

chapter 2

CAREER GUIDANCE: NEW WAYS FORWARD

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SUMMARY

Career guidance plays a key role in helping labour markets work and education systems meet their goals. It also promotes equity: recent evidence suggests that social mobility relies on wider acquisition not just of knowledge and skills, but of an understanding about how to use them. In this context, the mission of career guidance is widening, to become part of lifelong learning. Already, services are starting to adapt, departing from a traditional model of a psychology-led occupation interviewing students about to leave school.

One key challenge for this changing service is to move from helping students decide on a job or a course, to the broader development of career management skills. For schools, this means building career education into the curriculum and linking it to students' overall development. A number of countries have integrated it into school subjects. However, career education remains concentrated around the end of compulsory schooling. In upper secondary and tertiary education, services focus on immediate choices rather than personal development and wider decision making, although this too is starting to change in some countries.

A second challenge is to make career guidance more widely available throughout adulthood. Such provision is underdeveloped, and used mainly by unemployed people accessing public employment services. Some new services are being linked to adult education institutions, but these are not always capable of offering wide and impartial advice. Efforts to create private markets have enjoyed limited success, yet public provision lacks sufficient funding. Thus creation of career services capable of serving all adults remains a daunting task. Web-based services may help with supply, but these cannot fully substitute for tailored help to individuals.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Two key challenges today face those responsible for career guidance services in OECD countries. In the context of lifelong learning and active labour market policies, they must:

- provide services that develop career management skills, rather than only helping people to make immediate decisions; and
- greatly widen citizens' access to career guidance, extending access throughout the lifespan.

This chapter presents arguments for the importance of career guidance for public policy, and outlines some of the ways that OECD countries are responding to these two challenges. It begins by describing career guidance. The following section sets the scene by summarising what kind of career guidance is being provided today, who is providing it and in what settings. Section 3 explains why career guidance is central to the achievement of some key policy priorities in OECD countries, by helping to improve the functioning of labour markets and education systems, as well as enabling people to build human capital throughout their lives. Sections 4 and 5 then review the ways in which countries are addressing the two above challenges, extending the scope of career guidance services to meet today's wider goals. Section 6 provides a brief conclusion about new ways forward.

2. CAREER GUIDANCE TODAY

Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.

In its contemporary forms, career guidance draws upon a number of disciplines: psychology; education; sociology; and labour economics. Historically, psychology is the major discipline that has

under-pinned its theories and methodologies. In particular differential psychology and developmental psychology have had an important influence (Super, 1957; Kuder, 1977; Killeen, 1996a; Holland, 1997). One-to-one interviews and psychological testing for many years were seen as its central tools. There are many countries where psychology remains the major entry route into the profession.

However, in most countries today, career guidance is provided by people with a very wide range of training and qualifications. Some are specialists; some are not. Some have had extensive, and expensive, training; others have had very little. Training programmes are still heavily based upon developing skills in providing help in one-to-one interviews. On the other hand, psychological testing now receives a reduced emphasis in many countries as counselling theories have moved from an emphasis upon the practitioner as expert to seeing practitioners as facilitators of individual choice and development.

While personal interviews are the dominant tool, the examples in Boxes 2.1 and 2.2 show that across OECD countries career guidance includes a wide range of other services: group discussions; printed and electronic information; school lessons; structured experience; telephone advice; on-line help. Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings: schools and tertiary institutions; public employment services; private guidance providers; enterprises; and community settings. It is provided unevenly to different groups both within and between countries. In most countries there are large gaps in services. In particular employed

1. This chapter draws upon the national questionnaires and Country Notes produced during an OECD review of national career guidance policies that began in 2001. These, and other documentation from the review, can be found at www.oecd.org/edu/careerguidance. The countries participating in the review have been Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. Using the main OECD questionnaire, parallel reviews have been conducted by the European Commission (through the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training and the European Training Foundation) involving European Union countries not participating in the OECD study as well as a number of accession countries, and by the World Bank. In total these several reviews have involved 36 countries.

adults, those not in the labour market, and students in tertiary education receive more limited services than, for example, students in upper secondary school and the unemployed. In many settings, career guidance is integrated into something else:

teaching; job placement; personal and educational counselling; or providing educational information. Where this is the case, it can have low visibility, be difficult to measure, and clear performance criteria for it can be hard to define.

Box 2.1 Career guidance: Three long-standing approaches

Finland's Employment Office employs some 280 specialised vocational guidance psychologists. Each has a Masters degree in psychology, and also completes short in-service training. Many obtain further postgraduate qualifications. Their clients include undecided school leavers, unemployed people, and adults who want to change careers. Clients need to make appointments, and typically have more than one interview. Demand is very high, and it is not unusual for clients to have to wait six weeks for an appointment.

Germany's Federal Employment Office's career counsellors visit schools, run class talks, and provide small-group guidance and short personal interviews in the penultimate year of compulsory schooling. These counsellors have generally undertaken a specialised three-year course of study at the Federal College of Public Administration. School classes are taken to the Office's career information centres (BIZ) where they are familiarised with the centre's facilities; they can subsequently re-visit the centre and book longer career counselling interviews at the local employment office.

Ireland's secondary schools have one guidance counsellor for every 500 students. Each is required to have a post-graduate diploma in guidance in addition to a teaching qualification. Staffing and qualification levels such as this are quite high by OECD levels. Guidance counsellors are teachers, with a reduced teaching load to provide career advice, to help students with learning difficulties, and to help those with personal problems. Career education classes are not compulsory, but are included in some school programmes.

