MYFUTURE

Enhancing the quality of career guidance in secondary schools

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A HANDBOOK

MYFUTURE: Improving digital skills for career guidance at school*

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FOREWORD

This *Handbook* is one of the products of the **MYFUTURE** Erasmus+ project. It offers educational leaders and career guidance staff practical ways for improving the quality of career guidance products and services in their secondary schools (ages 11-16), with a special focus on career education. The goal of the *Handbook*, and the frameworks, resources and tools it provides, are meant to be useful in catering more effectively for *all* students. However, a special emphasis is placed on the needs of those who, for different reasons, have disengaged from formal learning, or are in danger of doing so. Career guidance is one of the ways we have of re-igniting motivation in such students, especially when the service offered by the school is robust and fit for purpose.

The *Handbook* is organised in such a way as to both enhance critical reflection, and to provide the tools and resources needed to translate understanding into improved career education and guidance.

Part One of the *Handbook* looks carefully at what we mean by 'quality'. This is important because 'quality' is in fact a difficult and contested concept: different people think of 'quality' in different ways, and hold contrasting views as to whether the product or service they use is one deserving the 'quality' label. Since the way we define has implications for what we aim to achieve with students in schools, it is important to be clear about our understanding of 'quality' in the field of career education and guidance.

After we define 'quality' – i.e. ***what*** we are talking about when we use the term in relation to career guidance – we then look at ***why*** it is important to make sure that products and services in secondary schools are of a high standard, and ***who*** has the responsibility to carry out such quality assurance. We identify different actors here, including system managers, institutional leaders, career guidance practitioners, other stakeholders, and the service-users themselves (i.e. students and/or their parents/guardians). We also describe ***how*** and ***when*** the quality

of career products and services in schools should be reviewed, presenting a series of distinctions that help identify different options, and the advantages and drawbacks with each. We also consider the rise of concerns with quality across Europe, critique the models of quality assurance shaped by neo-liberalism and New Public Management, and outline an approach that is informed by other values and ideological orientations which we prefer.

The first part of the *Handbook* concludes by highlighting some of the more ***important features*** that one typically finds in a career guidance service in secondary schools. Six such features are presented. We argue that the quality of career guidance products and services can improve if we pay attention to [1] our career learning programmes [2] the career information made available [3] the personalised support offered through career counselling [4] the provision of a well-organised and accessible career resource hub [5] the development of partnership input in career education and [6] the formation of reflective practitioners who make the attainment of high standards a habitual goal. These six features are linked, but we separate them out so as to be as specific as possible about the ways in which quality can be improved.

Part Two then looks in depth at each of these 6 aspects of a career guidance service as described above, with a chapter dedicated to each of them. Each chapter follows the same pattern: first, we describe the feature so that the relevant issues are unpacked, drawing on insights from international research ('what we know'). Then we address the aspects that can be the reviewed in order to improve quality ('how we can improve'). We populate the sections with examples of promising practice, as well as with tools and resources that can be used in order to evaluate and improve practice.

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Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations

APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEG	Career Education and Guidance
DOTS	Decision-Making, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Skills, Self-Awareness
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
HR	Human Resources
IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NPM	New Public Management
NICE	Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe
PES	Public Employment Service
QA	Quality Assurance
SMT	Senior Management Team

How Career Guidance is Defined in this Handbook

This *Handbook* defines 'career guidance' in the following way:

"Career guidance supports individuals and groups to discover more about work, leisure and learning and to consider their place in the world and plan for their futures. Key to this is developing individual and community capacity to analyse and problematise assumptions and power relations, to network and build solidarity and to create new and shared opportunities. It empowers individuals and groups to struggle within the world as it is and to imagine the world as it could be.

Career guidance can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions. But at its heart it is a purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this."

Source: T. Hooley, R.G. Sultana & R. Thomsen (2017) The neoliberal challenge to career guidance – mobilising research, policy and practice around social justice. In T. Hooley, R.G. Sultana & R. Thomsen (eds) Career guidance for social justice: Contesting neoliberalism*. London: Routledge.*

Understanding Quality

Giving students a better service
1. WHAT IS QUALITY?

1.1. Quality is difficult to define

A complex and contested concept

'Quality' is a *complex* and *contested* concept. At one level, this statement may be unexpected: after all, common sense tells us that we all know a 'quality product' when we see one, or a 'quality service' when we benefit from one. And yet, if we scratch below the surface, we discover that we have different views about what 'quality' really is. This is likely to depend on who we are, our social background, the evaluative criteria we use, past experiences, and so on. Most importantly, different people have different expectations and standards. Film critics, for instance, might pan a blockbuster that attracts and delights the crowds, and a wine connoisseur might dismiss a bottle we were prepared to pay good money for. In contrast to lay people, 'experts' or connoisseurs and specialists, have, through study, research, and/or experience over the years, developed criteria by means of which they judge 'quality'.

'Stakeholder-relative' views of quality

These 'quality criteria' are likely to correspond to different standards and expectations of a product or a service. 'Experts' are therefore less likely to award a 'quality label' than those who are less knowledgeable. This is why 'quality' is often defined as a relationship between one's experience (in consuming the product, in perusing the service) and one's expectations (of a product, or a service). The lower (or higher) the expectations, the more (or less) likely it is that we give the quality label. Quality, then, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and is 'stakeholder-relative'. As we shall note, this opens

up interesting possibilities, but also represents some dangers.

'Quality' is a 'construct'

This is also why 'quality' is considered to be a 'construct': much depends on *who* is doing the defining, and *who* is constructing meaning. What an institutional leader (e.g. a school principal) or service provider (e.g. school-based CG practitioners) might think of as a 'quality service' might be found wanting by the beneficiary (e.g. students, or their parents/carers). In other situations, what the recipients of a service are happy with might not meet the standards a provider is aiming for or the expectations of a higher authority responsible for ensuring quality.

'Quality' is a political matter

Recipients of services are also likely to have different needs, or they might interpret situations differently. Such differences between groups often relate to life experiences related to social background, gender, ethnicity, culture, faith, dis/ability, sexual orientation, place of residence (e.g. urban or rural), age, and so on. This makes the definition of quality in generic, abstract, non-contextualised terms difficult: what some groups might experience as a qual-

> 66 *'Quality' is considered to be a 'construct': much depends on who is doing the defining, and who is constructing meaning.* 99

ity service, others might consider unsatisfactory, problematic, or even as working against their interests. In the view of some, a good career education programme would have strong messages to give about the value of trade unions, for instance. Others, however, might disagree, emphasising worker responsibilities rather than rights. Some might evaluate a career

guidance service on the basis of the way occupations are represented in gender-neutral ways. Again, this might go against the grain of some of the recipients of the service. 'Quality' is therefore a political matter, in the sense that the praise (or criticism) that a society heaps on products and services depend on sets of values that are the subject of contestation among different groups in that society.

Context matters in defining 'quality'

It is important, therefore, to pay attention to contextual factors when attempting to define quality. However, paying genuine attention to the different, competing views of 'user, 'client' groups should not lead to 'negative relativism'. Two examples will help clarify what we mean by this. Liberal democracies, for instance, greatly value gender equity, even if they generally fall short of implementing it. That value is so central to the polity that any service or product that fails to respect it cannot possibly win a 'quality award'. This remains true irrespective of those groups in that polity that are not committed to gender rights, or who interpret them differently.

'Positive relativism' recognises and respects differences, and is committed to the notion of 'reasonable accommodation', but in a context that reaches consensus around core civic values and communal norms that serve as the basis of collective life. Generally speaking, these values and norms include the fundamental rights to life, freedom of religion, and protection against discrimination – with liberties limited only when one's liberties breach those of another. In this broader picture, products and services in a polity would need to be congruent with such fundamental values that have been dialogically adopted as the basis of a communal identity.

... but a satisfied user does not mean quality has been attained
A second aspect of 'relativism' that is unacceptable is when the expectations of different customer groups become the only criterion for defining quality. This would lead to significant differences in provision simply because some groups have lower expectations (because they don't know any better, and lack of experience of high quality products and services). In other words, the fact that some individuals and groups have low expectations should not lead to standards being dropped. This is why 'customer satisfaction', while valuable, is not the sole (or even the most important) criterion when it comes to assessing quality. This is also why 'quality charters' are helpful, in that they educate citizens as to what they have a right to expect from a product or service.[1]

The views of specialists matter
Specialists are therefore important in defining the quality standards for particular products or services they have ex-

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1   The NCDA, for instance, sets out client expectations, rights and responsibilities – available at https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd./news_article/5565/_PARENT/layout_details_search/false. Some schools have published charters setting out what students can expect from the career guidance service, e.g. https://www.philipmorant.essex.sch.uk/sites/default/files/fresh_files/Student%20Charter_0.pdf

pertise in: their views are important to ensure the highest standards possible, on the basis of knowledge and experience that are, in principle, deeper and broader than those of the non-specialist. This does not exonerate them from listening to the views of regular citizens: rather, it is their duty to ensure that such views contribute to understanding, defining, and promoting quality, in such ways that the whole (i.e. abstract notion of quality) is greater than the sum of the parts (i.e. context-specific notions of quality).

1.2. Defining 'quality' in career guidance provision: Typologies and frameworks

Organising our thoughts on quality and quality assurance

Since 'quality', and therefore 'quality assurance', are complex and contested concepts, it is useful to consider different *typologies* and *frameworks* that set out to explain what these terms mean. Typologies and frameworks attempt to organise different aspects of an object of study in ways that make the distinctions stand out more clearly. They are therefore helpful as tools to clarify thinking as long as we keep in mind that the boundaries between 'types' are often porous. The following section highlights a number of distinctions that can be made between different approaches so that the reader gets a better sense of the options available, and their implications for service provision.

QA typology based on ideology

It bears highlighting the fact that all quality assurance approaches ultimately seek to identify quality gaps and to plug them. While, as we shall note in this section, these approaches may be informed by different ideologies, all strive for excellence at the service of the user. What drives them is the desire to enhance the benefits that individuals and groups can derive

from career guidance. Focusing on the secondary school context, these benefits include:

- Improved knowledge of self and society.
- Better understanding of the available pathways for further education and training.
- Insights into how these pathways relate to occupational opportunities.
- Mastery of career management skills that support career exploration, career planning, and career development.
- Enhanced motivation to engage with education and training, in view of the clarification of goals and understanding of the ways to attain them, thus reducing disengagement from formal learning.

The desire to enhance quality in the provision of services can hardly be faulted. However, it is important to point out that this commendable objective is shaped in different ways by different ideological orientations, here referred to as *technocratic*, *interpretive*, and *emancipatory*. Ideologies are important because, as we have already noted, 'quality' and 'quality assurance' ultimately have a political component: they signal what a society values (or is expected to value) – and this is subject to different interpretations depending on the interest of different groups.

Technocratic approaches to quality and QA

Technocratic approaches tend to emphasise a set of criteria and standards that a service or product is evaluated against, often to verify that those who are paying are getting value for the money spent. Such approaches tend to emphasise criteria and indicators that can be readily quantified (e.g. staff to student ratio, number of clients reached, duration of a CG interview, length of time before employment is secured, number of clients placed in employment, and so on) and/or for which evidence of outcomes can be provided. Such approaches have

> **❝** *However, the attention to detail can also lead to missing the wood for the trees, and to giving more importance to issues for which 'indicators' are more readily available than to others that are less easily 'quantified'.* **❞**

value in that they break up complex issues into manageable bits of information that make it easier to identify aspects of a product or service, to match it against pre-established criteria and indicators, and to make improvements.[2] Many quality assurance approaches – including those associated with ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) – work on this principle.[3]

However, the attention to detail can also lead to missing the wood for the trees, and to giving more importance to issues for which 'indicators' are more readily available than to others that are less easily 'quantified'. A career guidance practitioner might give an appointment within 24 hours that a request comes in (a quantitative and measurable indicator), but might be unable to put the client at ease during the career interview (a qualitative indicator that is difficult to measure). While

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2   See P. den Boer, K. Mittendorf, J. Scheerens & T. Sjenitzer (2005). *Indicators and benchmarks for lifelong guidance*. Thessaloniki: Cedefop; P. Plant (2012). Quality assurance and evidence in career guidance in Europe: counting what is measured or measuring what counts? *International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 12, 91–104; P. Plant (2001). Quality in career guidance. OECD paper, November. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/2698228.pdf; P. Plant (2004). Quality in career guidance: issues and methods. *International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4, 141–157.

3   See L. Evangelista (2015) ISO9001:2000 and quality in guidance services. Available at https://www.academia.edu/10016339/ISO9001_2000_and_Quality_in_guidance_services The author notes that the use of the ISO approach in assuring the quality of career guidance services is unlikely to catch on since, besides being costly, it is administratively cumbersome and time-consuming, and requires the tightening up of organizational structures in ways that are often incompatible with the flexibility that is needed in this particular field.

this *Handbook* provides several indicators that characterise a career guidance service or product as one of 'quality', it constantly reminds readers that attention to detail should not be at the expense of losing sight of the overall picture. 'Quality' is often greater than the sum of its parts. Linked to this is the truism that what counts most cannot be counted, and that one of the dangers of technocratic approaches is that they encourage us to pay attention only, or mainly, to that which can be measured or documented. Later on we will also note another danger: a technocratic focus on indicators can lead to the micro-management of staff, resulting in ritualistic observance of protocols at the cost of snuffing out practitioners' creative, professional and joyful provision of service which, to our mind, is the ultimate indicator of quality.

