

Effective Policy Frameworks for the Organisation of Career Guidance Services

A Review of the Literature

2015

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Introduction

Career guidance refers to a wide range of activities that support people to think about and progress into their futures. It includes the provision of information, of work experience, of educational and counselling interventions and has a strong interface with human resource management. Its aim is to help people make good choices, to manage their careers effectively, to contribute to society and to live up to their potential. Career guidance is often seen as an individual good as it helps people to get on, to maximise the utilisation of their talents and to make wise investments in education and training. It is also a social good which the OECD (2004) argued could support the effective functioning of the labour market, the education system and contribute to a range of social goals.

In all countries where career guidance has a substantial footprint, there is generally a dominant underpinning rationale which informs policy direction. These rationales vary from those related to social justice or to specific societal values (including developing an entrepreneurial citizenship), to those informed by economic or educational imperatives (Stoney 1997, Morris *et al.* 2000). These rationales often define those who are able to access the services and what they are able to access. Bergmo-Prvulovic (2014) argues that within the context of Europe, career guidance is increasingly conceptualised as primarily serving a public rather than a private function. In countries where career guidance is well established the overwhelming bulk of career guidance services are paid for through public funding and delivered through the education and public employment systems (Grubb, 2004). The public sector nature of career guidance means that public policy and the design of publicly funded systems are very important determinants of the activities' effectiveness.

While career guidance may offer individuals considerable value, it is not something that most people are willing to pay for. Although

the 'individual-pays' element of the system is relatively weak in the UK, there is some evidence that it is growing (Jackson, 2013). There is a much stronger tradition of career guidance services being funded/provided by companies, educational institutions and trade unions and professional associations as part of a broader offer or relationship with the individual. The existence of a broader career guidance market outside of the public sector raises a number of issues for effective system design. How can such services be effectively aligned with those in the public sector to the advantage of both and the detriment of neither? It is also important to recognise the limitations of private sector markets in career guidance. Such markets offer greatest access to those who could pay rather than those who need it most. Consequently, if not balanced by a universal entitlement, it would potentially strengthen the capacity of those who can afford to pay to maintain their positional advantage.

This paper will focus on how public policy shapes career guidance and establishes a system within which individuals can access career support. Governments are critical to career guidance primarily as funders of the activity, but also importantly as regulators, coordinators and agents of system change. The paper will look at the evidence base on career guidance and public policy, explore the rationales for public policy involvement in the field, examine different models and systems and explore some key issues that underpin successful system design.

The evidence base

There is an extensive body of research and writing on career guidance that stretches back over a hundred years. The field has numerous academic and professional journals, books and papers and currently includes academics, researchers and theorists working in a wide range of countries, languages and cultures. For the most part, this evidence base has its roots in the discipline of psychology and, to a lesser extent, in the field of education. As a

consequence, research has focused on understanding the relationship between individuals and their careers and developing and evaluating specific interventions to support individuals' career development. There is also an important strand of research which has looked at career development within the field of business/organisation studies, although this strand has often been poorly linked to the career guidance literature.

Within this broad field of career development studies, there is a growing interest in the role of public policy. Such research attends to questions about how career guidance is organised in different countries, the rationale for public funding and the role that it can play in relation to wider public policy goals. It is this sub-set of research and thinking that this paper will draw on.

While there has been work looking at policy and systems in career guidance going back to at least the 1960s, a systematic international evidence base in this area only really developed from the mid-1990s, with a comparative study of career guidance in the European Community (Watts *et al.*, 1994). Interest in the field extended to the rest of the world in the late 1990s with two key initiatives proving to be important in catalysing the gathering of this new evidence: firstly the development of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Career Guidance Policy Review¹ which created a methodology for examining career guidance policies and which was ultimately extended to 55 countries (Watts, 2014); secondly the creation in this period of a process of international symposia (Watts, Bezanson and McCarthy, 2014) which helped to strengthen an international community of practice amongst policy makers and those in

