is enjoyable	*97%*	*75%*
A sense of accomplishment	*96%*	*59%*
Learning and developing skills	*89%*	*62%*
A "comfortable" salary	*89%*	*62%*
Work and non-work life balance	*85%*	*63%*
Working with stimulating people	*78%*	*45%*
Contributing to society	*71%*	*50%*
Influencing the organisation	*54%*	*22%*
Increasing financial rewards	*53%*	*25%*
Optimism about career futures		*35%*

There was a very considerable gap between "dreams" and "reality". Some of the differences are summarised below.

It is interesting to note that less than a quarter indicated they would take advantage of opportunities which removed them from the workforce, such as sabbaticals or reduced workweeks. Federal public servants appear to want very much to work and work well, but for 25-40% of these workers, the work values which are most dear to them are compromised. The social implications of this level of dissatisfaction, over time, are significant. According to the study, 65% believe they will not achieve their career goals – and many of these are young workers! Only 35% express optimism about their career futures. This is a depressing outlook for the balance of a working life. The motivation and productivity consequences are huge.

If career management skills lie at the heart of our practice, and if our profession is to focus greater attention on lifelong career guidance, what do we need to be doing now, in our professional training, our outreach to the adult population, our partnerships with employers, and our liaisons with policy-makers, to be more responsive to workplace issues and to workers who need to learn to manage their own career futures in more personally satisfying ways? These may be transformative conversations that we must begin to have.

A prominent Canadian career researcher, Danielle Riverin-Simard of the Université Laval in Quebec, suggests that career guidance professionals in the main do not need survey data to know the emerging career and workplace issues that need to be attended to in public policy (Riverin-Simard, 1998). She suggests that forerunning signs of issues are evident in the stories of the clients and students of career counsellors on a daily basis, and that we are in a position to bring these issues forward, in a way not unlike the Iceland counsellors mentioned earlier.

What is evident in the stories of our clients? Depending on the delivery setting in which we work, we hear about:

- how youth see their futures - how hopeful and optimistic they are about the options and the alternatives open to them;
- how youth are making decisions about post-secondary and work options;
- the issues which interfere with their selecting or completing post-secondary education;
- standards of living of families - going up,

going down, struggling, making it - and impacts on families and the choices families have or do not have;
- behaviours of work-seekers;
- behaviours of employers to work-seekers;
- reactions of survivors to casualties of layoffs;
- results of voluntary work;
- demands of changing workplaces and worker self-assessments of their capacities to cope;
- what people on assistance or benefits actually do when detached from the labour market;
- shifting work and worker attitudes.

Danielle suggests that career guidance professionals should begin to collectively gather indicators such as these five times a year. These data should be summarised into a public report and each year there should be a press release, at a public forum, to publicise these findings. This would begin to bring lifelong guidance issues more into public and policy view. She suggests that policy-makers could benefit and might even be grateful for these kinds of data in order to inform sound, humane and appropriate educational, social and economic policies, and that this could influence resource allocation. Our field would also benefit, because this data could force enhancements of professional training programmes so that career guidance providers could access ongoing training to be more responsive and effective with increasingly complex but very current issues.

If moving from a supply focus to a demand focus is one of our needed transformative steps, what other innovative approaches can we begin to invent to make this more than a superficial change? In one-on-one counselling situations, one always starts with an assessment of the client's needs for services. Demand is the driver, even though the "supply" of what can be provided is always finite, and in some settings more finite than others. Making demand the driver in a lifelong guidance system is the transformative challenge.

What steps do we need to take to make demand the driver and ensure our currency and relevancy?
This is the transformative challenge.

Transformation 4: Changing a weakly professionalised field to one with clear professional standards for practice

For me, the most hurtful observation in the OECD report was its acknowledgment that, in most countries, career guidance is under-professionalised. I know this to be true, but I never really wanted it to be made public. I also know that it is less the case in the UK than in most other OECD countries, so here your transformation requirements are less acute. However, I think we both share, and this is also troublesome, the constant risk of increased deprofessionalising because of our lack of professionally enforced standards.

I have struggled with this issue in my own mind for a very long time. My natural inclination has been to find ways to raise the professional bar through competencies rather than simply through a graduate degree, and I have actively worked on ways to achieve that. The Canadian context in English-speaking universities, with few exceptions, remains that the professional qualification in career counselling is a generic counselling programme with one or two career-specific courses added on. This is just not good enough. It does not develop a truly professional qualification, and it is very slow to change! The French model in Quebec is an "intentional" Master's programme in career counselling where the specialisation throughout the programme is indeed in career counselling. The profession is regulated with compulsory licensing and compulsory professional monitoring. These are two very different models.

As a professional who believes that career guidance is a true specialisation requiring professional training, and with the interests of the public at heart, I am very attracted to the Quebec model. I also know if we try to go down that route, it will be decades and decades before we have enough English-speaking universities offering intentional programmes, let alone enough qualified professionals to respond to the demand for services. I further know that many presenting client and student needs do not require this level of advanced professional training, and that many essential needs can be met with excellence by a number of

complementary roles such as mentoring and advising. These roles, of course, require appropriate training, supervision and quality standards.

In the paper we wrote for the ILO to which I referred earlier, the issue of qualifications and training standards had to be addressed. What training standards could make sense in a developing-country context? When resources are limited, what level of training is reasonable and sufficient? This is a difficult question, and again the easy and perhaps expected answer might have been: a very basic qualification. We did not suggest this approach. Instead, we proposed a quite different option for consideration. There may of course be other and better options. I absolutely feel that finding quality options is a crucial issue for our profession globally and that we could truly benefit from global dialogue.