An example of an approach that focuses on the component parts of a career guidance service, and establishes benchmarks

and indicators, is provided by the Greek National Centre for Vocational Orientation (EKEP). Having analysed different models of quality assurance, EKEP identified 6 areas linked to service provision, with each area having a number of benchmarks, as follows: *Leadership (*4 benchmarks), *Organisation-planning* (8), *Practitioners* (8), *Client satisfaction* (4), *Service delivery* (7), *Premises and equipment (*4).[4]

The different benchmarks for each area are specified in some detail, as are the quality indicators and the evidence that needs to be produced in order to show how a particular outcome has been attained. Here is an example from one area, that of client satisfaction:

Table 1: An example of benchmarks and quality indicators from Greece		
Area: Client satisfaction with career guidance service: benchmarks and indicators		
BENCHMARKS	**QUALITY INDICATORS**	**DOCUMENTS/ EVIDENCE**
4.1.a The Service has designed a system for investigating citizen needs. **4.1.b** The system for investigating citizen needs is implemented.	System for investigating client needs which could include: • client need surveys • collecting statistics • communicating with mainstream citizens and with citizens in key target groups etc.	• questionnaires • correspondence • documents that prove that public opinion surveys have been conducted etc.
Services should ensure that what is on offer is what clients need. They must answer the basic question "What do they want from you?" Identifying and then offering services needed by the citizen is the most important tool for widening participation.		
4.2. The Service should deliver services appropriate to meet the needs of different target groups accessing it.	There should be a mechanism that makes systematic use of the findings from client need surveys.	• description of mechanism

4   For a detailed description of how this approach was developed, see http://www.elgpn.eu/elgpndb/search/metadata/view/25

Exploring the needs of people accessing the service is not enough. The service should plan and deliver services directly proportional to such findings.

4.3. The Service should provide sufficient information about the services it delivers to each target group.	There should be a system suitable for informing citizens of all available services. Specific groups must be included in this description.	• description of the system • printed or electronic informative material
The Service should give all target groups information about available services.		
4.4.a The Service must ensure that users are regularly consulted on their satisfaction with the service. **4.4.b** The system for investigating client satisfaction is implemented.	System for investigating client satisfaction which could include: • client satisfaction surveys • feedback activities • interviews	• feedback forms • questionnaires • correspondence • documents that prove that surveys have been conducted etc. • forms filled after every visit to the service

Investigating citizen needs is not enough. The service should research citizens' expectations. The level of citizen satisfaction is crucial for improving the service. Making use of clients' feedback is a very important tool for investigating client satisfaction.

Source: ELGPN www.elgpn.eu/elgpndb/fileserver/files/24 [all details for the six areas available in English, courtesy of D. Gaitanis].

Interpretive approaches to quality and QA

Interpretive (sometimes also referred to as 'hermeneutic') approaches give more importance to context and to understanding quality in a more flexible manner with due consideration to diverse needs and situations. Such approaches tend to have a preference for a holistic view of quality as experienced by the consumer of a product or a service user. They are thus more likely to use qualitative data and measures, with an understanding of 'quality' being negotiated in response to context rather than against abstract principles. This makes

the process of quality assurance more open-ended, with the voice of both provider and user given importance in identifying and addressing quality gaps. A danger here is what we have referred to earlier as 'negative relativism', leading to a fall in standards with universal aspects of quality being sacrificed to the exigencies of context.

Emancipatory approaches to quality and QA
Emancipatory approaches reframe 'quality' in relation to the ability of a service to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable groups. They can draw on either technocratic or hermeneutic approaches, or on both, but they do so in order to advance the interests of the 'subaltern', i.e. those groups that tend to lose out when it comes to enjoyment of the best products and services that circulate in a community.

This has implications for resource allocation, for instance: since in most societies resources are limited, with demand outstripping supply, a quality indicator from an emancipatory perspective might entail measuring the transfer of products and services towards a disenfranchised group. An emancipatory quality audit of a school would, for instance, evaluate the weight given by the institution to positive discrimination. One such emancipatory approach to evaluating the quality of services offered is encapsulated in the following WISE framework and its four interacting principles:

The WISE principles for anti-oppressive practice

Welcome: Welcome diversity in society, and make welcome groups and individual people at risk of oppression, by appreciating their history and valuing their culture, identity, experience and contribution; respect individuality and avoid stereotyping.

Image: Be aware of the damage that can be done, however unconsciously, by negative imagery (e.g. of danger, sickness, childlikeness, worthlessness, ridicule) in language, buildings, service structures, pictures, notices, etc, and strive to replace them with positive, helpful imagery that reflects value, equality, respect, dignity and citizenship.

Support: Offer support to enable people to function well in society; this may include interpreting for users of other languages, aids and equipment for disabled people, attention to access and presentation of materials, good information services, ensuring comfort and good health care, supporting networks of friendship or common interest, etc.

Empowerment: Support self-help and self-advocacy; listen to what people say and learn from them; involve people in decisions; give and support advocacy for people; ensure rights through entitlements and legislation; provide equal opportunities and practice anti-discrimination.

Source: B. Gothard, P. Mignot, M. Offer & M. Ruff (2001) Careers guidance in context. London: Sage (p.131).

A mix of ideological and methodological approaches is possible

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive: an emancipatory quality assurance exercise might make use of criteria-based check lists and plot a service against standards, and it might do so in a flexible manner in response to contextual signals, but it would be emancipatory nevertheless if its main preoccupation is to safeguard and promote the interests of the most vulnerable. Equally, nothing stops technocratic or interpretive approaches to quality from adopting an emancipatory perspective.

Typology based on actors

A typology based on actors helps us consider the institutional persons that take responsibility for quality provision of career guidance services and products. These could be either [a] leaders/administrators, or/and [b] practitioners, or/and [c] users.[5]

As with the other typologies, there could be a mix of approaches so that the responsibility for evaluation a CG service is shared. The different institutional actors are here considered in turn to tease out the differences between them.

Administrative-centred QA systems

Administrative-centred QA systems set out (often, but not necessarily, in a top-down manner) to ensure quality by identifying criteria and indicators which, in the view of those with leadership responsibilities, contribute to a service that meets their expectations. There are different ways of attaining such a target, including through the promulgation of relevant legislation, the articulation of underlying principles that should guide the organisation and delivery of a service, the establishment of national frameworks and guidelines (that might also set out the training, qualifications and competences required of practitioners), the declaration of service-delivery standards and 'quality charters of service', the setting out of monitoring and evaluation procedures, and providing mechanisms for client protection, for complaints by users, as well as for redress. While by their very nature, administrative-centred QA systems tend to adopt a technocratic approach, in the sense of the term used above, they need not necessarily do so, and nothing

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5   See R.G. Sultana (2011). Quality matters – ensuring high standards in career guidance services. *Career Designing*, 1(1), 46–67; L. Evangelista (2003). Quality assurance in career guidance services – a tri-variable model. *Professionalità* Journal. No. 78 Italy: Editrice la Scuola – www.orientamento.it/orientamento/tri-varibale.pdf

stops them from being open, flexible and qualitative in methodology, and more focused on process than product.

Practitioner-centred QA systems

Practitioner-centred QA systems are bottom-up initiatives promoted by professional bodies that specialise in the area being audited, or setting out to improve its services. Such initiatives usually include the articulation of codes of conduct/ethics for practitioners, the identification of competences that practitioners should have, the setting up of a register which identifies the practitioners that attain the standards of practice targeted by the association, and which therefore gives individuals the warrant or licence to practice. This *Handbook* provides several examples of such strategies that set out to define quality, and also to enhance it. Professional bodies also strive to attain and improve quality provision by delivering pre-service and in-service training, by carrying out or commissioning evaluative research, and by disseminating results of such research among their members. In many ways, this *Handbook* sets out to fulfil this role.

User-centred QA systems

User-centred QA systems give clients and service-users (e.g. students, and/or their parents/guardians) the power to determine various aspects of that service. This may range from a greater or lesser degree of input in the design and management of a service, as well as whether, in their view, standards have been attained. This changes the locus of power in many quality assurance systems, with the opportunities and dangers that have already been discussed. A good example of user-centred QA systems are career guidance services designed, managed, and audited by students in higher education settings.

A mix of QA actors is possible

As in the previous typology based on ideologies, nothing stops a career guidance service from combining elements in a mix that strengthens the quality review, with system managers, service providers and service users coming together to design, implement and audit. The role of researchers, whether based in higher education institutions or elsewhere, is worth highlighting here, and is indeed one of the aspects that the MYFUTURE project gives particular attention to. Researchers can provide specialist knowledge that draws on a range of disciplines as well as empirical evidence. Such a knowledge base makes a crucial and critical contribution to setting out the parameters of what should be considered as good practice in the career guidance field. This is irrespective of whether the research is commissioned or utilised by system leaders, practitioners, or users.

1.3. Operationalizing a QA framework

Distinctions help improve understanding

A useful way of deepening our understanding of how the desire to increase quality provision is translated into action is to highlight a number of distinctions beyond the ones that emerge from the consideration of the two typologies referred to above. In highlighting these distinctions, a range of additional options become clear, with each option having implications for the design and implementation of quality auditing. Each choice entails advantages and limitations, and the specific combination of the different approaches depends on the context in which such a combination is applied.[6]

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6   See R.G. Sultana (2011). Quality matters…; P. Plant (2001). Quality in career guidance…

Specific vs. integrated QA approaches

This distinction helps us consider whether career guidance services are the *specific* focus of a tailor-made and targeted evaluation, or if they are examined in relation to a *broader* quality auditing exercise that examines different aspects of an institution in a more comprehensive manner. In the case of education institutions, for instance, a school's performance can be comprehensively evaluated in relation to a number of criteria and indicators associated with effective schools (e.g. curriculum, school climate, home-school links, student attendance, leadership style, and so on). Career guidance would be one of the aspects considered in the overall auditing of the school.

In contrast would be a more *focused* evaluation of career guidance services, which is more likely to be carried out by specialists in the field, and also more likely to look at the provision in depth. A comprehensive approach, however, is more likely to take into account the linkages that exist between career guidance and other aspects of school life – such as, for instance, the way career education features across the formal and informal curriculum. A mix of both approaches might be a good way forward (e.g. career guidance considered as one element in a comprehensive school auditing exercise during one particular year or period, followed by a more targeted and focused evaluation of career guidance the following year or review period).

Fragmented vs. comprehensive approaches to QA across sectors

Few countries have a lifelong career guidance system in place, where services follow the citizen throughout compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, into adulthood and even retirement. As a result, QA measures, where they exist, also tend to target only specific sectors where career guidance is provided, and in most cases such measures are more likely to be found in the education rather than in the labour market sector – i.e.

in schools, higher education, and training institutions rather than in Employment Services. QA efforts therefore do not target the whole range of clients, even if the notion of an integrated, lifelong career guidance service has become increasingly attractive given the nature of a fast-changing labour market.

Fragmented vs. comprehensive approaches to QA within sectors

In most cases across Europe and beyond, the evaluation of quality tends to focus on specific levels of education (e.g. secondary schools, or higher education) rather than consider the sector in a comprehensive and linked manner. Few if any countries have mechanisms to ensure effective coordination between different service providers and between ministries with responsibilities for career guidance, even when these cater for the same sector, such as education. Co-ordination between education and training levels, as well as between sectors, opens up more opportunities and possibilities for system improvement, given that weaknesses identified can be 'fed' backwards and forwards so that the required changes can be made.

Generic vs. specific QA measures in relation to different client groups

The European and international surveys of career guidance have shown that while several efforts have been made by many countries to address the specific needs of particular client groups (e.g. early school leavers, recent immigrants, refugees, long term unemployed, differently abled, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, those living in remote areas, etc.), by and large the tendency is still that of providing a somewhat uniform service that is not tailor made to respond to the specific career guidance needs of particular groups. This tendency is also reflected in the QA measures in place.

Voluntary vs. obligatory QA

Unlike other aspects of schooling, where we have seen an international trend for increased monitoring (of curricula, of performance and outcomes, of teachers, etc.), much of the quality assurance of career guidance services and products in schools remains voluntary, leading to situations where little monitoring effectively takes place.

Intermittent vs. on-going QA measures

The collection of information about the state of a particular service is only the first aspect of a QA exercise. While that is important and valuable, it is a means to an end, not an end in itself: what one does with the information gathered, in terms of using it to improve a service, is what matters most. Indeed, most QA approaches, as we shall note, are based on a recursive cycle of information gathering, analysis and reflection, planning change, and implementation, which leads to another cycle. This is the approach to quality, and to the enhancement of quality, that the *Handbook* would wish to promote.

Input vs. outcome-based QA approaches

In some cases, the quality of a service is presumed to be (or more likely to be) present if the required inputs are made. Examples of such inputs include qualified and well-trained, experienced staff, and quality resources such as a sophisticated career information website or a well-equipped career resource centre.[7] Some would argue that while quality inputs are *likely* to lead to quality outputs the focus should be on the *outcomes* themselves. The American National Career Development Guidelines (NCDG) framework, for instance, identifies

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7   A good example of an input-oriented system is the ***The BeQu concept for quality development in career guidance and counselling: The BeQu quality standards and competence profile*** developed in 2014 (revised in 2016) by Germany. Available in English at: http://www.be-ratungsqualitaet.net/upload/BeQu_EN_2016-12-15.pdf

a whole range of knowledge, skills and dispositions that students should manifest as an outcome of their career learning. Here is an example of what students are expected to know in relation to one domain:

Learning outcomes as evidence of a quality career education service

Use accurate, current, and unbiased career information during career planning and management.