Box 2.2 Career guidance: Using innovation to widen access

Australia's national careers web site (www.myfuture.edu.au/) contains information about courses of education and training, about labour market supply and demand at the regional level, on the content of occupations, and on sources of funding for study. Users can explore their personal interests and preferences, and relate these to educational and occupational information. In its first seven months the site was accessed 2.5 million times.

In **Austria** three large career fairs are held each year. They cover vocational training, tertiary education and adult education. They are visited by thousands of people, involve hundreds of professional and trade organisations, employers, trade unions and educational institutions, and are strategically marketed to schools and the community.

Canada's public employment services contract many career guidance services to community organisations, which are often seen as more attuned to the needs of particular groups: single parents or Aboriginal people, for example. Some of these organisations focus mainly on career development activities, such as information services, career counselling and job-search workshops. Others have a wider range of education, training and community functions. Some have career guidance professionals on their staff; many do not.

In **England**, the career service at the University of Leicester used to require all students to make an appointment and have a lengthy interview. During the 1990s student numbers grew by 50% but staff numbers in the career service declined. This forced a rethink. Now, a drop-in, self-service system in a careers resource centre is the major initial form of contact. Career development programmes are run in all undergraduate classes with each undergraduate department having a careers tutor to act as a first point of contact. Increased use is also made of ICT-based tools.

In **Spain**, the international company Altadis has a career development programme, built around a database of employees' qualifications and descriptions of existing positions in the firm. Those taking part in the programme are interviewed regularly to assess their competencies and aspirations against future business needs. As part of a planned redundancy programme negotiated with the trade unions, Altadis offers career counselling to employees, and has contracted a specialist outplacement firm to provide this service. The outplacement firm normally employs psychology or economics graduates to deliver it.

In **the United Kingdom** call centre technology is being used to widen adults' access to education. The service, *learndirect*, provides both information and more extensive career advice to callers. The staff of the service have relevant qualifications at one of three levels, depending upon the nature of their work, and can call upon an online database of information on over half a million education and training courses. Over four million people have called the national advice line since it was established in 1998. The help line is open between 8.00 and 22.00, 365 days a year.

3. WHY DOES CAREER GUIDANCE MATTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY?

3.1 It can improve the efficiency of labour markets and education systems

Evaluation studies, referred to in Box 2.3, show that career guidance can increase job exploration and information search activities. For such reasons, labour economists and labour market policy makers have long recognised that it can help improve labour market efficiency (Ginzberg, 1971; Killeen, White and Watts, 1992; Rosen, 1995; Watt, 1996; Autor, 2001; Woods and Frugoli, 2002). This recognition largely rests upon the value of informa-

tion in improving labour market transparency and flexibility. It also rests upon higher allocative efficiency as the result of a better match between individual talents and qualifications on the one hand and the skills and qualifications demanded by employers on the other. In principle, career guidance can assist in reducing unemployment: for example by helping to reduce the incidence of voluntary employment terminations or by reducing periods of job search (thus reducing frictional unemployment); or by encouraging those made redundant to improve their qualifications or to seek new types of work in different regions (thus addressing structural unemployment).

Box 2.3 Evaluating career guidance

Outcomes of career guidance: A recent review of the economic benefits of career guidance (Bysshe, Hughes and Bowes, 2002) has concluded that evidence for its positive impact upon short-term learning, motivational and attitudinal outcomes can be treated with a high degree of confidence, and in the case of its impact upon actual behaviour with moderate confidence. However evidence on its impact upon long-term individual outcomes, and hence upon economic outcomes, is very limited. Other reviews of research, mostly conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom (Killeen, 1996*b*; Killeen, Sammons and Watts, 1999; Watts, 1999; Prideaux *et al.*, 2000), highlight a number of impacts that are likely to contribute to national educational and labour market policy goals. These include: increasing people's interest in education and training; encouraging participation in formal and informal learning; positive effects on learning outcomes, including better decision-making skills and better awareness of learning opportunities; increased job exploration and information search activities; and increased motivation to seek work.

A complex evaluation model: One reason for conclusions from evaluation research being only cautiously positive is that the model for evaluating career guidance properly is a very complex one (Maguire and Killeen, 2003). Types of clients and their needs and problems vary widely. The help that they receive also varies widely, co-exists with other concurrent interventions and influences, and is often quite brief in duration. Outcomes, both intended and unintended, behavioural and attitudinal, short- and long-term can also vary widely. Obtaining clear answers about impacts under these circumstances requires large-scale research with complex experimental designs and statistical controls. Such research is lengthy and expensive. To date no government has provided the funds needed to do it.

Data needs for policy making: Career guidance researchers have often concluded that policy makers need strong evidence of the economic impact of career guidance. However policy makers' needs are often for more basic data on inputs and processes: what types of people use what types of services; what these different types of services cost; and what clients think about them. Some countries have attempted to gather some of this type of data. For example:

In the Czech Republic the National Institute of Vocational Education has surveyed the extent to which students in different types of schools use a range of career guidance services and their reactions to them. In revealing, for example, that students rely more heavily upon out-of-school sources of help (parents, employment office counsellors) than upon impersonal sources of help (the internet, career fairs, handbooks) and than upon sources within the school (teachers, school counsellors, school psychologists), the survey provides valuable pointers for future service improvement.

In Finland career guidance services in all sectors of education and the public employment office have been systematically evaluated over the period 2000-03. This has involved extensive surveys of actual and potential clients, of service providers, and of institutional managers. These evaluations have been translated into policy changes. For example wide variation in the level and quality of services in tertiary education has resulted in new requirements in the annually assessed financial contract between universities and the Ministry of Education for a concrete plan to improve guidance services, and for strategies to promote guidance within new study programmes.

