

INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND CAREER GUIDANCE

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Abstract

The international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), like many national and international organizations concerned with economic development believes that career guidance has an important role in promoting the development of a country's human resources. (*Mapping the future: Young People and career guidance* OECD, 1996). Generally the economic development agencies always recommend that career guidance services should be strengthened. Too frequently, however, they do not recognize the difficulties facing counselor in the schools and do not give clear and specific recommendations, yet they appear to believe that the education or other authorities who are responsible to guidance will quickly agree and provide more resources for guidance.

In addition to economic development agencies, social and educational development agencies also make important recommendations concerning the provision of guidance services. UNESCO, for example, has published two recent reports (*Policies and Guidelines for Educational and Vocational Guidelines for Equal Access and Opportunity for Girls and Women in Technical and Vocational Education.*) It is interesting to compare the OECD and UNESCO recommendations and note that the relative strengths of each set of recommendations, and to imagine how they might be combined in advocating changes in policies and programs.

Guidance Services are "At-Risk" in several Countries

There is a need for organizations like OECD and UNESCO to concern themselves with career guidance and counseling because of the need to develop these services in many countries, but also to question the management of the services in others. A number of countries around the world are "reorganizing" their guidance services in ways that appear to reflect administrative and political philosophies more than the needs of students and citizens for guidance and counseling. Following are examples of administrative changes being made to guidance services in six countries.

Country 1

The ministry decided that vocational guidance and counseling were no longer the right of every person, but rather a service to be purchased by the individual\ from private providers.

Country 2

The government decided to privatize the national occupational and educational information

resource center and reorganize local career guidance centers with the results that: managers with training in vocational guidance have been replaced with untrained administrators.

- Counselors are now called "advisors" and thus are not required to adhere to the accepted professional standards of guidance counselors.

- Grants for vocational guidance services will be discontinued and users (including schools and individuals) will have to pay for guidance and counseling from commercial providers.

Country 3

The ministry of education has dropped its requirement that guidance be a part of basic education, and left it up to the municipal school authorities to decide whether to provide the service, and if so how much. National coordination of guidance services has been discontinued and replaced by an optional model of services that local authorities may accept or reject. All citizens receiving unemployment insurance or social welfare are required to receive employment counseling but counselors in employment and municipal welfare offices have had little or no training in career and employment counseling.

Country 4

The employment service which hitherto had provided career and employment counseling to all citizens who were in or contemplating entering the labour market, decided to restrict its counseling service to only those people in receipt of unemployment insurance. At the same time, however, it provided grants to community-based agencies to provide career and employment counseling to adults who were "at-risk" in integrating into the labour market. For the most part the counselors in these agencies had little or no training in career and employment counseling.

Country 5

Financial support for education generally has been lessened and guidance services in the schools were reduced more than any other educational service.

Most notable has been the decline of guidance consultants in the municipal school authorities, leaving many school counselors without specialist supervision and leadership.

Country 6

A survey of counselors revealed that many thought that the administrative head (such as school principal) of their organizations did not understand counseling and guidance, and were more critical than supportive.

The foregoing examples indicate why guidance is at risk in several countries, and why

strong advocacy on behalf of guidance is needed.

OECD and UNESCO Recommendations for Guidance Services

The conclusions and recommendations of the two agencies may be compared under a number of headings, as follows.

Need for guidance service:

OECD notes the need for guidance services goes largely unrecognized in policy-making circles, and UNESCO describes the factors that should be considered in a guidance needs analysis.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>The typical division of responsibility between the education and the labour authorities currently risks duplication and conflicting agendas. There is every likelihood that this institutionalized division will continue to exist in many countries - and in many ways it is desirable in the interest of responding to the needs of different clients especially young adults who require several different access points. In order to get the best from a pluralist system attention should be paid to greatly improved liaison between all guidance and counseling agencies aimed at increased understanding efficiency and clarity of purpose, and recognizing the different interests involved.</p>	<p>In addition to the jurisdictional considerations referred to in the above section on Policy, UNESCO has recommended a joint institution as follows. Ministries of education and labour, together or separately, should establish an agency institution or office with responsibility to develop and maintain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Training and continuing education programs for counselors■ Development and provision of methods and materials for guidance.■ Conduct research and development to create new more comprehensive and better ways of conducting educational and vocational guidance.■ Develop appropriate methods of evaluation of counseling and guidance.