- *Describe the importance of career information to your career planning.*
- *Show how career information has been important in your plans and how it can be used in future plans.*
- *Assess the impact of career information on your plans and refine plans so they reflect accurate, current, and unbiased career information.*
- *Recognize that career information includes a range of occupational, education and training, employment, and economic information.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to use different types of career information to support career planning.*
- *Evaluate how well you integrate occupational, educational, economic, and employment information into the management of your career.*
- *Recognize that the quality of career information resource content varies (e.g., accuracy, bias, and how up-to-date and complete it is).*
- *Show how selected examples of career information are biased, out-of-date, incomplete, or inaccurate.*
- *Judge the quality of the career information resources you plan to use in terms of accuracy, bias, and how up-to-date and complete it is.*
- *Identify several ways to classify occupations.*
- *Give examples of how occupational classification systems can be used in career planning.*
- *Assess which occupational classification system is most helpful to your career planning.*
- *Identify occupations that you might consider without regard to your gender, race, culture, or ability.*
- *Demonstrate openness to considering occupations that you might view as nontraditional (relative to your gender, race, culture, ability).*
- *Assess your openness to considering non-traditional occupations in your career management.*
- *Identify the advantages and disadvantages of being employed in a non-traditional occupation.*
- *Make decisions for yourself about being employed in a non-traditional occupation.*
- *Assess the impact of your decisions about being employed in a non-traditional occupation.*

Source: https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3384?ver=16587

It should be noted, however, that tracing back outcomes to a specific career guidance intervention or input is not always easy or even possible. Individuals receive messages about career-related issues from a great many sources as part of the normal flow of life.

Disentangling what has an impact when and on who, as well as understanding the manner in which these different messages come together in the business of constructing meaning by an individual, is simply an existential impossibility. Individuals are likely to have an opinion as to which messages have been most useful in guiding their decision-making, but even then, while such opinions are important, they are not all there is to say about the matter. A case in point is a student who declares that a teacher's messages about making occupational choices in a gender neutral manner have been greatly influential, without necessarily grasping the impact that early socialisation into gender stereotypes has on thought processes. The fact is that there can be no authentic, all-seeing narrator of life stories, whether biographical or autobiographical.

1.4. Quality, New Public Management, and Action Research

Professionalism vs. managerialism

The issue of quality in the provision of public services has been given increasing importance across Europe, and can be traced back to a number of related and confluent factors. It is important for career guidance practitioners to be aware of these influences, since having a grasp of the wider picture has an impact on the way we approach the issues of quality and quality assurance. These influences and currents of thought include the entrenchment of a belief that the models of management used in private business should be applied to public services in order to increase efficiency and accountability, thus 'doing more with less'. While during the heyday of the establishment and consolidation of welfare systems in many countries citizens were encouraged to accept that members of a profession were skilled and ethical enough to work in the interests of the public good, the early 1980s saw a withdrawal of trust, as well as politically driven scepticism regarding a profession's ability to critically assess itself. Public services were increasingly criticised and reshaped through funding incentives and external accountability mechanisms.

The rise of New Public Management

The shift towards a business and managerialist model in quality assurance of services to the public is generally captured by the term 'New Public Management' (NPM), an approach that is underpinned by a political and ideological view that is committed to market principles in the management of the economy and human affairs more generally.[8] NPM therefore knows its popularity to the entrenchment of 'neoliberalism'

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8 Omar Guerrero-Orozco (2014). The end of New Public Management. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2476878

in several countries, with key features being the liberalisation and financialisation of markets, together with a commitment to competition, performativity and choice in the provision of services.[9] This generally entails deregulation from state control, decentralisation, and privatisation or outsourcing of public services. Such values also inform the approach to public administration, which advocates the employment of private sector management principles into the provision of public services to make them more efficient. Or so it is claimed.

Figure 1.1: The UK government's model of public service reform: a self-improving system based on New Public Management principles

Source: Stephen J. Ball (2008) The Education Debate. Bristol: The Policy Press (p.103).

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9   See *S. J. Ball (2008) The Education Debate. Bristol: The Policy Press.*

Problems with New Public Management

Many of the benefits touted by those committed to both neoliberalism and NPM have been severely questioned over the past decade, particularly in the shadow of the global economic recession that started in December 2007. There is much evidence that while private wealth has grown exponentially among a handful, the ordinary citizen has not reaped the dividends promised. If anything, the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' has increased both within and between countries, with millennials destined for a quality of life that is inferior to that of the previous generation.

> *Users exercise 'choice' from among a range of providers such that those services that are not attractive or up to expectations are squeezed out of the market*

Quality and NPM

It could be said that the approach to quality adopted by NPM is mostly aligned with what we earlier referred to as 'technocratic'. 'Quality' of public service (such as health, education, or, for that matter, career guidance) is defined in terms of pre-determined outputs and outcomes that are articulated in terms of measurable indicators. Users exercise 'choice' from among a range of providers such that those services that are not attractive or up to expectations are squeezed out of the market. Competition between service providers is encouraged and even stimulated, in the belief that market incentives serve to enhance efficiency and quality. In this approach, quality is defined in a top-down manner, with regulations and standards being clearly set out, and providers being inspected and assessed against them. Some countries, such as the UK, have taken this technocratic model on board in a particularly comprehensive

manner, as indicated in Figure 1.1 above.

Cost of so-called 'efficiency gains'

This *Handbook* takes a critical view of both neo-liberalism and New Public Management approaches, both from an ideological perspective and from a pragmatic one as well. While we are committed to improving the quality of career guidance as one of the services offered by the state to the public within the context of secondary schools, we are not persuaded that excellence is attained by top-down imposition of regulations and standards, by external inspection and micro-management of behaviour and outcomes, or by inciting competition through the stimulation of private providers. While some of these might have a populist appeal and even appear to 'work' in the short term, and they might contribute to overcoming institutional inertia and establish quality criteria across different service sites, there is growing evidence that such 'efficiency gains', if any, come at a very high price: practitioners – including those in the career guidance field – tend to increasingly feel that their knowledge, skills and discretion are being undermined. In the long term, this is counterproductive.

Evidence of quality service

The emphasis on externally-imposed standards leads to the need to produce 'evidence' that benchmarks have been attained, with much energy being spent on producing, packaging and even massaging evidence that 'proves' that targets have been reached, when precious time could have more profitably been spent responding to student needs. Ritualism, tokenism, impression management, strategic resistance, coping mechanisms, and even a culture of 'getting by' have been noted in several work places where technocratic forms of quality assurance have been enforced.

Bureaucratising quality

Most crucially, the intensification of work that accompanies the cult of performativity leads to burnout and disenchantment, a view that associates quality with 'burden' and 'bureaucracy', negatively affecting the vision, sense of mission, and joy of being of service that is often critical in the caring professions, especially as salaries never truly compensate for the amount of energy and emotional labour that such careers require. Ethical values central to career guidance – such as impartiality and putting client interests first – end up being compromised since practitioners are expected to promote economic and institutional agendas, often in muscular ways. Some have indeed made a case for 'principled infidelity' when the ethics of the profession are under attack.[10]

All this is a timely reminder that that quality assurance models and approaches are not just about techniques: they have an impact, and may even transform and shape our work. The view adopted in this *Handbook* is ultimately sympathetic to the claim that 'quality' is relative to how front-line actors construe and construct 'it'.[11]

Principles guiding the search for quality

This *Handbook* therefore promotes other approaches that we believe will improve the quality of career guidance as a public service in secondary schools. What we will be proposing here is more firmly anchored in interpretive and emancipatory traditions of quality assurance, even if we do draw on some of the tools developed within the technocratic tradition. Our understanding of quality and quality assurance is informed by, and promotes, a number of values and procedural principles, as outlined below:

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10 H. Colley, C. Chadderton & C. Lewin (2010). Changing career guidance practice in Connexions: a question of ethics? *Career Guidance Today*, 18(3), 33–37.

11 L. Harvey & J. Newton (2004). Transforming quality evaluation. *Quality in Higher Education*, 10(2), 149–165. (p. 156).

Principle 1: Trust in the competence and good will of professionals

Trust in the ability of qualified practitioners to: design and implement career guidance programmes that work in the interests of all students, particularly the most vulnerable; to develop partnerships with others, whether inside or outside school, in order to strengthen the career learning programmes on offer through all kinds of input, including critical feedback; to articulate high standards of service provision, and to regularly assess whether such standards are being attained through action research cycles; to understand and respond effectively to situations that arise, drawing on their knowledge base as professionals so as to be flexible without compromising central values and standards.

Principle 2: Value student voice

Accord great importance to student voice, and to the voice of their parents/guardians as well as the communities they come from. While career-learning programmes are designed in line with general principles that have been developed on the basis of research, reflection and experience, they are nevertheless open-ended in order to better take into account the lived and diverse realities of students.

Principle 3: Focus on fitness for purpose

Focus on quality as 'fitness for purpose' and on quality as 'transformation' and not just on quality as 'value for money'. While the latter is important in terms of ensuring that public funds are spent in ways that best promote the common good, the kind of quality assurance we have in mind is one that is committed to the development of a *quality culture* that sees an open and active commitment to quality at all levels. It is the willingness to continued self-evaluation, in respect to fundamental principles of public service, which is the key characteristic that we are after. Such an approach is forward looking and agenda setting. It is also marked by an alignment

between philosophy, technology and context: i.e. there is congruence between shared values and ideals, the instruments used to enhance quality, and the distinctiveness of mission and circumstances of an institution.

Principle 4: Enhance quality through action research and adoption of the reflective practitioner model

Such values and principles are nicely captured by an 'action research' approach, which informs not just our way of approaching quality and quality improvement, but also the way the **MYFUTURE** project was implemented in partner schools. Action research essentially is an approach to quality improvement based on inquiry-based professional development, with practitioners identifying an issue, collecting data, designing and then implementing an intervention and evaluating its effects with the students they are working with. Action research is an embedded practice that allows *reflective career practitioners* to examine their own programmes, thereby enhancing their efforts, and ultimately ensuring student progress in career learning.

While there are competing definitions as well as versions and models of action research, in this context the term will be used to highlight a number of important distinctions that differentiate it from more technocratic forms of quality assurance. Figure 1.2 provides a visual representation of some of the key words associated with 'action research'.
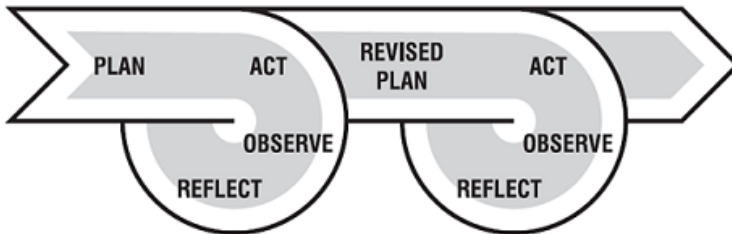
Figure 1.2: Stages involved in action research

Implications of action research

The adoption of an 'action research' approach entails a number of shifts in one's approach to quality and quality assurance. There is first of all a commitment to research as a way of interpreting situations in schools: the very way one identifies a situation and defines it as a 'problem' or 'challenge' engages us in a process of meaning-making. Such interpretations are inevitably political: how we define 'at risk' students, for instance, or how we identify 'early school leavers', or what we consider to be 'career maturity' entails making judgements about people's behaviour, what motivates it, whether or not it is positive or negative.

Action research implies collaborative approaches to quality improvement

Action research gives a lot of importance to the views of the students, and to the way they construct meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives. Action research therefore tends to privilege qualitative forms of research, where the student voice is quite central. Furthermore, action research is not just about method. It is not just about a different way of producing knowledge and of improving the quality of a service: it is also about a different way of *being* and of *being with others*. Action research is in fact about *improving* a social practice, and that such improvement needs to happen through the *involvement* of others. The spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, typical of the action research approach, "involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice, and maintaining collaborative control of the process."[12]

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12 J. McKernan (1991). *Curriculum action research. A Handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner*. London: Kogan Page (p.8). See also J. Masters (1995) History of action research. In I. Hughes (ed.) *Action research electronic reader*. Available at: http://www.aral.com.au/arow/rmasters.html

The importance of front-line implementers of quality services

The target is not just the improvement of a particular practice, but also the improvement of the *understanding* of the practice by its practitioners, and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place. Ultimately, it is the practitioners – the front-line implementers – who will change the world of the school by understanding it. In other words, action research is about engaging with the world as it is, in order to imagine and bring about a world as it could and should be… not merely from a technical point of view (e.g. improving programme effectiveness), but also from a social justice and normative point of view (e.g. ensuring that gender, class, cultural and other aspects of equity prevail, in concrete ways, in the context where an action research project is implemented). Such engagements are driven through partnerships that are mutually enabling.

1.5. Elements to be quality assured: A framework for the MYFUTURE *Handbook*

In search for a quality framework

Some work has been done in various countries around the world attempting to identify those aspects of a career guidance service, as well as of career guidance products, that would deserve the 'quality' label. As we have noted, context matters when it comes to defining 'quality', and yet there are some basic principles that seem to apply across the board, thus avoiding the problems associated with what we earlier referred to as 'negative relativism'. Contexts also determine which elements of quality are given most importance: a multicultural society, for instance, is more likely than others to stress services and products that acknowledge and cater for ethnic diversity, even if the principle holds true across contexts. A quality assurance framework that focuses on higher

education is bound to stress different aspects than one whose remit is primary schools.

Quality CG services in secondary schools

This *Handbook* does not set out to cover *all* aspects of quality assurance. Its focus is on compulsory schooling at secondary school level (in most countries, catering for students between 11 and 16 years of age), with a special reference group being those who are most likely to disengage from formal learning and to join the ranks of so-called 'at risk': regular 'absentees', 'lower achievers', 'early school leavers', and 'NEETs' (not in education, employment or training). All these terms and labels are placed in inverted commas because each of them is highly ideological, positioning readers in such a way as to point fingers at the student rather more than at the system.

Focusing on the larger picture

In this *Handbook*, as we shall see, one of the indicators of quality is the ability of a career guidance service to also see the institutional- and system-based nature of a phenomenon, problem, or challenge. This systemic, macro perspective is crucial and speaks to the irony of the intensification of career education programmes for young people at precisely the moment when labour markets are least ready to absorb them, with youth unemployment reaching record levels in many countries. It is important to keep our guard against exporting problems onto students when their proper provenance is the economy. While every effort should be made to support youth transitions into employment or self-employment, efforts to ensure quality services in this regard should not end up 'responsibilising' students for being unable to do so. The deficits are largely with our economic system, not with them.