the career development field with an interest in public policy (the seventh symposium took place in Iowa, USA in June 2015). The 2000s saw the publication of key reports by international agencies such as the OECD (2004), World Bank (Watts and Fretwell, 2004), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Hansen, 2006). It also saw the creation of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP)² which provides a coordinating function for international research and policy making in the career development field. Within Europe the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN),³ which acts as a coordinating network on career guidance policy, was also established. There have been notable developments within individual countries which have provided further coordination, funding and impetus to research and thinking around career guidance policy. For example in Canada, the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF), a charitable foundation, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and the Canadian Council for Career Development (which coordinates professional associations) have all contributed to the ongoing development of career guidance policy in the country.⁴ In other countries a single organisation has been funded, often by government, to play this role, including Vox in Norway and the Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung in Germany.⁵

The level of international interest in career guidance and public policy has resulted in the development of a body of literature on which this paper is based. This evidence base is continuing to be developed although interest in international work on policy and systems undoubtedly peaked between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s. Some of the descriptions of individual systems offered by this older research are now out of date, but

¹ See <http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/careerguidancepolicyreviewhomepage.htm>.

² See <http://www.is2015.org>.

³ See <http://www.elgpn.eu/>.

⁴ CCDF, <http://www.ccdf.ca/ccdf/>; Forum of Labour Market Ministers, [<http://www.flmm-ca/english/view.asp?x=1>; Canadian Council for Career Development <http://ccda.org/ccda/>.](http://www.flmm-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

⁵ Vox, <http://www.vox.no/English/>; Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung,

<http://www.forum-beratung.de/>.

many of the principles developed during this period still stand. The existence of this international body of literature offers huge opportunities for policy makers in England to examine how experiments in career guidance policy have worked out in other nations. However, it is worth heeding Sultana's (2011) warning that the borrowing and lending of policies across national boundaries needs to be done carefully and critically.

Evidence in this field includes a complex range of material encompassing academic papers published in peer reviewed journals, academic books, international research reports, handbooks and recommendations of good practice, and a wide range of grey literature sources including internal documents, speeches and a range of other ephemera. As a result of the special characteristics of this evidence base, we determined not to use the systematic literature review process which we have employed in other papers in this series, but rather to approach this as a position paper based on a descriptive literature review. We have focused on international and national evidence about system design and have been particularly informed by research which has looked at more than one country. We have given a number of examples of practices from countries that have been highlighted within the literature.

As this paper is focused on learning from international policy and practice, we have

focused on examples from outside England. This should not be interpreted to mean that there is no good practice from England. In fact we would argue that England has a strong system of career education and guidance, albeit one which could be developed to be stronger still. The international examples are presented to inform this development of the English system where appropriate.

Public policy rationales

The OECD (2004) argued that there were three distinct policy rationales for public policy involvement in career education and guidance. Firstly, the provision of career guidance supports the effective functioning of the labour market and ultimately leads to economic benefits; secondly, it supports the education system by demystifying the complexity of accessing and participating in the system, enabling people to choose wisely about how to invest their time, and motivating people to maximise their attainment; finally, career guidance can also support social goals helping with both social inclusion and social mobility by developing citizens who are informed, resilient and proactive in their careers.

The ELGPN (ELGPN, 2012; Hooley, 2014) expanded on the three categories identified by the OECD to produce the following list of policy areas that career education and guidance can support.

Figure 1: Search terms relating to career guidance policies and systems

Economic	Educational	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Active labour markets •Addressing youth transitions and unemployment •Economic development •Employee engagement •Labour market efficiency •Labour market flexibility/flexicurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Effective skills utilisation •Efficient investment in education and training •Lifelong learning •Participation in vocational and higher education •Reducing early school-leaving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Active ageing •Social equity •Social inclusion •Supporting and enabling European mobility for learning and work

Many countries currently view career guidance as an important public policy area. This includes a range of countries, largely in Europe and the English speaking world, which have a long history of engagement with career guidance (e.g. Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, New Zealand and the USA). It also includes a number of countries which are either developing new career guidance systems or which are scaling up under-developed systems. Countries which are investing in career guidance include Croatia (Moore, Zečirević and Peters, 2014), Norway (Hooley, Shepherd and Dodd, 2015), Sri Lanka (Neary, 2013) and Saudi Arabia. Clearly all of these different countries have very different policy priorities so it is important to consider why they all see value in investing public money in career guidance.