Career guidance is of interest to the ministries responsible for education, labour market and sometimes, social affairs. It is important that they be encouraged to formulate a joint plan of action in support of career guidance and perhaps a jointly sponsored support structure such as UNESCO has proposed.

Content: Both international organizations see the need for a curriculum approach to guidance. Significantly, neither specifically described the content of individual career counseling.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>The apparently disparate nature of the content of guidance programs in educational institutions need not be a problem. Country experiences show that well-planned courses focusing on personal growth can comfortably include individual personal and social development, understanding of the world of work and the local community, work experience and even job placement.</p> <p>These seem to be most effective for young people when they are based in educational institutions. But extensive liaison with other agencies – especially those with detailed knowledge of the job market is crucial. Distance or open learning could have a role to play for adults.</p> <p>The value of educational and career guidance often goes unrecognized by policy makers, employers and by other professionals in the fields of education and counseling alike. This can result in poor understanding and commitment on the part of decision-makers and managers, and low status and morale among counselors. Much could be achieved if the role of career guidance were more frequently publicized and discussed and its importance to national economies recognized. And if the role of guidance workers – whether in schools, tertiary institutions, job centers or in the workplace - were publicly validated.</p>	<p>The guidance curriculum will include such areas as:</p> <p>Self Knowledge including understanding the influence of a positive self-concept: skills to interact positively with others and understanding the impact of own growth and development.</p> <p>Educational and Occupational Exploration including understanding the relationship between educational achievement and career planning; understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work and learning, skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information, skills to prepare to seek, obtain, maintain and change jobs; and understanding how societal needs and functions influence the nature and structure of work.</p> <p>Career Planning including skills to make decisions; understanding the interrelationship of life roles. Understanding the continuous changes in male/female roles; and skills in career planning.</p> <p>The needs analysis should include the following possible problems and needs: lack of belief in self; lack of knowledge of own talents; lack of educational and career objectives; lack of an appropriate action plan to achieve objectives; need for peer support; need for career, education and labour market information; study skills; need for life skills training; need for job search training; assistance with housing; transportation; finances and family responsibilities.</p>

Guidance services seldom conduct a formal needs analysis for guidance, yet if they were to do so as UNESCO suggests, then more effective advocacy could be undertaken along the lines outlined by OECD.

Guidance Policy: In many jurisdictions, guidance and counseling is made available as a private confidential service to students or clients who volunteer themselves for assistance, or who are referred by other staff members (e.g., teachers) because of learning or behavioural problems. Both international organizations argue that the service should be provided to everyone.

OECD noted that "There is much good guidance practice in all countries, but incoherent or incomplete systems seem to be the norm. Large numbers of young people and adults who could benefit from career guidance have to go without, or receive an inadequate service."

OECD	UNESCO
<p>An effective system should offer educational and career guidance to every one from their early teens as an integral part of their education or training curriculum - rather than restricting it to transition points or to individuals with problems. Encouraging selfreliance and autonomous decision-making at an early stage can make for cost-effectiveness later on, enabling more people to take responsibility for their own choices, and freeing guidance counselors to focus more of their attention on the most difficult cases and situations.</p>	<p>Governments should have legislation that defines the goals of guidance, describes the range of services to be provided, and stipulates the level of resources. The legislation should apply to the services to be provided to students in educational institutions and adults in the labour market. Guidance programs should include four components: guidance curriculum; individual planning; responsive services and system support. Ministries of education should have policies on educational and vocational guidance. These policies should include the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All students in each grade shall receive curriculum-based career education covering each area of the goals of guidance; students who require individual counseling for satisfactory achievement shall receive it; and the guidance staff shall have the necessary competencies to deliver the guidance and counseling effectively. ■ Guidance courses will address developmental issues appropriate to the age level of the students and cover such factors as planfulness, exploration, decision-making, information, and realism. ■ Each course in the entire curriculum will include relevant career information and address the goals of guidance appropriate to the subject. ■ Educational and vocational guidance and counseling services must be available through all educational institutions. <p>Ministry for labour should provide employment counseling and placement services for students completing their studies.</p>