In the United Kingdom regional information, advice and guidance partnerships have been established as part of the government's strategy to improve access to education by adults who are disadvantaged and have low levels of education. As part of their reporting requirements to the Learning and Skills Council, partnerships are required to provide data on the number of clients who are members of specified priority groups (lone parents, or ex-offenders, for example). In one such partnership (Kent) client data are recorded by postcode, allowing access to services to be assessed against a number of socio-economic indexes derived from census data. Sophisticated database software enables client referrals to further education institutions to be matched against subsequent enrolments. This provides a measure of service impact (The Guidance Council, 2002).

There are parallels between the role that career guidance can play in improving labour market efficiency and the role that information plays in improving the efficiency of other types of market. However recent work for the OECD and the European Commission (Grubb, 2002a; Tricot, 2002) argues that for many people, career information – a combination of information about education and training, the content and nature of jobs, and labour market supply and demand – is not sufficient by itself. Policy makers need to find ways to ensure that career information is understood, that people know how to use it, that it is regarded as trustworthy, that it is appropriate to the person's level of career development and maturity, and that, where appropriate, people are supported in relating it to personal aspirations, talents and achievements, and in acting upon it.

Career guidance assumes an even higher profile as countries adopt more active approaches to unemployment and to welfare reform. These normally require the unemployed or welfare recipients to develop proposals for active job search, or education and training, as a condition of continuing to receive income support. This increases the need for personal advice, and for access to information, if such policy approaches are to succeed. In Spain, for example, where adoption of the European Employment Strategy now requires earlier intervention to assist unemployed people, the National Employment Office (INEM) has introduced a much stronger emphasis upon individual action planning in the job placement process. This has required employment office staff to develop new skills. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, guidance is a central

element in locally-managed early intervention programmes for school drop-outs. These safety net programmes are associated with strong evidence of improved labour market outcomes for youth (OECD, 2000). Recent Australian research has suggested that intensive interviewing of welfare recipients, including counselling and personal action planning, can increase social integration through increased participation in education and training (Breunig *et al.*, 2003).

Evaluation research summarised in Box 2.3 indicates some ways that career guidance can help improve the efficiency of education systems, as well as labour markets. In principle, it can help to increase access to learning, and to improve course completion rates. It can assess learning needs and interests, and put people in contact with learning providers so that they enrol in appropriate programmes. Feedback from career guidance practitioners can encourage learning providers to meet the unmet needs of learners and potential learners: for example, by changing their opening hours, modifying their teaching methods, or developing new types of course.

In such ways, career guidance can help to articulate better the scale and nature of demand for learning, as well as its supply, and help improve the match between the two. It can increase the transparency of learning systems, and their responsiveness to consumer demand. In these ways, it can help not only to increase participation, but also reduce dropout rates. American research suggests that comprehensive guidance services can have a positive impact on the quality of students' educational

and occupational decisions, and also on their educational performance and the overall climate of the school (Lapan, Gysbers and Sun, 1997).

Lifelong learning has major implications for career guidance, and vice versa. The European Commission has recognised this, making career guidance one of its six priorities in implementing lifelong learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). The importance of information and advice grows as alternatives and choices within education systems increase, and as the educational choices and labour market consequences that people face become more complex. Countries tend to put more emphasis upon career guidance as they make pathways through education more flexible and more individualised. Both trends can be strongly observed, for example, in Denmark and Finland during the 1990s. Consumer-driven learning systems require greater attention to the information and advisory systems needed to support efficient decision making by individuals. This increases the importance of career guidance in helping to manage transitions from one level of education to another, and transitions between education and working life. And countries place increased emphasis upon career guidance for adults as they seek to expand the range and flexibility of adult learning opportunities (OECD, 2003). This can clearly be seen, for example in Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

3.2 It supports key policy objectives ranging from lifelong learning to social equity

Policy makers in many OECD countries recognise the importance of career guidance for the effectiveness of their education systems. Countries were asked to indicate their key goals and objectives for career guidance in the national questionnaires that they completed for the OECD review of career guidance policies. They were also asked to indicate the major educational, labour market and social influences that are currently shaping their career guidance policies. Austria saw career guidance as a way to improve the permeability and effectiveness of educational pathways. Finland, the Netherlands and Norway saw its importance rising with growing individualisation and diversification of school programmes. The Netherlands argued that career guidance is needed to support the more active

approaches to learning that are important in developing lifelong learners. The United Kingdom saw career guidance as an important tool in its efforts to improve basic skills, which in turn are an important part of its lifelong learning strategies. Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands argued that it can support the attainment of high rates of educational qualification by youth and adults. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain argued that it can help to reduce dropout rates and improve graduation rates.

Other public policy goals have been identified for career guidance. Policy makers in some OECD countries recognise that career guidance has a role to play in promoting equity and social inclusion. In their responses to the national questionnaire for the OECD career guidance policy review, Denmark and Spain argued that it can address the needs of marginalised groups and of the disadvantaged. Finland, Germany and Norway believed that career guidance is important in supporting the social integration of migrants and ethnic minorities. Germany and Ireland argued that career guidance can support the integration of the disadvantaged and the poorly qualified in education, and, together with Spain, in employment. Canada argued that it can address growing polarisation in the labour market. The Netherlands and Spain believed that career guidance can support rising female labour force participation. Austria, Germany and Norway argued that it can help to address gender segmentation in the labour market.