The ELGPN has also sought to gather together key research and to present this in a way which supports policy makers to develop evidence based policy in this area (Hooley, 2014). The ELGPN's Evidence Guide draws the following conclusion:

There is an extensive research base on lifelong guidance... It recognises that there are many beneficiaries of such guidance, including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as well as society as a whole. Lifelong guidance impacts on: educational outcomes; economic and employment outcomes; and social outcomes (p.7).

The paper notes that while the evidence base for the impact of career guidance varies across different public policy areas, there is a substantial evidence base which policymakers can draw on and draw confidence from. However, the paper also notes that there is a need for continued research and evaluation to continue to build the evidence base and to increase its relevance to policy makers.

A recent paper published by Careers England (Hooley and Dodd, 2015) reviews the existing literature relating to the economic impacts of career guidance (e.g. Access Economics, 2006; Hughes, 2004, Mayston, 2002) to explore the utility of guidance for the economic aims of the current UK government. They argue that it can contribute to a number of primary economic outcomes (increased labour market participation, enhanced skills base, increased labour market flexibility), secondary outcomes (improved health, decreased crime, increased tax revenue, decreased benefits costs) and also bring macro-economic benefits (deficit reduction, increased productivity, improved living standards and increased growth). Again it is worth noting that the strength of the evidence for the impact of career guidance on each of these outcomes varies, but there is a wide array of evidence that has demonstrated that career guidance can contribute to the achievement of economic policy goals.

The available literature therefore suggests that there is a substantial public policy interest in career guidance. It also reveals the range of contexts within which career guidance can be sited and the policy objectives that it can serve. Inevitably these policy priorities are different in different countries and this has an influence on the way services are designed to meet these objectives. As a consequence it is not possible to identify a single approach to system design that will meet all needs and there is a need to learn from international practice rather than to simply reproduce it (Sultana, 2011). The next section will look at the range of ways in which career guidance is organised as a part of public policy.

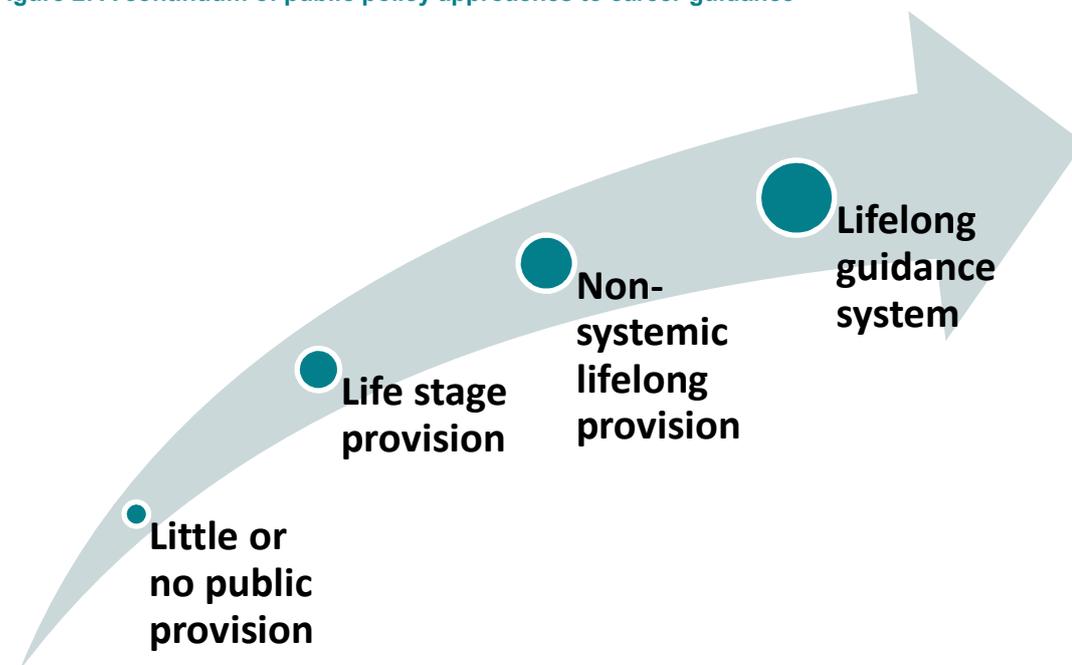
A continuum of public policy approaches to career guidance