Key features of CG services that can be improved

With this in mind, let us now briefly outline some of the features of a career guidance service offered to students in secondary schools in order to see what aspects could/should be the object of critical reflection (by authorities, school leaders, practitioners, and/or users themselves). These features can be organised in different ways under different sets of categories. In this *Handbook* we opt to organise our material around the key activities that school-based career guidance practitioners normally perform. The basic question we will be addressing therefore is: how can these key activities be performed in a better way?

Facets of career guidance services

There is broad consensus as to what career guidance staff normally does in schools. The *ILO Resource Handbook* (Hansen, 2006), for instance, helpfully outlines the different facets of career guidance services, and distinguishes between career information, career education, career counselling, employment counselling, and job placement (see *Figure 1.3* below). One can look at these different yet linked activities in the context of the secondary school and develop standards of quality as well as ways of assessing quality for each.

Clearly, the first three are more relevant to secondary school-based career guidance services, while the last two are more likely to be found in public or private employment services. However, elements of all five can be present in both contexts, and in systems that are designed with a life course perspective in mind, are closely linked.

Career information	→	Valid, reliable, up-dated, transparent, timely, usable labour market information; occupational profiles; education and training pathways…
Career Education	→	In or/and across the curriculum; extra-curricular activities; school-to-work curriculum; work experience; entrepreneurship education…
Career counselling	→	Supports self-understanding through career assessment tools; group counselling; in-depth individual counselling…
Employment counselling	→	Focus on Immediate employment goals: skills in finding jobs, sitting for job interviews; accrediting prior learning; personal action planning…
Job placement	→	Registration of vacancies; networking with employers; organising job tasting opportunities; …

Figure 1.3: Five different but linked facets of career guidance services

Activities that CG practitioners are involved in

Another way of identifying the aspects involved in providing career guidance has been offered by Ford (2001). Ford unpacks a service by highlighting several different activities or roles, as outlined in *Figure 1.4* below:

- Informing	- Advising	- Assessing
- Teaching	- Enabling	- Advocating
- Networking	- Feeding back	- Managing
- Following up	- Signposting	- Mentoring
- Sampling work	- Sampling courses	- Innovation/systems change

Figure 1.4: Activities career guidance practitioners are involved in/facilitate:

The NICE framework

In this *Handbook* we will use the framework proposed by NICE (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe). NICE has collaborated with more than 40 higher education institutions offering degree programmes and promoting academic training in career guidance and counselling from 29 European countries. Its proposals regarding the competences and training that guidance staff need to provide improved services are therefore of great value as they represent Europe-wide reflections and experience of those who are very close to the field. NICE identifies the following key roles/functions of career guidance staff:

Figure 1.5: Key roles of career guidance staff as outlined by NICE

Source: C. Schiersmann, B.-J. Ertelt, J. Katsarov, R. Mulvey, H. Reid & P. Weber (2012) NICE Handbook for the Academic Training of Career Guidance and Counselling Professionals: Common Points of Reference. http://www.nice-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NICE_Handbook_full_version_online.pdf (p.42)

CG practitioner roles

While the features identified by NICE are similar to those presented by the ILO and other organisations, they are especially useful in that they stress the role of career guidance practitioners as service providers within an institution and social system. Practitioners, in the view of the NICE group, can be more effective if they have skills and competences in managing service delivery *within* the school, while also building bridges with the community *outside* of the school in support of their programme's goals. This also signals the importance of career practitioners as persons with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to impact on systems in ways that render them more equitable and fair for students, thus responding to the emancipatory aspect of career guidance highlighted earlier. It furthermore ensures that career guidance continues expanding its horizons and becomes a truly multi- and inter-disciplinary enterprise, drawing not just on vocational psychology, but also on sociology, economics, and a whole range of related social sciences.

Structure of the Handbook

Part Two of the Handbook considers the different roles that career guidance practitioners in schools are expected to fulfil and focuses on five key aspects of their work. The first three, i.e. roles related to career education (chapter 2), career information (chapter 3), and career counselling (chapter 4), correspond to three of the facets of work identified in the NICE and ILO frameworks, while also addressing many of the tasks singled out by Ford.

The next two chapters address different aspects of the practitioners' role which, in the NICE framework, fall under the heading 'programme and service managers' and 'social systems interveners and developers'. We thus look at how quality of

services can be improved thanks to the provision of a well-resourced drop-in careers centre (chapter 5), and to the leadership and coordination of partnerships with potential contributors to the career programme, whether based inside or outside the school (chapter 6).

The *Handbook* concludes by bringing all the different aspects together in a chapter dedicated to professionalism of the career guidance practitioner (chapter 7). This reaffirms our conviction that ultimately, quality of service depends on the professional attitude of 'reflective practitioners' who constantly strive to improve what they do for the benefit of all students, and those most in need especially so.

Organisation of each chapter
While a chapter is dedicated to the different practitioner roles, these activities are in fact intimately linked in the reality of everyday practice. We nevertheless separate them out in this context in order to facilitate reflection and analysis. Each chapter follows the same pattern.

First we ask *What do we know about these roles?* Here we summarise some of the most relevant findings of international research. This serves as a foundation to build on, providing readers with a quick access to important elements of the knowledge base in our field, unpacking the relevant issues.
We then ask: *What can we do to improve?* This identifies specific areas as targets for improvement, formulated as a set of brief key messages that, if addressed, can serve to ratchet up the quality of their service. In addressing both questions, the Handbook in addition provides resources and examples of 'promising practice'. We avoid using the term 'best practice' as quality is very much related to context, as argued above.

The following signage is used to help the reader navigate through the *Handbook*:

	The sign of a **red brain** provides an overview of key issues about a particular aspect of career guidance, based on a review of international literature.
	A **blue jigsaw** puzzle piece signals a resource. The resource features in a blue box, or a link is provided to it.
	A **green star** signals an example of a promising practice. This is either described in a green box, or a link is provided to it.
	The symbol of an **orange** man presents questions and tasks to facilitate reflection and action, targeting specific aspects of career guidance for improvement.

International knowledge base informing the Handbook

In putting this material together, the **MYFUTURE** *Handbook* has greatly benefited from the rich fund of knowledge and insights that have been generated thanks to the research and projects implemented over the past two decades. Some of these initiatives deserve special mention. These include the highly influential OECD and EU reviews of career guidance[13], and the peer learning opportunities offered by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) and the NICE Network (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe)[14]. This *Handbook* has also been much enriched by the thoughtful input of all the partners in

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13 For an overview of the international reviews of career guidance, see A.G. Watts (2014). Cross-national reviews of career guidance systems: overview and reflections. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 32(1), 4–14.

14 Information about these networks, as well as several resources, are available at the following websites: http://iaevg.net; http://www.elgpn.eu; http://iccdpp.org; and http://www.nice-network.eu See also ELGPN (2015). Strengthening the quality assurance and evidence-base for lifelong guidance. ELGPN Tools No.5, European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. Available at: www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by.../ELGPN_QAE_tool_no_5_web.pdf/ The ELGPN website has several case studies describing efforts to improve quality of career guidance services and products in a number of countries: http://www.elgpn.eu/elgpndb/search/metadata/583

the **MY**FUTURE project, as well as of the career guidance practitioners in Denmark, England, Italy, Malta and Romania. These kindly responded to an on-line questionnaire designed by the University of Derby team, which included a section on quality assurance. Some of these practitioners also agreed to pilot the *Handbook* and to provide feedback to enhance its usefulness. Special thanks go to Giulio Iannis, project coordinator and instigator of the *Handbook*, and to Christine Garzia, my research assistant, who also carried out the focus group interviews with both practitioners and students in Malta.

Additional feedback was provided by Dr Manwel Debono (Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta), Dorianne Gravina (Chairperson, Malta Career Guidance Association), Dr Anne Marie Thake (Department of Public Policy, University of Malta), Professor Tristram Hooley (University of Derby), and Professor Rie Thomsen (Aarhus University).

Enhancing Quality

Areas to improve in career learning
2. CAREER EDUCATION

 What we know

2.1. Career learning programmes

Learning about work in secondary schools
Secondary schools that pursue quality in the way they provide career guidance services offer a carefully designed career education programme. Elements of such a programme promote critical reflection about the world of work, awareness of opportunities for further learning and training opportunities, deeper knowledge of the self, as well as a range of what some refer to as 'career management skills' that are often best learnt experientially. Strong career education programmes provide powerful connected learning opportunities at school, in work places, in the community, and through digital platforms and social media. Career learning and career exploration includes, but goes well beyond, the provision of information about further education and occupations, and it can take place in groups, as well as through individual career counselling interviews when necessary.

Work: an object of critical reflection
Career education programmes help secondary school students learn about the world of work, gaining the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are needed to orient themselves towards an important series of transitions in their life. The school (for better or for worse) already prepares students for the world of work by socialising them into particular values

(such as self-discipline, punctuality, teamwork), by teaching them generic, specific and soft skills (such as reading and writing, using a computer, vocational skills, communication skills, leadership), and by sorting and selecting them on the basis of assessment, with certification sending out signals to prospective employers. Over and above this, however, schools can make the world of work an object of critical reflection, as well as a curricular area where knowledge, dispositions and competences can be developed in a systematic and overt manner.[15]

Aspects of career education

Career education programmes can be examined in terms of
- content
- curricular organisation
- teaching personnel and methodologies, and
- assessment modes.

A review of the international knowledge base about these aspects helps us understand the key issues related to each of these features of a career education programme.

2.2. Content of career education

Typical content of career education programmes

Several countries provide detailed guidelines as to what should feature in a career education programme. All cover areas, topics and issues that fall quite readily into the so-called 'DOTS

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15 A strong case can be made for treating careers education as a subject. As Barnes et al. (2011) note, the notion of 'career' is an important organising concept that is related to other important life issues, just like other established curricular areas; it has a distinctive body of knowledge; it focuses on matters that are important to the individual and society; it draws on specific pedagogical traditions such as experiential learning; and is grounded in the knowledge and methods of the humanities and social sciences (see A. Barnes, B. Bassot & A. Chant, 2011, *An introduction to career learning and development, 11-19*. London & New York: Routledge, p.61).

model'[16], i.e. they deal with decision-making skills, opportunity awareness, transition skills, and self-awareness. Each of these four areas opens up opportunities for students to explore various aspects of the world of work. While this model has been subject to some criticism[17], an examination of attempts to revise it have not challenged it in any fundamental way: it still remains useful in outlining the main features of most career learning programmes that have been developed in different countries, even if they use different vocabulary to signal what ultimately are similar areas.

The following are examples of some of the better-known career education programmes:

Examples of career education curricular frameworks

- the USA: the National Career Development Guidelines: https://association-database.com/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3384
- Canada: the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs:
- http://www.nlsd113.com/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Career_Education/Blueprint_for_Life_-_Quick_REFERENCE_GUIDE.pdf
- Australia: the Australian Blueprint for Career Development: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_blueprint_for_career_development.pdf
- England: The ACEG Framework for Careers and Work-Related Education for 7 to 19 year olds:
- http://www.thecdi.net/write/ACEG_Framework_CWRE.pdf
- Scotland: Developing the Young Workforce – Career Education Standard (3-18): https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/dyw2-career-education-standard-0915.pdf

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16 See B. Law & A.G. Watts (1977). *Schools, careers and community*. London: Church Information Office.

17 See P. McCash (2006) We're all career researchers now: breaking open career education and DOTS. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34: 429–449.

Teaching students for work vs. about work

While these and similar programmes broach very much the same themes, they may be underpinned by different curricular and educational philosophies, with some emphasising information and conceptual knowledge, and others putting the stress on the development of competences. Some might be best described as efforts to prepare students *for* work, and be more technocratic in orientation by stressing adaptation and coping to the world as it is. Others might make a greater effort to encourage critical reflection *about* work, instilling an emancipatory impulse in students and educating them into a desire for a world of work as it should and could be.[18]

Curricular principles

As with all curricula, career education frameworks are underpinned by a set of specific principles and criteria. Examples of these include such features as the following: that the themes are open-ended and flexible, allowing learners to contribute their knowledge and to bring up their concerns; that the programme is customised to respond to individual and group needs; that it is relevant; that it is offered in partnership with other stakeholders; that it is appropriate given the developmental needs of the learners; that the themes are integrated so that the programme is holistic rather than fragmented; and that there is a sense of progression.

Established curricular frameworks

One of the best-known career learning curricula is The *Blueprint for LifeWork Designs,* Canada's "national learning outcome framework of the competences (skills, knowledge, attitudes) citizens of all ages need to improve lifelong to prosper in career and life in the 21st century". It sets out to be the archi-

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18 Simon, R., D.A. Dippo & A. Schenke (1991). *Learning work: a critical pedagogy of work education*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.

tecture and conceptual organiser for career-relevant activity in a school and beyond. It thus addresses some of the concerns expressed above, in that it helps integrate, coordinate and track career development across the lifespan. It is based on the notion that life and work, though at times distinct, are not separate, and that they are best designed in harmony with each other. The notion that life/work can be 'designed' and re-designed emphasises the intentionality and agency behind life planning, while acknowledging the serendipity of life.

The Blueprint for LifeWork Designs

The Blueprint caters for *three major areas*, i.e. personal management, learning and work exploration, and life/work building – all of which correspond nicely to the DOTS model mentioned earlier, as can be seen below, which sets out the different themes/topics that fall under the three major areas. The Blueprint is also *developmental* in that the same issues can be revisited in ways that connect with age/stage concerns. The four levels refer to early years, up to adolescence, up to late adolescence, and up to adulthood, where the determination of needs is based on vocational maturity rather than on age.

> *The Blueprint is also developmental in that the same issues can be revisited in ways that connect with age/stage concerns.*

The Blueprint is underpinned by *an approach to learning that emphasises four stages*, namely acquisition (acquire, explore, understand, discover); application (apply, demonstrate, experience, express, participate); personalisation (integrate, appreciate, internalise, personalise); and actualisation (create, engage, externalise, improve, transpose).