Guidance is a developmental process and can best be achieved within a learning context such as a guidance course. Much of the time of counselors is consumed in individual counseling dealing with crisis situations. Governments do not value such counseling as much as career guidance. Some institutions attempt to separate the roles by employing social workers as well as guidance counselors.

Jurisdictions: The foregoing would suggest that there may be a need for counselors to define and describe the typical content of individual career counseling interviews. It is possible that they are largely devoted to providing educational and occupational information, on the other hand they may largely address personal and social issues of the student. What should administrators believe is happening in what they may consider to be time consuming conversations between student and counselor?

Materials: Career guidance is more than a conversation between a student and a counselor. There are interests, aptitudes and talents to be explored and defined, there is educational and occupational information to be learned, there are personal student career planning portfolios to be prepared, there are job search skills also to be learned, and there are

electronic education and career information systems to be used. Therefore the requirements for materials in the guidance service must not be ignored.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>There is a general dearth of good guidance materials - a lack which is particularly important when many counselors and guidance workers lack specialist training, and when clients are sometimes undecided, poorly motivated, newly -arrived in the country or have other special needs Many governments could have a highly positive effect for little outlay by sponsoring high -quality training packages, guidance materials and computer software and could learn much from each other in this respect.</p>	<p>Students and workers need information about occupations and about the labour market in order to establish appropriate preferences and to make decisions in the face of education training and employment opportunities The kinds of information that they require include: descriptions of the work in occupations, composition of occupational families, education and training requirements, requirements for certification, registration, or licensing, salary and wage information, working conditions, personal characteristics (aptitudes interests and personalities) of people successful in the occupation, physical activities, inter-occupational mobility, employment rates and numbers, seasonality, and occupational forecasts. The collection and publication of this information is usually the responsibility of the ministry of labour. All counselors need information on the educational system, occupations, the labour market. curriculum materials, assessment tools.</p>

The budgets of career guidance services must include ample funds to provide a complete career information center.

Delivery: In looking at the delivery of career services, OECD gave particular attention to populations at risk, whereas UNESCO was concerned that all students receive at least a basic service and that career guidance services for girls and women in technical and vocational education, in particular, be strengthened.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>Marginalised young and adults who most need effective guidance often receive the least satisfactory service. Since improving current arrangements will take time, and given the almost universal emphasis on restraining public spending, governments should make serious enough efforts to target these groups immediately through outreach, mentoring and other techniques.</p> <p>Access to information and to guidance is a real problem in many countries, especially for unemployed individuals who are no longer in education or training. Innovative methods of delivering information, especially using computer-based technologies, should be developed and new ways of offering guidance - perhaps in public libraries, shopping centers, or through the use of "Careers Hotlines" - should be explored. Outreach techniques using youth workers or peer counselors, or other approaches such as briefing parents or other members of the community who can then pass on their knowledge, should be more widely used. Innovations such as job clubs and back-to-work plans have had some success in some countries.</p>	<p>All students should get a career guidance curriculum. All students and workers who want and need guidance will receive it from a competent counselor. All graduating students should get employment counseling.</p> <p>National, regional and local career centers be established for girls and women, with particular emphasis on encouraging and assisting women enter and succeed in technical and vocational education.</p>

The delivery of guidance services is the testing ground of good intentions. It is important that the organization of local services receive the professional, financial, material, and technical support to ensure the accomplishment of the professed policy objectives.