The OECD (2004) review of career guidance policies concluded that in order to deliver

the most effective and efficient services the aspiration for countries should be the creation of a 'lifelong guidance system'. It is clear that this is not the prescription of a one size fits all approach that can be simply system development. However, the core assumption behind the development of a

lifelong guidance system is that there should be coherence and coordination between different elements of the system. Given this, it is possible to propose a spectrum along which different national approaches to career guidance can be located.

Figure 2: A continuum of public policy approaches to career guidance



In some countries there is **little or no public provision** and all or most provision is left to the market. In such models public policy involvement is minimised. It is to be expected that such systems will generate uneven and uncoordinated provision which has barriers to access for many individuals. The introduction of strongly marketised approaches to career guidance can even have negative impacts within those countries where career guidance is well established. Hughes, Meijers and Kuijpers (2015) trace how the marketisation of career education in England and the Netherlands has had negative effects on the quality and quantity of provision available. They argue that there is a need for stable public provision in this field to be adopted, but is rather an approach to address concerns about access, quality and effectiveness.

Other countries have invested in career guidance, but it is confined to a particular **life stage**. In such countries individuals are

only able to access career guidance at a particular life stage. Such a system might offer services to young people in the education system but little or nothing to adults. Alternatively provision might be available for unemployed adults but not for younger people.

The increasing recognition of the lifelong context of career and the lifelong need for career support means that many countries are seeking to deliver lifelong careers provision. Such a perspective is endorsed in two resolutions from the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2004, 2008) and has underpinned the collective endeavors of European countries that are involved in the ELGPN. However, in many cases what has developed has been **non-systemic lifelong provision** within which provision is often fragmented and poorly-integrated. In such a system individuals are able to access career guidance from a wide range of different providers at different

points in their life (Moreno da Fonseca, 2015). Provision may be funded in a range of ways but is not effectively integrated, different government departments may offer services independently with no coordination across the whole. Moreno da Fonseca (2015) highlights the particular challenge of coordinating services provided through the education system with those connected to public employment services. For example, Cort, Tomsen and Mariager-Anderson (2015) argue that while career guidance for young people in Denmark is well developed, adult career guidance in the country is patchy and scattered across a range of institutions. They describe how this both creates an inequity between young people and adults and results in a system which fails to meet the needs of adults or serve the needs of society.

The literature consistently makes the argument that a **lifelong guidance system** offers the optimum way to organise career guidance provision. In such a system individuals can access career support across the life course. The services that they access may be coordinated and substantially delivered by a single organisation (a lifelong guidance service) or by a range of organisations which work closely together. Underpinning the system is a shared rationale (a lifelong guidance strategy) and mechanisms (such as fora and coordinating bodies) that support collaboration, coherence and identify gaps in provision. In such a system, services may not all be run and paid for by government (although this is one model) but government will use a range of public policy to ensure coherence and access across the life course.

This continuum of policy approaches provides a way of thinking about different approaches. Inevitably countries will move about on this spectrum as policy is developed and embedded. The consistent endorsement of lifelong approaches in the literature does not mean that excellent services cannot exist within any of these systems. However, their overall

effectiveness in delivering policy aims is likely to be diminished without the existence of an integrated system. So for example a country may have an excellent career guidance system embedded into its schools. This may be effective in supporting young people to make transitions to the labour market, but if this is not connected to a parallel service working with young unemployed people (and potentially young workers as well), some of the gains made within school can be lost.

Within the career guidance field there is a strong consensus that a lifelong guidance system offers the most effective way to organise career guidance services. The recent international symposium in Iowa included the following recommendation (ICCDPP, 2015):

Countries should develop national career development strategies with associated resourcing to ensure policy and service cohesion.