Educational qualifications and employment are important determinants of social mobility: access to them is a key indicator of social equity. Career guidance attempts to maximise the use that people make of their talents, regardless of their gender, social background or ethnic origin. Disadvantaged groups are likely to be less familiar with key educational and labour market information than more advantaged groups. They may be less confident in, skilled in, or used to negotiating access to, complex learning systems. They may need more assistance in finding opportunities that can maximise their talents, and in overcoming barriers to accessing these opportunities. It is significant that many OECD countries have initiated career guidance programmes targeted at

disadvantaged groups, or have required services to meet specific targets for access to career guidance by such groups. This has been a strong motivation for recent guidance initiatives for young people and adults in the United Kingdom, and for the *action locale pour jeunes* programmes established for unemployed youth in Luxembourg. However the extent to which career guidance actually contributes to such equity objectives remains an open question in most countries, given the paucity of data on client access to and outcomes from services.

3.3 It enables people to build human capital and employability throughout their lives

Important additional arguments in support of career guidance are found in recent OECD work on human capital (OECD, 2002). This points out that less than half of earnings variation in OECD countries can be accounted for by educational qualifications and readily measurable skills. It argues that a large part of the remainder may be explained by people's ability to build, manage and deploy their skills. This wider concept of human capital sees the planning skills required to develop and implement long-term career goals as a central component of human capital. It sees a wider concept of career guidance – focusing on the development of career management skills, not just upon immediate decision making – as a key policy tool for developing such skills.

Recent thinking about the concept of employability as a tool of labour market policy leads to similar conclusions. There is increasing interest in OECD countries in the notion of employability as a key tool of labour market management: for example, developing employability is now at the heart of the European Employment Strategy (Gazier, 1999). The concept has several interpretations. One focuses on the importance of replacing passive unemployment benefits with active approaches to assisting unemployed people: intervening early in the cycle of unemployment; and requiring individual action plans to be constructed that involve job search, education and training. Another definition places greater emphasis upon the individual, stressing the ability to find and keep a job, and the personal capacity to adapt to a changing labour market and new job requirements. This approach

to the notion of employability within labour market theory strikes strong chords with the approach to human capital found in recent OECD work. Both cases point to the importance of career guidance services having a much broader focus than upon immediate decision making.

Career guidance must, then, respond to long-standing challenges within both the labour market and education, and at the same time adopt a broader approach in responding to newer challenges that arise from lifelong learning, from active approaches to labour market and welfare policy, and from the central role that career management skills appear to play in the formation and use of human capital and in the development of employability.

In its 2001 response to the European Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, France referred to the need for career guidance services to move away from the logic of education, training and occupational selection-allocation, and to move towards the logic of enabling continuous construction of choices and decisions. CEDEFOP (2002) has described this as the key organising idea for the direction of future changes in career guidance services. OECD countries must grapple with how to translate such an objective into the reality of concrete policies, service delivery, training programmes and funding mechanisms. The remainder of this chapter describes some of the specific challenges that they face, and how they are confronting them.

4. FROM DECISION MAKING TO CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS: A POLICY CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Traditionally the focus of career guidance in schools has been to help students with the decisions that they face immediately upon leaving school: finding an apprenticeship; choosing a course of tertiary study; or selecting a job. This has resulted in services concentrating upon providing information and one-to-one interviews just before the point of leaving school. If *all* young people need to develop career management and planning skills, an approach based upon doing this through personal interviews is an expensive one, whatever its value in dealing with the immediate decision-

making needs of *some* young people. In practice the traditional approach means that many young people may miss out, or that services may tend to become superficial and standardised.

The traditional approach has also resulted in career guidance having a relatively minor role in many countries' tertiary education systems, where it seems to be assumed that students have made a career choice before they enrol. Where they exist, tertiary education services have tended to concentrate upon job search and placement and personal counselling, rather than developing career management skills.

4.1 Career guidance in schools

If career guidance is both to develop important skills for life and work and to assist with immediate decisions, there are significant implications for schools. First, they must adopt a learning-centred approach, over and above an information and advice approach. This means building career education into the curriculum. The Appendix shows wide variation in the extent to which career education is included in the school curriculum in OECD countries. In some countries – for example, Ireland and Luxembourg – it is neither mandatory nor included in overall curriculum frameworks. In other cases it is included in curriculum frameworks as an optional element. Where it is included in the curriculum, the ways in which it is delivered (as a separate subject or integrated into other subjects), the time devoted to it, and the school grades in which it is delivered can vary widely from school to school within a country, as well as between countries.

Second, schools must take a developmental approach, tailoring the content of career education and guidance to the developmental stages that students find themselves in, and including career education classes and experiences throughout schooling, not just at one point.

Third, schools need to adopt a more student-centred approach through, for example, incorporating learning from and reflecting upon experience, self-directed learning methods, and learning from significant others such as employers, parents, alumni and older students.

Fourth, they must incorporate a universal approach, with career education and guidance forming part of the education of all students, not just those in particular types of school or programme.

The experiences of countries that are trying to move towards the type of model outlined above show that a number of difficult issues arise. These include space in the curriculum and time in the school timetable: other teachers may resist time being taken from their subjects. This has been the case, for example, in Austria. Also parents can be concerned that time for career education takes time away from examination preparation. This is more likely to be an issue in upper secondary than in lower secondary education. However in Ireland, a competitive examination at the end of the first stage of secondary education has been a factor acting against the introduction of career education in the lower secondary school curriculum.

One answer to this has been to integrate career education into other school subjects. This can be done, as for example in the Czech Republic, through a detailed mapping of objectives against existing curriculum content so that in principle both are taught at once. Another option, which is adopted in Austria, is to include career guidance in the class time for another subject, but for time in reality to be taken away from the teaching of that subject. Whichever model is adopted, problems of teacher training and motivation are commonly reported for the integrated delivery model. Often teachers do not receive special training to teach career education, and sometimes they have difficulty in seeing its relevance to their normal subject areas (Whitty, Rowe and Aggleton, 1994). Addressing these issues requires a lot of effort to be put into co-ordination within the school: for example to ensure that all areas of the career education curriculum are taught. As Austrian experience shows, this can take a lot of resources and time to do well.