The Canadian Blueprint for LifeWork Designs

Competencies by Area and Level and Learning Stage

COMPETENCIES	LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV
AREA A:	**PERSONAL MANAGEMENT**			
1. BUILD AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE	1.1 Build a positive self-image while discovering its influence on self and others.	1.2 Build a positive self-image and understand its influence on one's life and work.	1.3 Develop abilities to maintain a positive self-image.	1.4 Improve on abilities to maintain a positive self-image.
2. INTERACT POSITIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS	2.1 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (I).	2.2 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (II).	2.3 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work.	2.4 Improve abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work.
3. CHANGE AND GROW THROUGHOUT ONE'S LIFE	3.1 Discover that change and growth are part of life.	3.2 Learn to respond to change and growth (I).	3.3 Learn to respond to change and growth.	3.4 Develop strategies for responding to life and work changes.
AREA B:	**LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION**			
4. PARTICIPATE IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING SUPPORTIVE OF LIFE/WORK GOALS	4.1 Discover "lifelong learning" and its contributions to one's life and work.	4.2 Link life-long learning to one's life/work scenarios, both present and future.	4.3 Link life-long learning to one's career building process.	4.4 Participate in continuous learning supportive of life/work goals.
5. LOCATE AND EFFECTIVELY USE LIFE/WORK INFORMATION	5.1 Discover and understand life/work information.	5.2 Locate, understand and use life/work information.	5.3 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information (I).	5.4 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information (II).
6. UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND SOCIETY/ECONOMY	6.1 Discover how work contributes to individuals and the community.	6.2 Understand how work contributes to the community.	6.3 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (I).	6.4 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (II).
AREA C:	**LIFE/WORK BUILDING**			
7. SECURE/CREATE AND MAINTAIN WORK	7.1 Explore effective work strategies.	7.2 Develop abilities to seek and obtain/create work.	7.3 Develop abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work.	7.4 Improve on abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work.
8. MAKE LIFE/WORK ENHANCING DECISIONS	8.1 Explore and improve decision making.	8.2 Link decision making to life/work building.	8.3 Engage in life/work decision making.	8.4 Incorporate adult life reality into life/work decision making.
9. MAINTAIN BALANCED LIFE AND WORK ROLES	9.1 Explore and understand the interrelationship of life roles (I).	9.2 Explore and understand the interrelationship of life roles (II).	9.3 Link lifestyles and life stages to life/work building.	9.4 Incorporate the "balanced life/work" issue in life/work building.
10. UNDERSTAND THE CHANGING NATURE OF LIFE/WORK ROLES	10.1 Discover the nature of life/work roles.	10.2 Explore non-traditional life/work scenarios.	10.3 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (I).	10.4 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (II).
11. UNDERSTAND, ENGAGE IN AND MANAGE ONE'S OWN LIFE/WORK BUILDING PROCESS	11.1 Explore the underlying concepts of the life/work process.	11.2 Understand and experience the process of life/work building.	11.3 Recognize and take charge of one's life/work building process.	11.4 Manage one's life/work building process.

2.3. Curricular organisation

Delivery modes

Many education systems internationally have embedded career education (also known as "career management skills") in the curriculum. They have tended to do so in one (or a combination of more than one) of the following four ways:

Career learning across the curriculum

Some systems have different aspects of career education taught across a range of curriculum areas, such as language (e.g. learning how to write a job application letter; how to write a c.v.); social studies/personal and social education/religious studies (e.g. meaning of work; different ways of organising work, such as cooperatives; workers' rights; the role of

trade unions; gender issues in relation to work; the notion of work as a 'calling'); and expressive arts (e.g. role playing a job interview).

Advantages of cross-curricular approaches
A cross-curricular approach helps students think through work-related issues in different contexts and through the lens of different subject areas. This can lead to the development of rich insights, with opportunities for learning spread out in ways that connect with the interests and subject-related motivation of students.

Disadvantages of cross-curricular approaches
Cross-curricular approaches require careful coordination and cooperation between different teachers, as well as curriculum mapping, in order to avoid unintended overlap and repetition, as well as major gaps in the knowledge, skills and dispositions that a coherent career education programme should promote. When 'everybody' is expected to teach an area, there is a danger that 'nobody' ends up doing so because it is assumed that 'others' are addressing the topic. There is thus no sense of ownership. This is especially the case in an overcrowded curriculum where there is pressure to complete a programme due to student assessment requirements. Furthermore, unless links across the subject areas are made in an explicit manner, students might not be able to connect work-related issues in ways that facilitate cumulative learning, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Combating fragmentation
In order to combat such fragmentation, some education systems encourage career guidance practitioners to coordinate a curriculum mapping exercise. They hold meetings with the teachers addressing work-related issues so that each teacher

knows what the other is doing, and when. They also provide teachers with appropriate resources. Such a strategy is more likely to be successful in systems where there is an institutional culture of teacher collaboration.

Curriculum mapping in Austria

A good example of how career guidance staff can work with other teachers in delivering career education is provided by Austria's 'key-2success' initiative. All curricular subjects across the different years of secondary schooling were scanned in order to identify career learning elements, and these were mapped out across a grid making this learning visible. This provided the basis for stronger coordination in the delivery of career education.

Source:
http://www.schulpsychologie.at/key2success/handreichung.pdf

Organising curriculum mapping

The following is an example of a survey that can be organised at school in order to coordinate the curriculum mapping exercise. Ideally the survey would be preceded by a meeting with all staff to explain the purpose behind it, and for the senior management team of the school to show their commitment to it.

Staff survey

Curriculum mapping: career learning in our school
We are in the process of putting together a career education programme at our school. In order to address gaps and avoid unnecessary overlaps, we are conducting a survey to assess what career guidance/ information is presently being provided by teachers across the different subject areas.

Your response to this curriculum mapping exercise is essential in determining the content of the career-learning programme that the career guidance team will offer. Please return this survey to the Career Centre by ….

Thank you.
The School Careers Team.

1. Are you providing students with any of the following career-related materials/activities?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
- Awareness of variety of careers related to the subject you teach
- Values information related to careers and choices
- Entrepreneurship skills
- Knowledge of where to find career information resources
- Knowledge of specific job duties, training, salary, job trends
- Awareness of job-search methods
- Preparation of CV and job application
- Job interview techniques (teaching and or role playing)
- Guidance in choosing a definite career goal
- Guidance in choosing an educational programme/pathway
- Guidance in choosing a vocational pathway

2. Which resources do you need to teach career-related issues more effectively?
N.B. The school career guidance team can provide you with: teaching input, guest speakers, contacts in industry and further education, videos, field trips, posters, computerised career programmes, career and interest assessment tools, and the use of the Career Resource Centre… [circle the ones that are of interest to you, and add others below]

....
....

3. We are planning to introduce a career-learning portfolio to help students put together the insights they develop about their future pathways.
Would you have any comments or suggestions to make about this?

....
....

Career learning portfolios

Another strategy to ensure that students make connections between career-related learning communicated in different subject areas is to require them to keep a *work-related reflective journal* (also known as career learning portfolio). This reflective diary, which can be in print or digital format ('e-portfolio') can then be the basis of a career learning conversation with the guidance practitioner, with the possibility of also involving the student's parents.

The career learning reflective diary in Denmark

Denmark has recently introduced the use of *Individual Learning Plans* for students in vocational education, in order to enhance the student's ability to make more conscious and well-founded choices. Each and every student must be offered options to choose between different pathways, levels, methods and learning opportunities corresponding with students' individual goals. These personal choices are to be prepared, organised, structured and monitored through the *Individual Learning Plans*. The more informed educational choices made by the students are expected to increase their level of motivation and decrease the drop out rate and the number of inappropriate course choices. An **Education Log** helps students record their achievements and their developing interests and aims, and this supports the drawing up and monitoring of individual education plans. The plans have to be signed by the student, a parent, and the guidance counsellor.

Career learning outside the formal curriculum

Other education systems have career-learning programmes added on as an **extra-curricular activity**. Students are invited to take part in a 'careers week' or a 'careers fair', to visit work places, to participate in a work exploration or work ex-

perience programme, to set up a mock company (e.g. through the Young Enterprise Scheme), to attend presentations made by alumni, parents, and employers who talk about their experiences at work, and so on.

Strengths and limitations of extra-curricular approach

Many of these extra-curricular activities are organised at key transition points throughout the secondary school cycle, such as when students have to make choices between subject clusters (which open up some further education and occupational routes while closing down others). While such extra-curricular activities can provide powerful opportunities for learning about work, their 'ad hoc' and 'add-on' nature conveys the impression that work-related learning is peripheral to the mainstream concerns of the school, as represented by the regular curriculum. Furthermore, such extra-curricular activities also tend to be too little, too late: they often come at a point when students may already have positioned themselves in regard to their future. A more powerful model would be to accompany students throughout their secondary schooling with regular inputs and experiences that help them think through further study and work-related concerns in an incremental manner. This can be particular effective with students who are in danger of disengaging from formal schooling, since they are more likely to grasp the consequences of their action.

Career learning as part of the formal curriculum

Yet other education systems have set up a formal, timetabled subject within the curriculum dedicated to career learning, either as a compulsory or optional area of study. This addresses the disadvantages mentioned in the previous two models, without necessarily excluding its coexistence with them.

A mixed model approach to career learning

The fourth organisational model is one that has a mix of all elements. Finland's approach, for instance, is to integrate career learning across several subjects up to grade 6, while having it timetabled as a subject from grades 7 to 9, where students have a 95-hour compulsory course. Students in upper secondary general education have a 38-hour compulsory course and one optional 38-hour specialisation course in guidance. In vocational secondary level education a 1.5 ECTS guidance module is integrated into all vocational subjects. Similarly in Malta, career learning is one of the main pillars of a timetabled subject called Personal, Social and Career Development, features across a number of curricular areas (such as social studies, and religious studies), and is also addressed through (mostly voluntary) extra-curricular activities (such as work exploration, entrepreneurship programmes, career fairs).

Integrating career learning in the ethos of the school

What seems to work best is when career education is integrated into the mission and ethos of the school, mobilizes both qualified specialists and the wider teaching and school staff, and draws on external contributors such as alumni, parents, post-secondary education and training providers, trade union staff and employers.[19]

2.4. Teaching personnel and methodologies

Persons involved in delivering career learning

Career education programmes can be delivered by school-based staff, by career practitioners based outside the school, or in partnership between school-based and external person-

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19 See T. Hooley, A. G. Watts & D. Andrews D. (2015). *Teachers and careers. The role of school teachers in delivering career and employability learning*. International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, Derby. Available at: www.derby.ac.uk/icegs

nel. School-based staff are closer to the students, and their knowledge of the institutional culture and their constant presence can render them more effective in exploiting teaching opportunities and follow through more effectively. External staff – such as members of employment services, trade unions, enterprises, and community-based associations and NGOs – can bring to the school a more in-depth knowledge of the world of work than school-based staff possess, and their input may thus carry more legitimacy among students.

The partnership model brings the best of both models together, and while coordination between teaching staff and external providers can be a challenge at times, such collaboration can provide powerful learning opportunities. This is especially the case if care is taken to ensure that career guidance principles and professional codes are respected: external staff from the world of work are more prone to emphasise 'realism' at the cost of 'aspirations', and this can raise questions regarding issues of equity, for instance.

Pedagogical methods to teach career education
An ELGPN survey of methodologies used to teach career education revealed that several strategies are used, with a predilection for *experiential forms of learning*. One can here distinguish between methodologies that are *curriculum based*, those that are *work based*, and those that are delivered via the school's *career guidance services*.

Curriculum-based methodologies
Curriculum-based methodologies include the whole gamut of pedagogical strategies that educators normally use, some of which are especially conducing to career learning, such as: use of case studies, role playing, research projects, photolangage, video-based discussion, workshops, peer teaching, etc.

Work-based methodologies

Work-based methodologies include business simulations, visits to work places (work observation, work shadowing, work tasting), setting up of a (mock) company or cooperative, short apprenticeships, etc.

Methodologies used by career guidance service

Methodologies used by career guidance services include bringing in parents, alumni, staff from the employment services, and members of the business community to address students, the organisation of career fairs and career days/week, the setting up of a careers resource centre (real and/or virtual), simulation, career tests and inventories, career guides, career games (e.g. *The Real Game* – see below), research from further education and occupational databases, career learning conversations on the basis of learning diaries, career coaching, career mentoring, facilitating personal action planning, etc.

Examples of games that stimulate career exploration and development

- The Game of Life: https://www.hasbro.com/common/instruct/life.pdf
- Career Challenge: https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/124784/career-challenge
- Career Odyssey: https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/111404/career-odyssey
- You're Hired: http://casualgamerevolution.com/blog/2016/03/youre-hired-a-preview-of-jobstacles
- Career Bingo: http://www.breitlinks.com/careers/career_pdfs/careerbingo.pdf

The Real Game – facilitating career development

The High Five Principles

- Change is Constant
- Learning is Ongoing
- Focus on the Journey
- Follow Your Heart
- Access Your Allies.

Australia
Canada
Denmark
France
Germany

About The Real Game

The program commences with students creating a wish list of things they would like as adults. After assuming randomly assigned life/work roles, the experience a 'reality check' as they balance their monthly budgets, cope w unexpected chance events and explore the balance between work and the of their lives. They create an imaginary community and plan group holidays taking into account individual budgets and work schedules. As their role characters are made redundant, they learn how to adapt to change and unexpected situations, and use their transferable skills to enable them to create new work opportunities. Finally, students leave their roles behind an imagine themselves in the future, developing their own personal life/work profiles based on self-knowledge and experience.

The core activities take 18 to 23 hours of class time to complete. Optional activities provide opportunities to involve other teachers, parents, guardians people from the local community.