However, in practice, a lifelong guidance model can be difficult to achieve as it requires a strategic focus across government and high levels of coordination (including addressing the way in which funding of services is managed between departments). The OECD (2004) concluded that a lifelong guidance system did not exist in any country but that the features that could comprise such a system could be found across the countries examined in the review. The elements that OECD argued comprise a lifelong guidance system are:

- transparency and ease of access over the lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients;
- particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan;
- flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups;

- processes to stimulate regular review and planning;
- access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it;
- programmes to develop career-management skills;
- opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them;
- assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises;
- access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information; and
- involvement of relevant stakeholders.

This provides a useful checklist against which countries can audit their provision and develop plans for moving forwards.

A recent review completed as part of the Iowa symposium (McCarthy and Hooley, 2015) focused on the integration of career guidance policy systems in participating countries. It found that, over a decade after the OECD report, it remained the case that most of the participating countries could not claim to have genuine lifelong guidance systems, though there were a few countries that were moving closer to this ideal (Austria, Finland and Estonia were notable examples). Countries in this category were typified by the development of national strategies, unified service delivery approaches and the involvement of a range of citizen and stakeholder bodies in managing policy implementation. The concept of the lifelong guidance system therefore provides a useful aspiration against which countries can benchmark their policy systems. It is most usefully understood as a trajectory of travel rather than an ultimate destination. Its key features (lifelong citizen access to career guidance, strategic coordinator of services, stakeholder involvement in the

development of the system) provide the strongest available steer about how career guidance systems should be organised.

Creating effective policy systems.

There are substantial challenges in realising effective career guidance policy. Many of these challenges are specific to particular interventions and are addressed in other papers that we have produced in this series. For example, it is important that career guidance and employer engagement in schools is well organised and based on evidence. In our prior paper on school and employer brokerage (Hallam et al., 2015) we identify a number of pre-conditions for effective education/employment working around career guidance. These include lessons for the organisation charged with brokerage, the schools and the employers. Many of these lessons have implications for policies and systems, but they are not primarily framed in policy terms. Consequently this paper will focus on providing insights into what policies and systems need to be in place in order to provide the best conditions within which the kind of individual interventions discussed in our other papers can best be implemented.

The ELGPN (2012) developed a resource kit for policy and system development in Europe. Its foci are based on the four key themes identified in the 2004 and 2008 EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance:

- career management skills;
- access, including accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)
- co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance policy and systems development; and
- quality assurance and evidence base for policy and systems development.

These have formed the four key areas of activity for the countries that have sought to

develop their national systems through engagement with the ELGPN. The ELGPN is not the only body which has been involved in research and development about the enhancement of lifelong guidance systems. However, it probably represents the most systematic and sustained effort to do this in practice. Consequently, we will use this framework to discuss further evidence around the creation of effective career guidance systems.

Career management skills (CMS)

The ELGPN (2012) focuses on career management skills (CMS) as a central element of policy systems. We have already produced a paper in this series which seeks to define CMS, explores how they underpin the delivery of interventions and examines the evidence for how they can be enhanced through interventions (Mackay *et al.*, 2015). However, it is also possible to view CMS and particularly the existence of a career management skills framework as an instrument for policy integration.

At the heart of the concept of CMS is the belief that it is possible to identify the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable an individual to gain career success. The identification of these and their codification into a CMS Framework provides a useful resource for individuals and an agreed set of outcomes that all stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of career support can potentially work to. Seen in these terms CMS Frameworks have the capacity to bring coherence and to offer different stakeholders a common language for discussing the outcomes that they are seeking to bring about.

The creation of an agreed national CMS Framework also offers government and other strategic stakeholders a way to manage provision. By placing a CMS Framework at the heart of a lifelong guidance strategy there is the possibility to

clarify what outcomes such a strategy is seeking to bring about for individuals and to use this as a way to direct funding and resources in order to bring about this outcome.