Standards: When standards for guidance are discussed the issues of counselor ethics, and qualifications are typically given prominence. Considering the problems described above that put guidance itself "at risk" there are many other factors that must be addressed under this heading. OECD has taken up the professional issue along with the need to conduct audits or inventories of services. UNESCO, on the other hand, has listed a dozen features or hallmarks of a quality guidance service.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>In many countries career guidance lacks established standards of practice and a strong professional identity. Setting up professional standards, uniting the different fields in which educational and career guidance takes place and establishing levels of qualification would do much to improve practice, and also to clarify the career counselor's task.</p> <p>Governments should set up audits of their own systems with the aim of recording what is already in place - both within educational institutions and outside - and identifying gaps in provision. Improving coherence and comprehensiveness may well entail increasing the number of trained guidance workers.</p>	<p>The "hallmarks" of a quality guidance program include: Policy; Program design based on client needs analysis; Listing of what the clients will gain from guidance and counseling; Description of what the counselor does; Description of the guidance interventions; Description of the role of the client; Code of ethics; and, Up-to-date appropriate and accurate materials.</p>

Counselors, counselor educators and associations of counselors need to establish comprehensive standards for guidance services and programs, and to advocate with educational, social and economic development authorities that these standards be put into practice.

Training of Counselors: Both international organizations have affirmed the need for well-trained counselors. UNESCO has suggested some of the subjects that the training should include.

OECD	UNESCO
<p>Although well thought-out, coherent and comprehensive systems are essential for an effective service, no structure can guarantee that young people actually receive a good service at the level of the individual if practitioners are inadequately prepared. High quality training for practising counselors, whether they are operating in the school, the employment center, or the workplace, is essential.</p>	<p>Counselors need training in individual and group guidance and counseling, educational and labour market information; individual and group assessment; management and administration; implementation; specific populations; consultation strategies with third parties; guidance program development and advocacy.</p>

Some counselor training institutions provide training based upon the approaches of counseling psychology while others provide training based in occupational psychology. The design of the training programs must take into account the scientific analysis of the needs of clients, and of the "corporate" skills required by counselors in dealing with administrations that do not adequately appreciate the nature of guidance programs and services.

Evaluation

Guidance services are seldom evaluated in a formal way. Much research has been devoted

to the evaluation of particular guidance techniques, processes and programs, but very little attention has been given to the evaluation of the full guidance service. It is perhaps not surprising that an economic development agency sees the importance of the evaluation of guidance services. To the support that it gets from the administration.

OECD	UNESCO
The marginal status of educational and career guidance is reflected in the lack of serious research work on what counts as success in each national context and how it can best be replicated and disseminated. Evaluation should be taken more seriously and, in particular, processes established which include feedback from clients of all ages.	The guidance program must be regularly evaluated to ensure that it is designed to meet the needs of students.

There is a need for the development of appropriate means of evaluation guidance services as a means of improving the service, but also of defending it and of advocating improvements to the administrations that, as we have seen, are not always supportive.

Conclusion

Guidance counselors are pleased to see national and international social and economic development agencies express the importance of educational and vocational guidance for the personal social and economic benefits that it provides. The future of many nations depends on young people and adults learning about themselves, their potential and how to achieve educational, vocational and economic goals - which are typically intertwined. The comparison between the recommendations of an economic development agency (OECD) and an educational and social development agency (UNESCO) lays the basis for developing a comprehensive approach that meets the needs of students and of administrators.

National governments listen to economic development agencies as they search for means of improving the economy and increasing employment. It is important for national associations of educational and vocational counselors to make sure that the economic development agencies gain a sufficient understanding of guidance services to be able to advocate specific, workable and reasonable suggestions for the further development of guidance services. Finally, counselors associations may be the catalyst to bring a common and complete approach by educational, social and economic development agencies to the proper development of career guidance services for students and workers in the establishment of a career development culture and lifelong learning.