One way that countries have tried to address the need for wider access to career guidance in schools has been to impose a general requirement for schools to provide career guidance, but not to specify how. In Ireland, the 1998 Education Act requires schools to ensure that “students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in

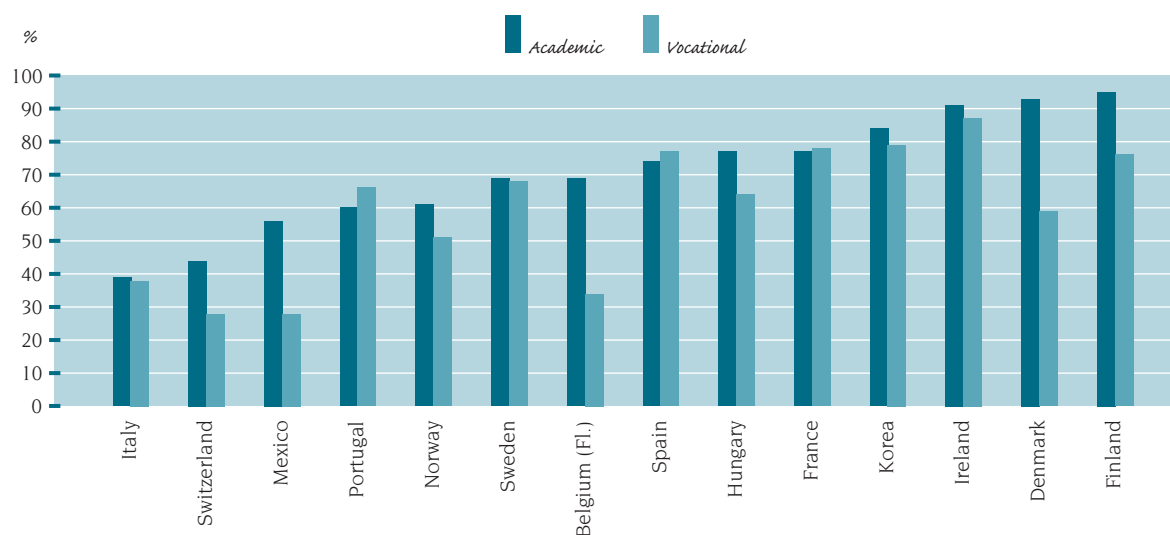
their educational and career choices” but does not specify what “appropriate guidance” might be. Not surprisingly, such an approach can lead to wide variation among schools in what in fact is provided (National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2001). Relevant Spanish legislation (the 1990 General Law of the Spanish Education System) is slightly more directive, in that it specifies that career guidance shall form part of the teaching function, that “suitably qualified” professionals shall coordinate services, that school services should be co-ordinated with those provided by local authorities, and that special attention should be paid to social discrimination issues.

A commitment to introducing career education also requires decisions to be made on the grades and programmes in which it should be included. The Appendix suggests that the most common approach is to concentrate career education within lower secondary education. There are exceptions: in the Czech Republic, Finland, Spain and Canada (British Columbia and Ontario) it extends into upper secondary education. In Denmark, the Czech Republic

and Canada (British Columbia and Ontario) it begins in primary school. The dominant pattern reflects a common assumption that the key career-related decisions are made at the end of compulsory schooling. Such an assumption might have had some validity when the end of compulsory education represented the main point of transition from school to the labour market, or from school to very specific occupational preparation. However this is less and less the case in nearly all OECD countries.

While OECD countries commonly focus organised classes of career education in the compulsory years of secondary education, other forms of career guidance are provided within upper secondary education. In particular, as Figure 2.1 shows, individual career counselling is very commonly provided at this stage. These data, which are available for 14 of the countries that participated in the OECD International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools, indicate that in most countries very many students receive some individual career counseling. However, in most of

Figure 2.1 Percentage of upper secondary students in academic and vocational programmes who receive individual career counselling, 2002



Note: Academic programmes refer to those general education programmes classified as 3-AG in ISCED 97 *i.e.* those designed to lead to tertiary education. Vocational programmes refer to those classified as 3-BV or 3-CV in ISCED 97 *i.e.* non-academic (pre-) vocational programmes. However in the case of Italy, Sweden and Finland the reference is to those programmes classified as 3-AV in ISCED 97 *i.e.* academic (pre-) vocational programmes.

Source: OECD International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools.

Data for Figure 2.1, p. 57.

them this seems to be more commonly provided to students in academic programmes than to those in vocational programmes. This appears to assume that young people in upper secondary vocational programmes have made a specific career decision. However like those in academic programmes, these students also face difficult career choices: whether to change track; which specialisation to choose; what type of occupation and enterprise to enter after finishing school; and what long-term career options and further study to contemplate. Such choices become more common as OECD countries increasingly make pathways more flexible through vocational education and beyond (OECD, 2000).

A broad approach to career guidance requires those responsible for school systems, and school managers, to address important organizational issues. These relate to staff training and qualifications; resources; school-community relations; the development of team-based approaches; and the use of a wide range of non-career-specialists (teachers, alumni, parents, employers) in working towards a common goal. As Box 2.4 illustrates, these have implications for the way in which the whole school is organised.