The ELGPN (2012) goes on to identify a series of practical steps that countries can take in order to embed a CMS Framework into a national career guidance policy. Key actions include the creation of a CMS Framework, connecting it up to other learning aims in educational curricula, the training of practitioners in its use, the development of resources and the development of monitoring and evaluation approaches linked to implementation.

Access

The underlying assumption in the creation of a lifelong guidance system is that access to career support should be extended as widely across the population and lifecourse as possible. Maximising access to career guidance increases the chance of realising the desired policy outcomes. A key element of this is likely to be the development of publicly funded career guidance services. Such services can be found in a wide range of countries including Canada, Germany, Ireland, Norway and Denmark. However publicly funded services can be organised in a wide range of ways and designed to achieve a range of different policy objectives. While government funding is essential to the effective functioning of a lifelong guidance system, this does not necessarily mean that government has to pay for all services, nor does it mean that all individuals should be entitled to the same services. Indeed there are strong arguments related to social equity which suggest that there should be additional targeted services for some groups to address various forms of disadvantage.

Developing a viable market in career guidance therefore offers a possible way to extend access to career guidance (Watts, Hughes and Wood, 2005). Watts (1995)

highlights the importance of distinguishing in this discussion between genuine markets in which individuals pay for services and quasi-markets which use market mechanisms to manage the delivery of services which the government pays for. The development of quasi-markets arguably has no significant impact on questions of access as it simply rearranges the delivery of existing services. However the development of genuine markets can potentially extend the amount of resource available beyond what is provided by the government. This is fraught with a variety of challenges some of which have already been discussed in section 4 of this paper. The delivery of career guidance services primarily through the market can result in issues of social equity and inequality of access. However, as Chang (2010) points out ‘there is no such thing as a free market’ as all markets are shaped and regulated.

The OECD (2004) provides a clear vision for on how governments can shape guidance markets. In order to harness the value of markets in this field, whilst avoiding some of the dangers of marketisation, governments must play three roles.

- Stimulating the market in order to build its capacity.
- Regulating the market and assuring the quality of services, both to protect the public interest and to build consumer confidence.
- Compensating for market failure where this is appropriate.

This kind of complex market making role increases the importance of strategic co-ordination and the development of a formal lifelong guidance strategy. Such a strategy would need to clearly conceptualise the relative roles of state provision and market provision and develop instruments that could be used to stimulate, regulate and compensate.

The ELGPN (2012) suggests a range of ways in which access can be extended in addition to either funding more public services or

supporting the growth of a stronger market. In particular, it highlights the use of educative and one-to-many approaches, collaboration with a range of stakeholders and the development of online or distance approaches.

While much career guidance is conceived around a one-to-one paradigm there is a wealth of practice and research which highlights the value and efficacy of one-to-many or group guidance approaches (e.g. Gati, Ryzhik & Vertsberger, 2013; Vuori, Toppinen-Tanner, and Mutanen, 2012). Such approaches have been used extensively and with unemployed adults as well as adults in work and learning. However, there is an even stronger tradition of practice and research relating to career education within the education system (see Hooley et al., 2012; Hooley, Watts and Andrews, 2015; Hallam et al., 2015). Such literature emphasises a range of policy features that include providing schools and other educational providers with strong drivers to deliver career guidance and a broad infrastructure of support to aid with staff training, brokerage with external stakeholders and quality assurance and improvement.

The literature on school-based career education highlights the multiple stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of career guidance. While the market where the individual pays for career guidance is relatively small in most countries, the delivery of career guidance as an embedded service is typically much larger with employers, learning providers and a range of other bodies contributing to delivery. The complexity of this delivery picture again highlights the need for clear strategic co-ordination.

The delivery of online and distance services is increasingly being seen as critical to the extension of access to career guidance. The literature in this area provides insights into the effective use of new technologies to deliver online and distance careers provision (summarised in Hooley, Shepherd and Dodd,

2015). Key messages from this literature centre on the importance of connecting online and distance services with the existing career guidance system. Such a system should offer integrated, multi-channel services rather than simply providing new services. Ideally technology should act as an integrative force which increases citizens access to a range of services. Watts and Flederman (2014) highlight the fact that national multichannel helplines exist in Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, New Zealand, and South Africa and that they have been used to efficiently widen access to career guidance.