In our paper we proposed training at the postgraduate level, in an intentional career counselling programme of studies, a small core of career guidance professionals who would staff a Career Guidance Professional and Technical Centre. The role of the Centre would be to provide professional support to a range of service-delivery providers in the career guidance delivery system, from classroom teachers to community workers. This would include assisting in designing a small but holistic set of services, including ensuring access to a quality career and labour market information kit, and providing training and coaching, as well career counselling for a number of client referrals.

In proposing this Centre, we had two premises. The first is that professional leadership is essential and that a core of fully qualified professionals can and must exert the leadership needed to set the standards for how the profession is intended to evolve over time (as resources permit) as well as to assure the quality of whatever level of comprehensive service is possible in the short term. Therefore "leadership, standards and quality assurance" need to be put in place. The second premise is that multiple career guidance roles played by many persons are necessary if the principle of trying to provide a basic service to all who need and could benefit from such services is to be respected. These multiple roles require various levels of quality training in order to produce quality results. Managing the training for these diverse roles is a key function of the professional staff in the Centre. Therefore "standards of training consistent with the scope of practice for each career guidance role" need to be put in place. This recommendation is, in spirit and approach, the same as the holistic service-delivery model recommendation: that is, set the standard high, recognise that it will require a gradual and careful evolution towards quality, but let quality and comprehensiveness be the drivers.

The transformative issue, and it is a critical one, is assuring a strongly professionalised field. If we want this, we need to set the bar for a professional qualification. This does not mean that one size fits all. It does mean quality standards, at several levels according to levels of service provision. It also means a mechanism to monitor and enforce standards.

We made the point in the paper that it is easier to build a system well in the first place and much more difficult to take it apart and rebuild. It is probably true that many countries with well-developed career guidance systems wish they could dismantle them and rebuild, based on experience and research. However, most of our countries cannot dismantle, but must instead face the challenge of ensuring a basic standard of professionalism which cannot be compromised and diluted. We have some excellent foundation pieces to build upon. The IAEVG competencies framework (built strongly on the Canadian Standards and Guidelines, of which we are quite proud) is one important instrument. The IAEVG is now looking at training qualifications to match different roles and competencies.

The CEDEFOP Synthesis Report of the EU offspring from the OECD study (Sultana, 2004) states very well the transformation needed:

- From a service that is staffed by non-specialised personnel….to a service that requires pre- and in-service training.
- From a service that is poorly professionalised….to a service that has clear entry and clear progression routes.

- From a service that is staffed by same-level personnel…to a service that includes different staff categories, including paraprofessional workers.

I would like to add one more:

- From a service that has inconsistent standards …. to a service which is guided by a set of consistent professional standards for how the profession will evolve over time.

Conclusion

These, then, are the four transformations which seem to me to be most central to achieving a quality lifelong guidance system which is current, client-centred, has a strong evidence base and is utterly professional across and within the many diverse roles of career guidance professionals:

- Moving from fragmented services to a holistic service framework.
- Accountability – moving from simplistic to simple, and from one-dimensional to *"true"*-dimensional.
- Shifting from a service-supply focus to a service-demand focus.
- Changing a weakly professionalised field to one with clear professional standards for practice.

This is where my reflections have led me to date. Your own reflections of course may result in different themes. My list is far from complete and certainly not universal.

Transformational change, the literature tells us, often results from a sequence of small steps that are guided by a compelling vision. It must engage all of us. The process is iterative, with lots of reflection and adjustment built in. There is no one best way and no neat list of best practices to follow, but there are action steps which are very generic.
They include:

- Recognise the barriers to change: begin addressing what stops us from transforming.
- Spread new practices through learning and innovation - the OECD study is a superb start.
- Engage all the stakeholders: we cannot do this in isolation of the wider community of policy-makers, employers and our public.
- Measure progress: set the bar, establish the goals and the steps to be undertaken, be accountable.

I am grateful to the OECD report for the profile it has given our profession and also for the reflection it has provoked. Reflection is hard work, and to make any difference, reflection must be a catalyst not only for learning but for action. Transformative change takes time – easily 3 to 5 years. I look forward to where we could be as a profession by 2010 – which is not very far away at all!

In closing I would like to leave you with a Christmas gift. When I was in the UK in summer of last year, I closed my comments with a gift my Mother gave to me in my autograph book when I was perhaps 10 or 11 years old. I have long treasured it. Bill Law (Visiting Associate, CeGS) was in the audience and in his comments the next day he referred to this gift as *"Eileen Mary Time"*, and how in looking at our Life Quality and in building a Quality Life, Eileen Mary Time has wisdom to offer. Eileen Mary was my Mother's name. I was deeply touched by what Bill said and so it seemed more than appropriate to bring Eileen Mary Time back to the UK where this unnamed poem was first given a title. I hope it will speak to you and be a source of wisdom in your work and in your life:

Eileen Mary Time:

Take time to work; it is the price of success;
Take time to think; it is the source of power;
Take time to read; it is the fountain of wisdom;
Take time to worship; it is the highway to reverence;
Take time to dream; it is hitching your wagon to a star;
Take time to love and be loved; it is the privilege of the gods;
Take time to look around; it is too short a day to be selfish;
Take time to laugh; it is the music of the soul.

Eileen Mary Bezanson

Whatever your traditions, I wish that they include for you an abundance of Eileen Mary Time.

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