If schools and school systems are to see the development of career decision-making skills, and not just assistance with immediate decisions, as the

Box 2.4 “Guidance-oriented” schools

In Canada (Quebec), schools are being encouraged to develop the concept of the “guidance-oriented school” (*l'école orientante*). This is linked to wider competency-oriented school reforms. Personal and career planning is defined as one of five “broad areas of learning” throughout schooling. The aim is to provide support for students’ identity development in primary school and guidance in career planning throughout secondary school. This is linked to ensuring that students understand the usefulness of their studies (in languages, mathematics, sciences and so on) and why they are studying them.

To implement this concept, the number of qualified guidance specialists is being increased. In addition, the active involvement of all stakeholders is being promoted, first by encouraging discussion and collaboration between teachers and guidance professionals, and then by developing partnerships with parents and the community. Schools are being permitted considerable flexibility in determining what a “guidance-oriented school” might mean within the broad parameters provided (Ministère de l'Éducation Québec, 2001).

A similar approach, linking a broad concept of career guidance to wider school reform and to wider links between the school and its community, can be seen in the ways in which career guidance is being introduced into some Luxembourg *lycées*. There, the curriculum, which can be included in each of grades 7, 8 and 9 includes the transition from primary to secondary school, life and social skills, study methods and tutorial support in addition to career education. It teaches decision-making skills and career management skills in addition to assisting students to make specific choices. Teachers deliver this curriculum, with support from school psychologists. Employers and parents are involved by, for example, explaining occupations to students. It includes work experience or job shadowing, mentoring by students in higher grades, and personal projects. Luxembourg has commissioned evaluations of these initiatives to assess the impact upon student progression and upon operation of the *lycées*.

goal of career guidance, there are also important implications for the training of career guidance staff. As well as skills in individual interviewing, they will need curriculum skills, community relations skills, skills in managing and co-ordinating teams and, increasingly, ICT skills. Many existing training programmes for career guidance staff have major gaps in these respects (McCarthy, 2001).

4.2 Tertiary education

A wider view of career guidance is also important in tertiary education. Career services are often underdeveloped in this sector, and where they exist, often focus upon job placement or are integrated with personal counselling services (Watts and Van Esbroeck, 1998). The need for career guidance rises as tertiary education in OECD countries operates in a more open and competitive environment, and as the expansion of tertiary participation widens its purposes substantially beyond preparing students for traditional professions. These two trends mean that students have more choices, the link between particular courses of study and specific labour market destinations becomes less direct, and institutions need to become better at monitoring their students' destinations and using their employment outcomes as a key marketing tool to attract new students. All of these imply a shift in tertiary career services towards a greater emphasis upon developing students' employability skills.

Career services in tertiary education have traditionally been much more strongly developed in some OECD countries, notably the United Kingdom and the United States, than in others. However, services are now developing rapidly in a number of countries. In Spain, the Navarra Private University's employment service provides a job placement service for graduates, arranges student learning placements in firms, and organises career fairs that bring employers on campus to provide information. In addition, the university provides a career planning and personal development service for all students on a voluntary basis. Beginning in the second undergraduate year, this involves a web-based self-evaluation tool, personal and employment skills training activities, and meetings between students and tutors. In Ireland, Trinity College Dublin's career service provides assistance through a resource centre, ICT-based tools, and individual interviews. In addition,

it provides a personal and social skills development programme in undergraduate courses. In many cases this is integrated into the normal teaching programmes of academic departments through teaching assistants who have been trained by the career service.

5. WIDENING ACCESS FOR ADULTS

A second key challenge for those responsible for national career guidance policies is to make it widely available throughout the lifespan, and in particular to make it more widely available to adults.

In all countries, career guidance services for adults are far less well developed than are services for youth. Public employment services generally claim that all adults, not only the unemployed, are able to use them to access career guidance. The reality is that very few adults who are not unemployed seem to do so, and that even for the unemployed access to career guidance can be limited and uneven. In all countries, the image of public employment services is that they are services for the jobless. They inevitably concentrate upon short-term employment options, rather than upon longer-term career development and career planning. As a result, in all countries there are gaps in services for employed people who wish to change career direction or to improve their employment prospects, and in services for those who are not in the labour force. Furthermore, given the role that public employment services play in controlling expenditure upon unemployment benefits, it could be argued that a more "arm's length" provision of career guidance to the unemployed is needed.

In some countries – for example in Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom – there are interesting initiatives to develop new career guidance services for adult education. Many are in their infancy. They have yet to become strongly embedded, and attract far less funding than services for youth and for the unemployed. However they are often more innovative than traditional in character, with strong links to community groups to make them accessible to disadvantaged people. An example of such a service in the United Kingdom is given in Box 2.3. Often, however, these services attract those who have already decided to enrol in adult education courses. Commonly they are linked

to particular institutions. As a result they often cannot provide comprehensive advice, and they are often not perceived to act in an independent and impartial way. The latter has become a particular concern in Denmark, where steps are being taken to establish regional services that are not linked to particular adult education institutions. A similar initiative can be found in Austria. The United Kingdom's *learnirect* service is an alternative approach, on a large scale, to the same issue.

As part of their human resource development strategies many large enterprises have internal career development services for their own employees, and purchase outplacement services for those about to be made redundant. Box 2.2 provides a Spanish example of such a firm. However these services are not generally designed to assist those who wish to develop their careers outside their present employer, and tend not to be available for those who are working in smaller and medium sized enterprises. Few examples exist of independent, comprehensive services that are able to meet the needs of all adults, whatever their educational or labour market status.