The research in this area therefore suggests that key elements of the delivery of access to a lifelong guidance system should be understood to be the development of: (1) the provision of public career guidance to those who need it; (2) the development of a viable market in career guidance which extends beyond public sector provision; (3) the use of one-to-many approaches; (4) strong partnerships with stakeholders (schools, colleges, universities and employers) who are capable of delivering forms of career support; and (5) strong online and telephone provision of career guidance.

Co-operation and co-ordination

So far we have highlighted the value of lifelong guidance systems within which all of the diverse elements of delivery are integrated into a single strategy. It is worth considering briefly why this kind of integration is so challenging. McCarthy and Hooley (2015) discuss the fact that career guidance is a lifelong and cross-sectorial policy area. They note that it can be found across public services (in schools, in vocational training centres, in adult learning centres, in universities, in prisons, and in public employment services) as well as in the private sector both as a market activity and embedded in the activities of the human

resources departments of businesses, professional associations and trade unions.

Imposing a strategic order on this heterogeneous field can be very difficult as there are (typically) multiple government ministries/departments that have an interest in the area. These will usually include ministries responsible for education and employment as well as others such as those associated with social welfare, criminal justice and health. An additional layer of complexity is offered within countries that have strong devolution and where local, regional or sub-national governments have a responsibility or an interest in aspects of workforce preparation and career development. Lundahl and Nilsson (2009) trace the history of devolution of education policy in Sweden, arguing that the movement of control from the centre to the school has resulted in increasingly patchy career guidance and noting that no effective local coordination has emerged in most municipalities.

In response to a concern about fragmented and patchy services, a range of countries have developed different mechanisms to support cross-ministry and inter-sectoral work, coordination and coherence within the career guidance field. Austria, Germany and Norway all provide examples of countries which have emphasized coordination. The ELGPN (2012) sets out a taxonomy of approaches as follows.

- **Communication.** This might include exchanging information, and exploring possibilities for co-operation and co-ordination.
- **Cooperation between partners, within existing structures.** This might be largely informal in nature, and based on a co-operation agreement, with decision-making powers being retained by each partner.
- **Coordination.** This is likely to require a coordinating structure, with operational powers and funding (and possibly a contract or legal mandate).

ELGPN notes that in most countries the collaboration operates at the level of communication or cooperation rather than coordination. This is typically because there is no clear strategy or strategic body to manage it.

Both ELGPN (2012) and McCarthy and Hooley (2015) identify a range of mechanisms that exist in some countries to deliver various forms of collaboration including:

- The development of **clear accountabilities** for the development of the lifelong guidance system e.g. a minister for careers supported by civil servants with responsibility for strategy development and implementation.
- The development of a **formal national lifelong guidance strategy** either as a unique document or as part of a broader policy e.g. a lifelong learning strategy. This can be found in Austria, New Zealand, the USA and Saudi Arabia amongst other countries.
- The creation of **national or local stakeholder fora** to support or lead collaboration. Cedefop (2010) has produced a summary of how to make such fora effective. This includes identifying a clear role for the fora and its members; clarifying the relationship to government and delivery organisations; having an independent secretariat; and avoiding mission creep. Good examples of national fora can be found in Finland and Estonia.
- The creation of **integrated service delivery structures** (e.g. Skills Development Scotland or Careers New Zealand) which bring together service delivery in one organisation (see Watts, 2010).

Quality assurance and evidence

There is a strong case that the development of lifelong guidance systems (like all public policy) should be underpinned by evidence and robustly quality assured. The ELGPN has proposed both an approach to quality assurance (ELGPN, 2012) and developed a summary of the evidence base (Hooley, 2014). A key element of this work has been proposing that governments adopt the Lifelong Guidance Policy Cycle (understand what is known, develop new policies, implement policies, evaluate and quality assure) to guide the development of policies in this area. At the heart of this is a commitment to the continuous improvement of the evidence base in the field to ensure ever greater efficacy. This kind of process of continuous improvement is discussed by Bengtsson (2015) who highlights the importance of clearly understood ideas about 'good practice'. Governments therefore have a role to incentivise careers providers to engage with good practice, conduct evaluations and learn from the evidence base.