2.5. Assessment

Assessing progress in career learning

Career education programmes that aspire for a quality brand will ultimately have to look at 'outcome' rather than just 'input'. The key question here is therefore whether the goals of the programme have been reached, and that entails measuring/assessing student progress in career learning. As with educational efforts more generally, there are different ways of assessing career learning. This can include setting assignments, oral or written tests and exams, quizzes, self- and

peer-evaluation, observation of students in action, and so on. Three approaches that are especially pertinent to assessing career learning are highlighted in this *Handbook*.

Competence-based assessment
Here the students are given tasks that show whether the competences that the career education programme set out to teach have been learnt. A checklist of competences is thus drawn up, with the evaluator noting the extent to which an individual is aware of the rights that workers have, knows how to look for career information on the internet; organise information to select an appropriate course of studies; consider jobs organised in occupational families; examine the impact of gender stereotypes on career decisions; identify the impact of peer pressure on choices made; find vacancies in a newspaper; write a job application letter; sit for an interview and leave a good impression; prepare a c.v., and so on.

Project-based assessment
Here the range of career development skills are expected to come together when implementing a career-related project. A good example of this is when students take part in a Young Enterprise scheme, for instance, where they have to set up a small company or cooperative, make a business plan, identify roles and responsibilities, sift through c.v.'s to recruit employees, open a bank account, design, produce and market a product or service, and so on. In doing all this students demonstrate the extent to which they have learnt a range of career management skills, with the implementation of tasks actually reinforcing that learning.

Portfolio-based assessment
Here students are expected to keep a reflective diary where they record their career exploration experiences and career

learning at school, at home and in the community. This could include records of, and reflections about, career issues raised in class or elsewhere, experience in part-time work, visits to work places, and so on. The emphasis is on reflection – i.e. these portfolios are not meant to be 'display' records as much as learning tools. Career advisers can then use these as a platform for more meaningful individual or group career learning conversations and which, if and when appropriate, could also involve parents or guardians. Such portfolios normally require students to be quite proficient in writing thoughts and feelings, and this might make them less suitable to use with those who have difficulties with literacy. However, portfolios can be based as much on visual records (e.g. through the use of photographs or illustrations) as on writing.

Examples of career learning portfolios

An example of a career learning portfolio is provided by the American Student Achievement Institute (ASAI) in Bloomington, Indiana, available at: https://tinyurl.com/yahhz7rv

The portfolio helps student and parents with educational and career decision-making. Students are invited to check the extent to which they have completed a range of activities or tasks that support their career development. Examples include:

Self Awareness enhanced by: taking a career interest assessment; taking a career preference assessment; identifying a career cluster; discovering one's preferred learning style.

Educational/career exploration enhanced by: learning how much education is needed to be eligible for a job; learning how choices may impact on standard of living; learning about the way subject choices open/close job options; learned to use a career exploration website; taking part in job shadowing experience; taking part in an internship.

Educational and career planning enhanced by: checking which subjects are offered where; talking with a post-secondary teacher; visiting a post-secondary school.

Transition process enhanced by: starting to build a post-secondary plan; developing goals for particular time periods; discussing my plans with my parents and with my plans with career guidance teacher; learning how to write a job application; learning how to do a job search.

The French *Livret Personnel de Compétences* is similar in that it sets out to encourage students to be more reflexive and purposeful in regard to the process of career planning. The *livret* is available at: http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/27/02/7/livret_personnel_competences_149027.pdf

How we can improve

Key questions/tasks

- How does your career education programme compare to the curricular frameworks that have been referred to above? Are there any major gaps that you should attend to?

- How are you ensuring that the school-to-work messages that students are receiving from different teachers come together in meaningful ways to support career planning and development?

- Is the school-to-work curriculum in your school underpinned by clear educational principles? Which are these? How do these relate to the school's overall vision, mission and ethos? Does career education feature clearly and explicitly in the School Development Plan?

- What instruments can you use in order to evaluate the impact of career education on students' career development? Would a participative action research project be valuable in this regard?

- Design and pilot a career learning reflective diary, targeting in particular those students who are most likely to benefit from close mentoring and coaching. Evaluate the pilot and consider expanding the initiative to include as many students as possible.

Areas to improve in providing career information
3. CAREER INFORMATION

 What we know

3.1. Career information: necessary but not sufficient

Students' information about careers comes from different sources
Career-related information is important, but the school is not
the only source of such information, or necessarily the most
influential. Students hear about jobs from the family, from
friends, from the community, and from the media. Students
also learn a lot about the world of work from their experience
in after-school, weekend and/or holiday jobs. Sometimes the
messages they hear from these different sources are in con-
flict with what they hear at school. It should not be assumed
that the information career guidance services give is more re-
liable, though one could argue that it is expected to be.

**Simply throwing more information at students is not enough
and can be counter-productive**
Some claim that we are living in an 'Information Society', with
a great deal of information being available at one's fingertips.
Students might more readily ask Google rather than their ca-
reers adviser for the kind of course- and employment-related
information they need. Others however argue that there is so
much information available – what some refer to as the 'In-
formation Dump'[20] – that people need to learn how to select
what is relevant to their needs, distinguish between reliable
and unreliable sources, and how to make use of data in ways

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20 See W. Norton Grubb (2002). *Who am I: The inadequacy of career information in the informa-
tion age*. Available at: http://iccdpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/OECD-Inadequa-
cy-of-Career-Info-2002.pdf

that shape and inform life goals in a positive manner. Some students are more 'career ready' than others, which means that they can more readily sift through the mass of information available to select what they need. Other students are not clear about what they want, or even which occupational areas or families they wish to explore. Throwing more information at them without providing guidance can only serve to confuse rather than help.

Self-service is not always the answer

As information becomes more readily available through internet-based systems, there is a trend to encourage self-service modes of accessing information. While this might work well for some students, and certainly makes career-related information more readily accessible, it should not lead to exclusive delivery through that mode or medium: many students, especially those who are disengaged from schooling, require assistance and support when making use of web-based career information. Indeed, an important aspect of career education programmes is the development of skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information.

Principles that should underpin career information

A great deal of valuable labour market information is made available by government statistics departments. This, however, is often complex and not immediately transparent to users. It often needs to be presented in much more user-friendly ways. A good career guidance service has up-to-date information that can be readily understood by students and their parents/guardians, and presented in a way that informs decision-making. Information about educational and occupational pathways should be: timely, up-to-date, understandable and user-friendly, accurate, specific, impartial/unbiased, easily accessible, available in diverse formats, supported by guidance

when needed, relevant, sensitive to the diversity of users, developmentally appropriate, linked to broad life concerns, inclusive of learners' knowledge and experience, solicitous of input by specialists and stakeholders.

These and similar principles are outlined by the Association of Computer-based Systems for Career Information (ACSCI, 2009), which provides a useful **checklist** in its *Consumer Guide for Evaluating Career Information and Services*:
https://ncda.org/aws/ACRP/asset_manager/get_file/37672?ver=2398

3.2. Making career information count

Constructivist rather than input-outcome approaches to career information

While information is valuable, it is important to also recognise that the processes involved in considering educational and occupational futures are marked by a complex set of factors. It is not a simple input-output process where the 'giving' of information affects decisions made. Different individuals construct information and understanding in different ways. Gender, class, ethnicity and other social ascriptions, as well as personal characteristics, come together in complex ways, shaping the way individuals make sense and use of new data.

Sensitivity to diversity

The career information we present in schools needs to be sensitive to the diversity of the student backgrounds. In some cases, the very words we use 'warm up' some students and 'cool out' others. The word 'career', for instance, might not always be appropriate, as it tends to be associated by some

students with 'suit-and-tie' jobs that they might find unattractive. In other cases, information is presented in ways that reproduce and reinforce stereotypes based on class, gender, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on. Sometimes the very font types we use, as well as font size, exclude groups of students (e.g. individuals with dyslexia find it easier to read sans-serif fonts).

The NCDA has published criteria for the evaluation of software that is used in career guidance. It also provides a **checklist** that helps to quality audit this software, including the way career information is presented:

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3404

Reaching out to disengaged students

Students who are disengaging or have already disengaged from schooling are less likely to find career information appealing unless it is presented in ways that are meaningful to them and which respond to immediate needs. The choice of presentational styles, media, format, and language are even more important with such students, and a special effort is required to make sure that career information is accessible and transparent to this group as well.

Synchronising career information with students' developmental journey

There is a strong developmental aspect to career information. The extent to which students will find such information relevant and of value depends on their career maturity and devel-

opmental concerns. For some, and at different points throughout their secondary schooling, other life issues and concerns – such as family relationships, peer group interaction, sports and leisure activities – might be much more important than considerations of further study or employment. Career-related information cannot be given at just one point throughout secondary schooling, but needs to synchronise with the developmental journey of young people, scaffolding informed reflection on the way to the next step.

Career information needs to be linked, not scattered and fragmented

Information about educational, training and career pathways is most effective when it is linked. The best sources bring together all the required information in ways that are meaningful to the user. Typically, such information would provide thick descriptions of a particular occupation (whether in the employ of others, or as self-employed), the education and training needed, where this could be obtained and at what cost, how long it lasts, the different skill levels required and remuneration attached to them, the characteristic conditions of work, promotions prospects, and so on. Such information is most effective when supplemented by testimonies of workers in that particular occupation, thus bringing the data alive in ways that students can relate to more readily. One such website is the award-winning Australian platform **MYFUTURE**, details of which are presented below.

An exemplary career information website that sets high standards worth emulating is My Future (Education Services Australia Ltd.): https://www.myfuture.edu.au

This national Australian online career information service was launched in 2002 and revised ten years later taking into account in-depth research involving business and industry, young people and those who help others develop career related skills. It helps Australians of all ages explore their interests, identify potential jobs, change jobs, and find out what qualifications and skills are required for those jobs. Users can also access information on wages and regional job demand. The website acknowledges parents as having a big influence on children's career choices. It thus includes an Assist Your Child feature, designed to give parents up-to-date information on the options available to their children, thus making it easier for them to provide support in making the best possible decisions about study and work. The portal also includes a forum where students will be able to talk online to industry professionals from a range of fields. The new mobile versions also make the site easier to navigate through smartphones and tablets. In 2013, the site averaged more than two million page views per month.

Students as active producers of career-related information, not just passive consumers

Current theories of learning emphasise 'constructivism'[21], signalling the fact that powerful learning is more likely to take place when an individual is actively engaged in the process of producing knowledge and understanding. This suggests that students can be encouraged to produce their own information about particular educational, training and occupational pathways. This can be done through research (e.g. consultation of specialised websites; access to a career resource centre at school, public employment service, or elsewhere). It can also be done through guided visits and/or short internships in educational institutions or work places. Course or work 'tasters' can generate a lot of information and insights, and can be especially helpful to students, especially when there is guided reflection on the experience through career learning conversations with guidance practitioners.

Impartiality of career information is crucial

Information about educational, training and career pathways provided in a professional manner needs to respect the ethical code of the career guidance profession by being impartial. Information can easily be skewed in order to promote particular courses, institutions, service providers, or occupations that an authority would wish to see more interest in. This is especially important since some countries have organised their education and training systems as a market or quasi-market, with funding following students. This means that there is a lot of pressure on educational institutions to attract students, and to present information about their 'product' in such a way as to compete more effectively for students. This could include,

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21 A number of career researchers have applied constructivism to the field of career learning. See, for instance, M. McMahon & W. Patton (2006) *Career counselling: Constructivist approaches*. Abingdon: Routledge.

for instance, statistics about the number of students that find employment after graduation.

How we can improve

Key questions/tasks

- Examine the career information material in your school in the light of the criteria in the ACSCI checklist available at https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3404. How close or far are you from reaching such quality standards? What can you do about this?

- Carry out a survey among students to see where they get most of the work-related information. What does this tell you about the likely impact of the information you are providing? What can you do to be more effective in reaching students?

- What media are you using to make sure career information is readily available to all students? How many of the following are you using: print-based material, a dedicated website, social media, blogs, digital newsletter.

- Does your school have a Career Resource Centre that acts as a hub for career information?

- What arrangements and partnerships have you developed in order to ensure that the career information you provide is up-to-date?

- Is your approach to providing information based on a 'one size fits all' approach, or are you presenting it in ways that make it fit for purpose for specific target groups?

- What special efforts are you making in order to ensure that disengaged students access career information and use it in meaningful ways?

Areas to improve in career counselling
4. CAREER COUNSELLING

 What we know

4.1. Working with individuals and groups

Personalised career guidance for those who need it
A great deal of career development learning can take place in regular classrooms and in large groups. A student can also engage productively in career exploration on his or her own thanks to self good career information platforms. Some students, however, require more attention and support, which can be made available through career counselling sessions with individual or small groups. The success and value of such sessions will largely depend on the ability of the career practitioner to establish a positive rapport with students in ways that enable the latter to share, construct and reconstruct their life narrative, in line, for instance, with life-design strategies. Not all students require close attention, however, and it is unlikely that a school's career guidance practitioner to student ratio makes such time intensive work possible. Group sessions and workshops can bring together students who have the same career development needs, thus helping practitioners make better use of the time available, and leaving more time to attend to individuals when necessary.

The link between career and personal counselling
In many education systems, the same person or staff team offers both career guidance and personal counselling services. This may make sense, both from the perspective of efficient

use of personnel, and also because for students, life's problems and challenges do not come neatly packaged in silos, but are closely knit and interwoven. An individual's problem with parental authority can lead to social-psychological issues (such as frustration, rebellious behaviour, resentment), which in turn impact on the ability to think through career-related concerns. Students may indeed find it easier to start discussing the latter with their counsellor, and then move to more emotionally trying issues. However, the international literature suggests that when both personal and career counselling roles and responsibilities are invested in the same person, there is a tendency for the former to take precedence over the latter. Concerns about this tendency have led some countries to separate the two roles to enhance the availability and quality of career guidance services in schools.