Providing more comprehensive career guidance services for adults requires governments to address difficult financing problems. In some countries – most notably the Netherlands and the United Kingdom – there have been efforts to create private markets for career guidance. In the United Kingdom, for example, this has been done by limiting public funding to the provision of free “information and advice” and expecting adults to pay for “guidance”. So far, these have generally not been a success: in the United Kingdom, for example, the key distinction between “information and advice” on the one hand and “guidance” on the other that underpins funding appears not to be well understood, or adhered to, either by consumers or providers. Markets can be identified for educational guides and other forms of career information, and a limited market exists for outplacement services funded by enterprises. However individuals in almost all countries appear reluctant to pay for career guidance at rates capable of developing and sustaining a market. There are several reasons for career guidance being hard to handle through private markets: both demand and supply are hard to specify and

define (even those who provide it are often not able to agree on how to describe the services they provide); it is highly variable in nature; it is often subsumed within other services such as education and job placement; and its benefits are hard to predict or to measure (Grubb, 2002*b*).

The difficulties involved in creating markets for career guidance may mean that the private sector's role is ultimately limited but, whoever supplies the service, the natural fuzziness of supply and demand highlights the need for measures to make things clearer. Thus, governments have a key role to play in making supply and demand more transparent. This is important in helping to ensure that individual choices and preferences can play a significant role in influencing the services offered and how they are provided. It is also important in improving the dialogue between career guidance practitioners and public policy makers. Among other things, this implies the more systematic use of client preference and satisfaction surveys, as well as attempts to increase the diversity of service provision.

In some countries governments have taken the view that free career guidance services should be provided to all adults who demand them, but few countries appear to have been willing to provide sufficient resources to meet the potential demand. This gives rise to difficulties. Bottlenecks and queues can arise, as Box 2.1 illustrated in the case of Finland's public employment service. Some services, for example in parts of Canada, are not widely publicised, partly as a way of limiting demand. This can give the misleading impression that universal access is a reality.

One response to a level of demand that exceeds supply that has been adopted – for example in Finland, Korea, the Netherlands and Norway – has been to look to web-based services. However, these are at best a partial solution. Where, as in Ireland, internet access costs are high, web-based career information and advice is not readily accessible to many adults, and in particular to those with low incomes and low qualifications. And web-based services do not suit the needs of all adults (Watts, 2001), many of whom wish to discuss their problems individually. Nevertheless the popularity of web-based and call centre services (see Box 2.2) indicates that they have an

important role. This is likely to increase, even if it is not a complete solution to problems of adult access to career guidance.

In other cases, for example the United Kingdom, governments have attempted to ration services by distinguishing between those that are intensive and those that are less so, and limiting government funding to less intensive services. In practice such distinctions are hard to implement, and appear to be resisted by service providers. Another solution has been to target government-funded services to those considered to be in greatest need (for example: unemployed people; migrants and refugees; those with poor educational qualifications; and low income earners).

All of these approaches raise questions, in a lifelong learning context, of how comprehensive, accessible career guidance services can be made available to *all* adults. Wider debate is required on possible funding models, including mixed models, and a possible future role for individual learning accounts. In addition, debate is required on whether one solution might be for public employment services to adopt a much wider and more integrated role within national lifelong learning and labour force skill development strategies, acting as a key portal to learning and skill development opportunities as well as centres for job placement. This would require extensive changes to marketing and promotion strategies. It would have important implications for public employment services' role in benefit administration, for staff recruitment and training strategies, and for co-ordination between education and labour portfolios.

As is the case with career guidance within education, the approach to career guidance for adults outlined here has important implications for the training and skills of all career guidance staff. Working in community settings, working with groups with special needs, and skills in telephone and ICT-based interventions are among the competencies that need to be more firmly embedded in initial training programmes (McCarthy, 2001).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Education and labour market policy makers in OECD countries certainly behave as if they believe that career guidance can be a tool to help them

achieve a number of public policy goals: more efficient labour markets and education systems; more active approaches to labour market policy; lifelong approaches to learning; and a range of equity goals. There are some strong conceptual and theoretical arguments in support of such beliefs. Some of the more interesting of these come from recent thinking on human capital and on employability. The available research evidence offers at least cautious support to such an optimistic view of the importance of career guidance for public policy.

However there is a sizeable gulf between such optimistic aspirations for career guidance and the reality of how it operates and is provided within many OECD countries. Too much of it focuses upon short-term decision making and not enough upon the development of career management skills. And there are large gaps in access to career guidance in most OECD countries: in particular on the part of adults, the employed, and tertiary students. If career guidance is to be a more effective tool of public policy, these will need to be addressed.

Two key challenges have been identified here that need to be addressed if career guidance is to make a more effective contribution to the achievement of lifelong learning and active labour market policy goals. These are: to provide services that develop career management skills, rather than only helping people to make immediate decisions; and to greatly widen citizens' access to career guidance, extending access throughout the lifespan. A number of specific issues that need to be addressed by policy makers, and some of the ways in which OECD countries are trying to address them, have been outlined.

In addition to these specific issues, there are three over-arching questions that need to be addressed in whatever particular approaches are adopted to the challenges that career guidance faces in OECD countries. The first of these is to adopt a more modern approach to the training and qualifications of career guidance practitioners, as gaps can be identified in how well existing training arrangements meet both of the key challenges identified here. An approach to this question, which can be seen in the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners,² is to develop

2. www.career-dev-guidelines.org/

comprehensive competency frameworks as the basis for developing training qualifications, and to ensure that these frameworks can encompass the skills needed by those providing career guidance in all types of settings, in a wide range of ways, and to a wide range of clients.

A second key issue to address is how to improve the ways that services are planned and co-ordinated: between government and non-government services; between education, labour and other portfolios within government; and between the various education sectors. Few countries have adequate mechanisms for doing this. Denmark has recently moved to restructure its guidance co-ordination arrangements within the education portfolio, the United Kingdom has established a national board to co-ordinate the key government career guidance services, Luxembourg has announced steps to improve strategic planning of career guidance services, and Poland has estab-

lished a non-government national forum for career guidance that involves the key stakeholders. These are positive steps.