Effective quality assurance is important to ensure effective services for individuals. However it also offers a tool for policy integration and co-ordination. Moreno da Fonseca (2015) argues that this is a role that is particularly important within liberalised systems like the UK, where a large amount of career guidance provision is delivered through market and quasi-market means. The establishment of standards which all providers have to abide by can include requirements to pay attention to policy, to ethical practice, to cross-refer to other services and to attend to the evidence base. All of these elements of quality are important in the delivery of a lifelong guidance system. The development and implementation of quality standards therefore provides governments with a tool through which they can influence both the delivery of the services that they fund that those that they do not.

Plant (2012) raises a note of caution about the over-reliance on quality assurance and evaluations particularly if they are based on quantitative measurements. He asks whether we are 'counting what is measured or measuring what counts?' Thinking about how evaluation and quality assurance tools are constructed, whose interest they operate in and what the unintended consequences of this might be for service delivery are therefore important questions that should underpin thinking about quality assurance and evaluation.

Conclusions

A review of policy systems suggests that there is a range of ways to organise a countries' careers provision. Inevitably different countries have different strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of different elements of the system. Some countries have a long history of providing school based career guidance while others have developed their adult guidance services often in parallel with their public employment systems. However, when looked at as a national system the issues and challenges that countries face have a remarkable amount of consistency.

Careers provision, by its nature, is addressed to transitions and the moments when individuals move between systems. Although individuals are often unaware of this, their life transitions move them from the purview of one government department into another. So a standard school to work transition will move someone from being regulated by an education department to a ministry of labour or similar. As each individual is different, and the range of choices is so complex, this presents challenges for policy makers who are used to dealing with things at the core of their brief rather than those things which sit at the periphery. Consequently career guidance policy-making requires structures, policies and processes which are capable of

managing the activities positioned between departments and agendas.

Much of the international research reveals that ensuring the coordination and coherence of career guidance systems is a challenge across the world. However, there is a strong international consensus that a coherent, strategic and universal lifelong guidance system should be the aspiration of policy in this area. It is hoped that such a policy will be both more effective and more efficient as it will avoid overlaps and wasted resources. At present a fully realised lifelong guidance system remains as an aspiration in most countries. However, many of the elements that could realise such a system do exist and a number of countries are currently seeking to create a genuine lifelong guidance system. It would be possible to cite numerous and diverse examples of countries that are currently involved in developing their career guidance systems such as Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Norway and Saudi Arabia. Many of them currently look to Britain for expertise in this field but are developing their systems in ways that are distinct from current policy in England.

The work of the ELGPN is highly relevant to the questions that this paper has addressed. The organisations' identification of the four areas of CMS, access, co-ordination and co-operation and quality and evidence is helpful. These four areas provide a useful steer for policy makers in England, should they wish to move further in the direction of a lifelong guidance system.

Areas for English policy makers to consider:

- Is there a rationale for moving the English career guidance towards a lifelong guidance system?
- How could England undertake the process of creating a lifelong guidance strategy? Who/what departments should be involved in this process?

- Should accountability for the career guidance system be clearer? If so where should it best be located?
- Is there a rationale for creating a national stakeholder forum and/or strategic organisation to oversee and provide input to the development of a lifelong guidance system?
- What is known about the individual-pays private market in career guidance in England? How should government interface with this and further stimulate its growth?
- How should public sector career guidance relate to other career guidance services which are embedded within other contexts and organisational relationships?

Areas for the National Careers Service to consider:

- In the absence of a national lifelong guidance strategy, how can the National Careers Service best work with other key players (schools, the Careers and Enterprise Company, the LEPs, HEFCE etc.) to ensure coherence and coordination in the English career guidance system?
- Should the National Careers Service seek government approval to constitute a strategic unit to oversee the development of a lifelong guidance strategy?
- Should the National Careers Service seek to endorse and promote a career management skills framework as part of its role?

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