Distinguishing between counselling, mentoring and coaching
There is a range in the intensity of time and personalised service dedicated to face-to-face one-to-one encounters. We can thus distinguish between coaching, mentoring and counselling as follows.

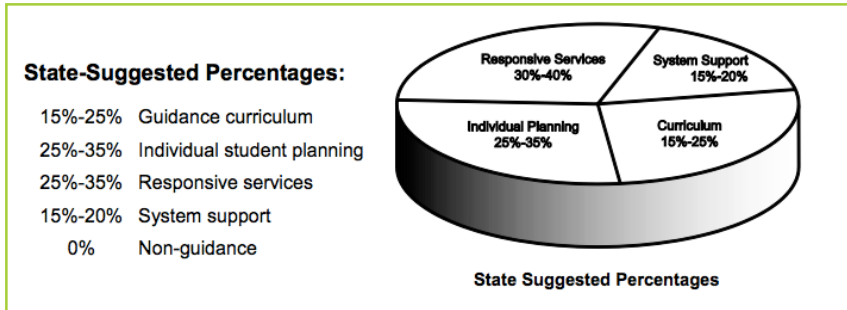### *Difference between Coaching, Mentoring and Counselling*

Support modalities	Coaching	Mentoring	Counselling
Focus	Development and goal-related performance issues	Career and person development	Psycho-social issues that intersect with career concerns
Agenda	Set by individuals with coach assisting in achieving specific goals	Set by mentee with mentor providing support, guidance and experience sharing	Set by individuals and counsellors aimed at achieving short or long term goals
Engagement period	Relationship is for a short duration	On-going relationship that can last for a long period	Relationship is short term but can last longer due to breadth of issues addressed

Using a 'triage' system to cater for those most in need

Career guidance practitioners thus need to be able to assess the type of service different students need. One way of doing this is to implement a '*triage*' or 'screening' approach. This helps identify who is more likely to benefit from large group, small group and/or individual career learning sessions, while keeping a watchful eye to ensure that needs are met. Students who are disengaging/disengaged from formal schooling are likely to benefit from individualised attention of this sort, though they are not the only ones to need it. Some education systems – such as the one for Missouri in the US (see figure below) – have established guidelines as to how much time career practitioners should spend on a range of guidance activities, such that while the largest number of students is reached, those with specific needs that can be met in small groups or individual interviews are also catered for.

Suggested Distributions of School Counsellor Time

State-Suggested Percentages:

15%-25%	Guidance curriculum
25%-35%	Individual student planning
25%-35%	Responsive services
15%-20%	System support
0%	Non-guidance

Responsive Services 30%-40%
System Support 15%-20%
Individual Planning 25%-35%
Curriculum 15%-25%
State Suggested Percentages

Source: "Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Programs: Linking School Success with Life Success." http://www.missouricareereducation.org/doc/guidemanual/AppendixC.pdf

The needs of those doing well at school should not be ignored

Such monitoring is a sign of quality in service provision, since it takes the goal of access seriously. It also avoids the error of focusing almost exclusively on those who are most in need, ignoring the entitlement to career education of *all* students, including those who are doing well at school. These might appear to be motivated and to know what they want from life, but nevertheless can greatly benefit from developing the range of career management skills that career education programmes provide.

The point therefore is not to focus on some groups at the expense of others, but to develop appropriate strategies to ensure that different needs are met in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. Career guidance practitioners are however also likely to deepen their career learning conversations with students on the basis of assessment tools that facilitate self-knowledge, personality traits, and occupational interests. While many of these are now available on line and

can be used in a self-service mode, some students need additional support in order to both complete these tests, and to derive meaning and career development learning from them.

Using 'career readiness' as an indicator for the kind of services a student needs

One way of ensuring that as many students are reached by career guidance services, by providing the type and duration of service that is needed, is to deploy the notion of 'career readiness'. Sampson[22] provides a model to show how a career guidance practitioner greets students who drop in at the resource centre, and directs them to – or provides them with – the service that they need at the appropriate level of intensity. The model does not see 'career readiness' as an all or nothing property, but rather as a continuum where some might be more (or less) 'ready' than others to engage with career planning and decision-making. All students, whatever their state of readiness (high – moderate – low) have career development needs. The key is to respond appropriately to the diversity of needs, thus funnelling the time, resources, tools, and strategies in a way that is both fitting and effective. Some students are thus referred to self-help services, others receive brief staff-assisted support, while individual and more personalised, case-managed services are directed at those who are least career ready.

> " *All students, whatever their state of readiness (high – moderate – low) have career development needs.* "

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22   J.P. Sampson Jr. (2008) *Designing and implementing career programs: A handbook for effective practice*. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association.

Providing individual career counselling to those who need it
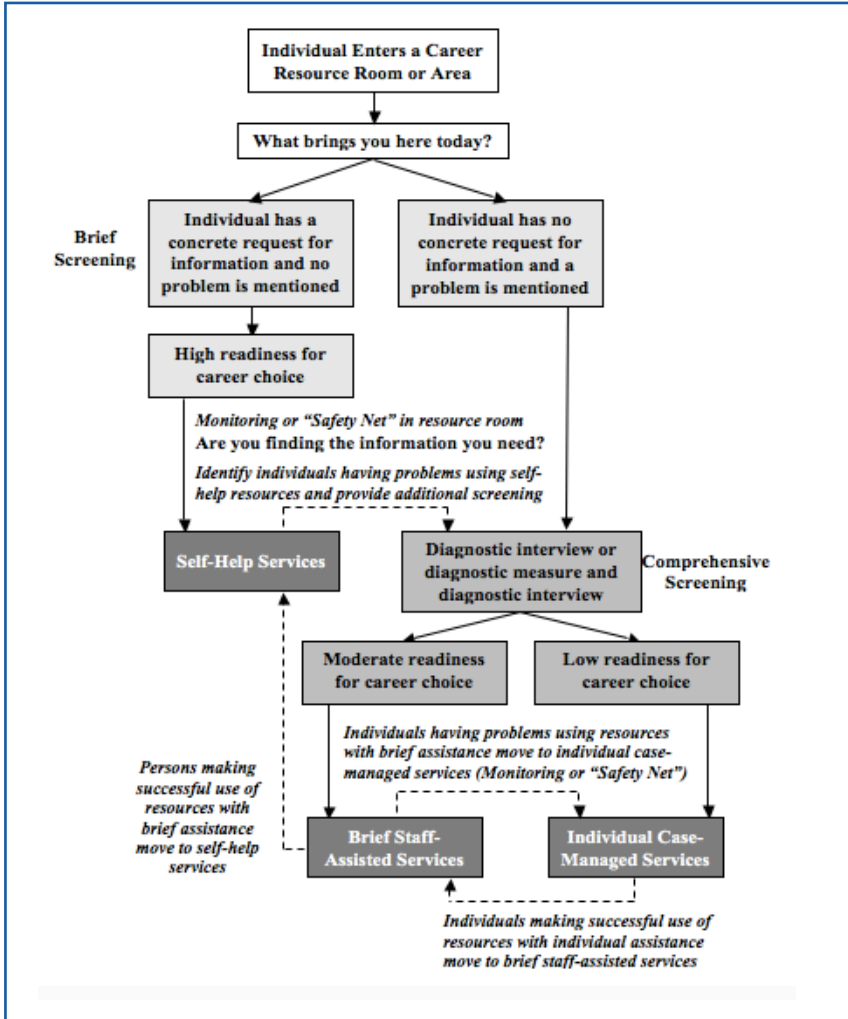
Source: J.P. Sampson Jr. (2008) Designing and implementing career programs: A handbook for effective practice. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association.

4.2. Counselling towards career planning

Engaging with purposeful career planning

The ultimate goal is to help students become more skilled and purposeful in planning their life journey. Here it is important to point out that the notion of 'career planning' tends to assume that all students approach life in the same way, i.e. on the basis of rational decisions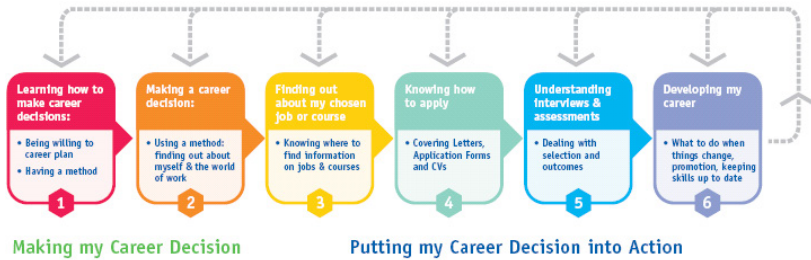 based on the best information available. Research reminds us, however, that this is not necessarily the way that all students, or adults for that matter, engage with life's journey. Some are more inclined to 'go with the flow', grabbing opportunities as they arise. Others might strongly believe that they really do not have much choice, and that planning and aspiring can only lead to frustration. Yet others reject work as a central value in their lives, and see no point in investing a great deal of time and energy into planning for a future in it.

Students who disengage from formal schooling might belong to either of these different groups, and while their life perspective has to be acknowledged, understood, and respected, the role of the career guidance practitioner is to engage with them in order to increase their critical awareness of their approach to life, and to the consequences that can potentially flow from it. Whether such work is done in small groups and workshops, or during face-to-face sessions with individuals, the process leading to career planning is ultimately similar and its stages and recursive nature is nicely captured by the figure below.

The Career Planning Journey

Planning my career involves:

1 Learning how to make career decisions:	2 Making a career decision:	3 Finding out about my chosen job or course	4 Knowing how to apply	5 Understanding interviews & assessments	6 Developing my career
• Being willing to career plan • Having a method	• Using a method: finding out about myself & the world of work	• Knowing where to find information on jobs & courses	• Covering Letters, Application Forms and CVs	• Dealing with selection and outcomes	• What to do when things change, promotion, keeping skills up to date

Making my Career Decision | Putting my Career Decision into Action

Source: Skills Development Scotland

Enhancing career planning through PDPs

A valuable tool that can be used during career counselling is the Personal Development Plan (PDP) – also called an Individual Pathway Plan in some contexts[23]. The goal here is to introduce, reinforce, and/or direct purposefulness and goal-oriented behaviour in students. As already noted, while this can be an effective way of motivating some, others might find that it goes against the grain of who they are and how they negotiate life.

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23 See Scott Solberg's work on Individual Learning Plans and their use in career guidance. The Guide is available here:
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/publications/promoting-quality-individualized-learning-plans-throughout-the-lifespan-a-revised-and-updated-ilp-how-to-guide-2-0/
while this link connects you to resources:
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/solutions/individualized-learning-plans/

An outline of the process involved in writing a Personal Development Plan
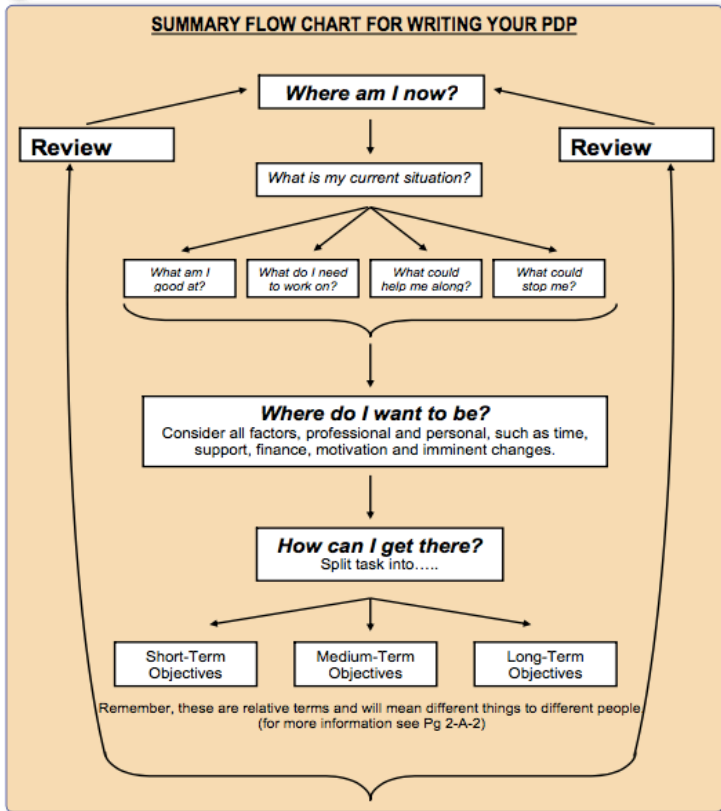
Source: N. Gikopoulou (2008) Career Guide for Schools: Report on Effective Guidance.
http://www.career-guide.eu/uploads/cg_handbook_low.pdf

4.3. *Mobilising career counselling to prevent school disengagement*

Identifying those likely to disengage from schooling

Career counselling is more likely to be effective when it adopts a preventive rather than a 'curative' approach. This is especially relevant when the goal is to prevent school disengagement and early leaving. Some countries, such as Iceland[24], have developed instruments that help identify students who are most likely to lose interest in formal schooling. An example of this is the 'Risk of NEET Indicator' (RONI) piloted in the UK.

The role of career counselling in preventing school disengagement

The 'Risk Of NEET Indicator' (RONI) is a prognosis and monitoring tool to identify young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) early in their secondary school studies, in order to provide them with adequate support to finish their education.

RONI is a School Information Management System. Through this, data related to NEET risk factors is collected and stored about each student in the school. These include low academic attainment, high absenteeism, being in care, special educational needs, living in a deprived area, eligibility to pupil premium (connected to low family income), being involved with the social services, certain ethnic backgrounds, joining the school later, English as an additional language, exclusion from school, gender. Schools and local authorities can amend this list of risk factors based on local knowledge. RONI then awards points based on a weighted scale, which results in a cumulative score that identifies overall vulnerability and risk for each student.