A third important step if public policy and career guidance are to be brought more closely together must be for policy makers to improve greatly the information available to them about career guidance. They need to understand better who uses different services for what purposes, how well suppliers are serving demand, the costs and benefits of career guidance services, and what clients think about what is on offer. Improved dialogue between public policy makers and career guidance practitioners can also be a way in which public policy makers can improve the fit between services and policy goals: for example by receiving earlier and improved signals on problems that result from mismatches between student needs and aspirations on the one hand and the nature, size and structure of pathways between education and employment on the other.

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APPENDIX: *Career education in the school curriculum in OECD countries*

Country	Summary
Australia	The location of career education in state curriculum frameworks varies. In some cases it is located within personal development, health and physical education syllabuses; in some within social studies, in some it is integrated into a number of subjects across the curriculum. It is also included in courses in work education and the like which are taken by some students but not others.
Austria	All grade 7 and 8 students must receive 32 hours of career education each year. In most cases it is integrated into other subjects by normal classroom teachers, many of whom have little training for this. In the <i>Hauptschule</i> it is provided as a separate subject in around 45% of cases.
Canada	There is very wide variation between and within provinces and territories. For example in British Columbia 60 hours must be devoted to career education and personal planning each year from kindergarten to grade 12 and four credits in this must be obtained for graduation; in Saskatchewan 30 hours of career education are required in grades 6-9; in Ontario a half-credit course in career studies is mandatory in grade 10; in Alberta a grade 11 course in career and life management is compulsory.
Czech Republic	Career education is included in the curriculum for all students from grade 7 through to grade 12. Schools may decide whether to teach it as a separate subject or to integrate it into other subjects. In some 25% of compulsory schools it is taught as a separate subject.
Denmark	Educational, vocational and labour market orientation is a mandatory topic in grades 1-9.
Finland	Career education is compulsory in grades 7-9, and new curriculum guidelines require it to be included in the full basic education. Two hours per week of lessons are provided in grades 7-9, and one hour per week in the optional tenth grade and in upper secondary education. Vocational school students receive 1.5 weeks of career guidance and counselling.
Germany	Schools incorporate <i>Arbeitslehre</i> (learning about the world of work) into the curriculum: either in specific subjects such as technology; or more broadly across the curriculum. It is often in the last two years of compulsory school, but may start much earlier. It is less often taught in the Gymnasium than in other types of schools. Classes are supplemented by work visits, and by work-experience placements. It focuses upon learning about the world of work, rather than upon self-awareness and the development of career planning skills.
Ireland	Career education is not mandatory. In upper secondary education two programmes which together account for around 24% of students – the Leaving Certificate (Vocational) and the Leaving Certificate (Applied) – include career education modules.
Korea	Career education is currently being introduced into the school curriculum. “Employment and career” can be included as an elective “extra-curricular” subject for two hours per week for one semester (<i>i.e.</i> a total of 68 hours), both in junior and senior high school. Provinces and schools decide whether it is to be mandatory and how to implement it.
Luxembourg	Career education is not mandatory. However some lycées have begun to implement pilot projects, in which career education can be included in grades 7, 8 and 9 for two hours a week.
Netherlands	“Orientation towards learning and working” is included in the upper forms of all general subjects, and “orientation towards the sector” in all vocational subjects, within pre-vocational education. Within general education “orientation on continued education” is an optional component within the so-called “free space” periods.
Norway	Within the curriculum, the goal is that “educational and vocational guidance shall be interdisciplinary topics regarded as the responsibility of the school as a whole”. Teaching about working life is in principle included in the subject syllabuses for each grade within the national curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools, but it tends to be phrased in very general terms. In practice, the main focus is from grade 8 and the extent of such delivery varies considerably: it is estimated that on average it amounts to only perhaps 6 hours in grade 8, 8 in grade 9, and 10 in grade 10, largely concentrated in social studies.
Spain	One class hour per week of guidance is included in compulsory secondary education and in the two years of baccalaureate upper secondary education. Upper secondary vocational education students take a “vocational training and guidance” module for 65 class hours per year.
United Kingdom	Since 1997 career education has been a mandatory part of the national curriculum in England for the 14-16 year-old age group, although its extent and content have not been specified and schools have adopted widely differing approaches. Early in 2003 the government announced that career education is to be provided from age 11, and issued guidelines on the learning outcomes to be achieved as part of it.

Source: National questionnaires and Country Notes from the OECD career guidance policy review.

Data for the Figure

CHAPTER 2

Data for Figure 2.1

Percentage of upper secondary students in academic and vocational programmes who receive individual career counselling, 2002

	Academic	Vocational
Belgium (Fl.)	69	34
Denmark	93	59
Finland	95	76
France	77	78
Hungary	77	64
Ireland	91	87
Italy	39	38
Korea	84	79
Mexico	56	28
Norway	61	51
Portugal	60	66
Spain	74	77
Sweden	69	68
Switzerland	44	28

Note: Academic programmes refer to those general education programmes classified as 3-AG in ISCED 97 *i.e.* those designed to lead to tertiary education. Vocational programmes refer to those classified as 3-BV or 3-CV in ISCED 97 *i.e.* non-academic (pre-) vocational programmes. However in the case of Italy, Sweden and Finland the reference is to those programmes classified as 3-AV in ISCED 97 *i.e.* academic (pre-) vocational programmes.

Source: OECD International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools.