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24 See the outcome of a number of projects reported in the *Back on Track* conference, which addressed the process of disengagement from school. A number of papers in the proceedings deal with the contribution that career guidance and counselling can make to support students, also making the point that the profile of disengaging students is quite varied. Papers available at: www.arnastofnun.is/solofile/1011086

Schools are expected to individually assess the young people identified thorough RONI and provide adequate support for them.

Students identified by RONI can benefit from special support, which can include a combination of academic support, language support, functional skills in literacy and numeracy, and tailored Life Skills courses.

Adapted from: Nouwen et al. (2001) School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures and Alternative Learning Approaches to Reduce Early School Leaving. https://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1046840/ FULLTEXT01.pdf

How we can improve

Key questions/ tasks

- Is the way you are distributing your time allowing you to reach both the majority of students through curricular interventions and self-help material in the Resource Centre, and those in greater need through small group and individual sessions? If not, what can you do about your 'triage' system and your organisation of services to ensure that your efforts have maximum impact?
- What protocols have you developed in order to schedule career-counselling sessions with individuals? Are these protocols widely known and implemented?
- What insights have you developed regarding the use of Personal Development Planning with students who have disengaged from schooling? How can this approach be modified to be more effective? What alternatives can be imagined to render the career development encounter more effective?
- Which career assessment tools are you using? Which standards did you consider when selecting them? Have you considered the issues that have been raised in the following White Paper? https://www.cpp.com/pdfs/Selecting_Career_Assessments_ Whitepaper.pdf

> • Consider the findings of the Gatsby Foundation[25] in the UK, which identified eight benchmarks that are the hallmark of the best career education programmes. These dovetail with the pointers provided in this chapter of our *Handbook*. How many of these benchmarks does your programme fulfil? What kind of indicators can you provide as evidence that you have reached each benchmark? (for examples of indicators, see p.35 of the Gatsby Foundation report).

8 Benchmarks for providing good career guidance in schools

1	A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME	Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.
2	LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION	Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
3	ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH STUDENT	Students have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each student. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4	LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS	All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.

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25 Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014). *Good Career Guidance*. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Available at: http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf

5	ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES	Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
6	EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES	Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
7	ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION	All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
8	PERSONAL GUIDANCE	Every student should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all students but should be timed to meet their individual needs.

*Source: Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014). Good Career Guidance. **London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.** Available at:* http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf

Making career resources more accessible
5. CAREER RESOURCE CENTRE

 What we know

5.1. A hub for career information, education and guidance

The importance of a Career Resource Centre at school

This *Handbook* suggests that a secondary school that gives importance to career guidance allocates the resources required to provide a quality service. An important resource is the physical space that acts as a hub for career-related activities, products and services. Having a Career Resource Centre addresses a number of issues highlighted as concerns across the different chapters, including strong institutional and curricular embedding, access to students, effectiveness and impact through suitable pedagogies and collaboration with partners.

Strengthens legitimacy of career guidance

A Career Centre sends out a clear message to students and staff that the school *values* career guidance. Allocating a physical space to the service establishes a presence, confirms its legitimacy, and is likely to lead to greater use. While the physical space can and should be complemented by resources made available on line, one must not assume that by throwing more information at students this will be enough: as noted in Chapter 3, career information available over the internet in self-service mode is effective with some students, but not with others. Many need a degree of face-to-face contact, and

support in making good use of career-related information and resources in a hands-on, personalised manner.

Enhances access to career services

Having a Career Centre also *enhances access* to services. Career-related issues are not always uppermost in the minds of secondary school students, who have other important life and developmental concerns to focus on. The presence of an attractive and welcoming hub for career information, education and guidance that can be used by individuals on a drop-in basis or by appointment, and by groups, can do much to embed the service as a regular part of the institutional life of the school.

Provides a hub for career learning

The Career Resource Centre can be a hub for pedagogical activities with students, with the print and digital resources required to make career learning more meaningful at hand. Students can get help in learning how to research further education and occupational pathways with the help of guidance staff and peers, and also develop important meta-cognitive skills by learning how to reflect on the way they think about their future. Examples of career learning portfolios can be displayed so that students have a better grasp of their potential value, and are inspired by the efforts of peers and alumni. Students can also benefit from coaching and mentoring of the career guidance staff and peers, who, for instance, can model web-site use, thus stimulating information-seeking behaviour in students. A Career Resource Centre is necessary if one wants to deliver a differentiated service.

A 'laboratory' for authentic learning

Vacancies for holiday, weekend and after school jobs can be advertised at the Resource Centre. This has a number of benefits: staff can establish useful links with local companies and

the labour office, while also ensuring that the jobs on offer to students respect labour laws. In addition, students will have an additional reason and incentive for visiting the career services, and learn about job applications, conditions of work, rights and responsibilities in an authentic manner. If the vacancy noticeboard system is similar to the one used at the local labour office, this helps students understand how to sift through adverts – a skill that will come in handy when looking for full time work later on.

Provides a hub for staff
The school's Career Centre has pedagogical value for teachers as well. It can bring together the different curricular and extra-curricular career education-related inputs that are made by different subject teachers. It can serve as a resource for these teachers, with the career guidance specialist/s supporting the development of teaching materials, and also bringing together the contributors of the career learning programme around a table in order to forge meaningful links between the different elements.

A site to consolidate partnerships
A Career Resource Centre can be managed by an Advisory Board that includes partners from within and outside the school. The range of partners that career practitioners need to work with is covered in detail in Chapter 6 of this *Handbook*. Since the number of partners can make the board unwieldy to run, different boards can be set up to address different aspects of the roles and work programmes of the Centre. Students should be strongly represented on the board/s, also to ensure that their needs remain top of the agenda. Employer and union organisations, national agencies, public and private employment services and institutions of further and higher education and training can provide labour market and educa-

tion-related information on a regular basis, helping to keep the Resource Centre up-to-date.

A resource centre complements but does not replace web-based services

A Career Resource Centre should establish a strong web presence, serving to advertise its services, establish a first contact with students and parents, and providing a range of information and self-help tools that enable career planning. Social media and blogs could complement web- and print-based resources and services. These, together with a career advisory phone-in service or online chat system available to both students and parents, could serve as a first step leading to an appointment for more personalised services at the Resource Centre.

5.2. Setting up / improving the quality of a Career Resource Centre at your school

Features of a career resource hub

An analysis of some of the best career resource centres in educational settings provides clear pointers as to what one should aim for in one's school[26]. We consider these in relation to the physical space needed and its organisation, the kinds of resources that should be made available, the records that could be kept, and the staff and overall costs that are required.

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26 Adapted from various sources, including D. A. Schutt Jr. (2007) *How to plan and develop a career center*. New York: Ferguson (2nd edition); J.P. Sampson Jr. (2008) *Designing and implementing career programs: A handbook for effective practice*. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association; J.S. Fowler & B.E. McDonald (eds)(1998). *Developing a career center: the complete handbook*. New Mexico: State University at Alamogordo. Additional material and guidelines are available free of charge: e.g. *R. Feller (n.d.) Developing a career center*. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.194.8516&rep=rep1&type=pdf *and* https://www.okcareertech.org/educators/career-and-academic-connections/career-information-resources/CareerResourceCenter.pdf
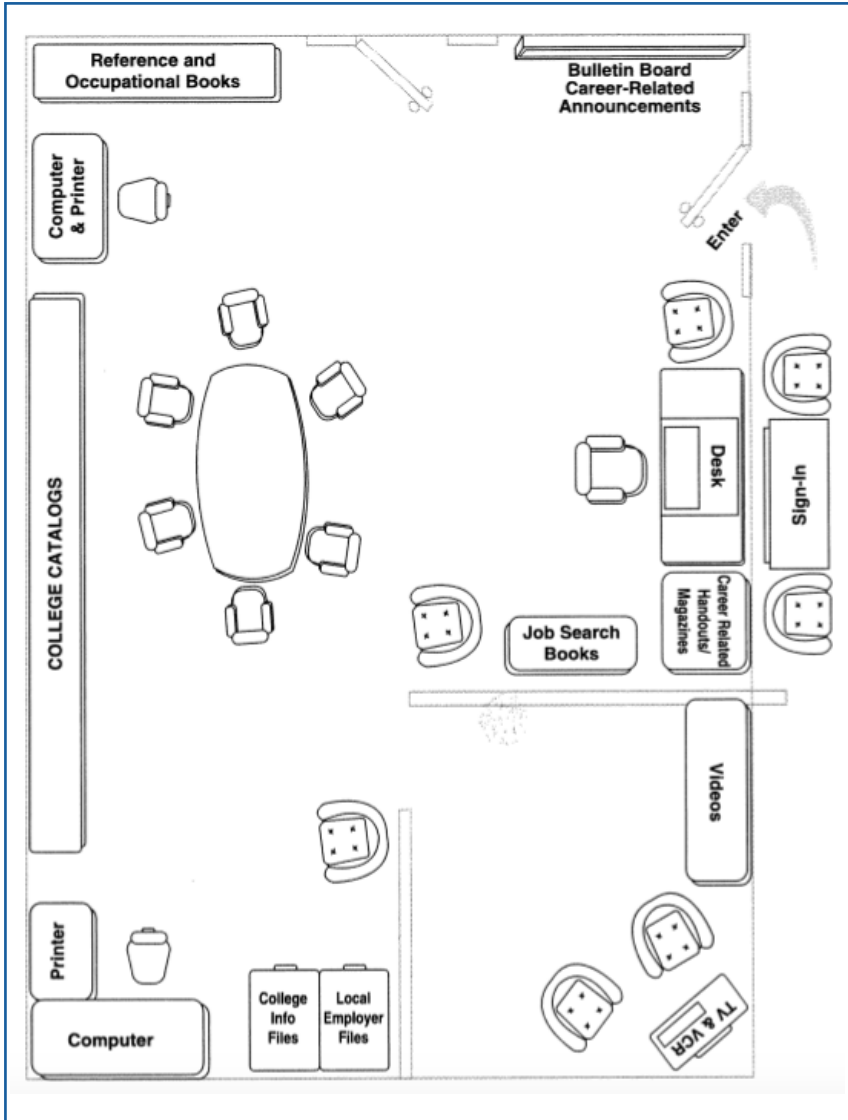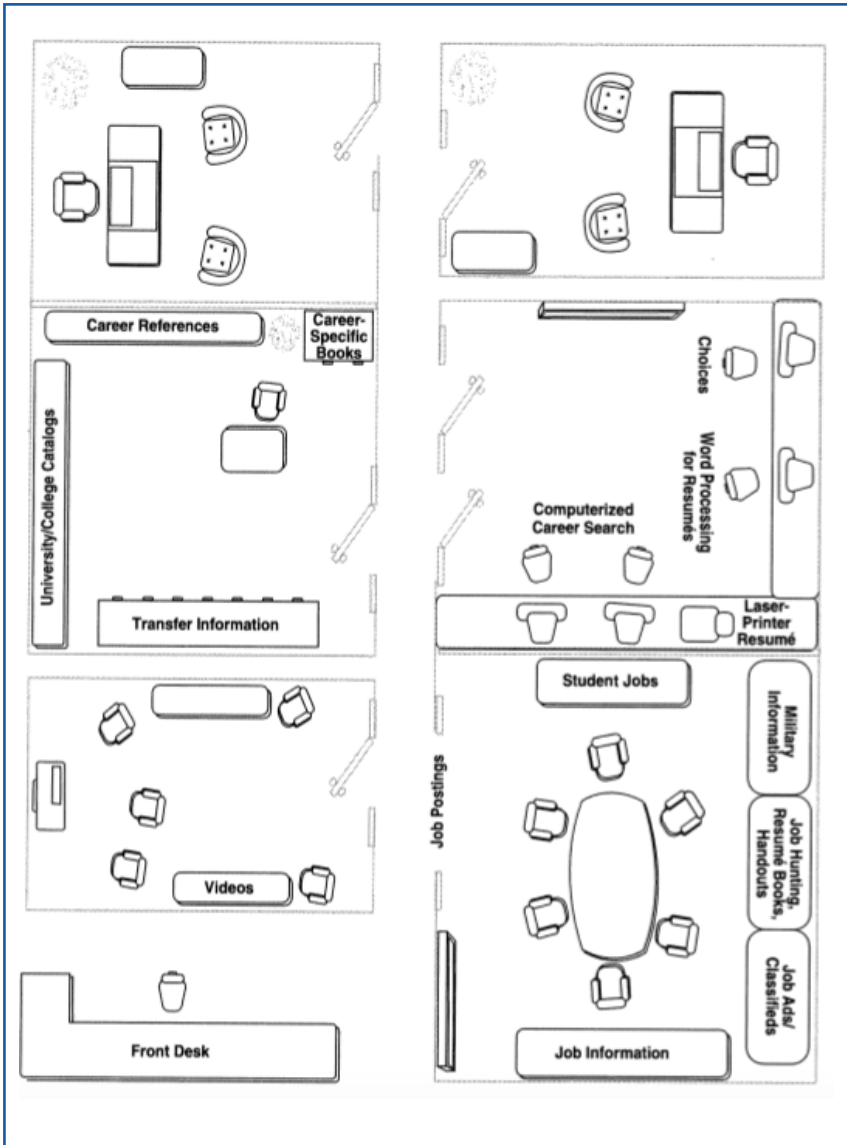
Organisation of the physical space
Career guidance centre located in a 'heavy traffic' area of the school that makes it more likely to be seen by students.

- A set-up that is attractive and informal, encouraging students to drop in so as to engage in career-related learning. The Figure below shows two possibilities.

- A welcoming area where students can ask for an appointment for personalised attention, or directed to the resources they need and which they can use in self-help mode.

- Furniture that supports interactive learning sessions, with an open space for group work, and cubicles for brief staff-assisted inquiry as well as personalised individual case-managed services.

- Computer workstations should be available, with headphones, key career learning websites bookmarked, and attached to printers, photocopiers, scanners, and LCD projector/s.

- Posters and notice boards, whether traditional or electronic, that signal key career-related messages that the school wishes to emphasise, (e.g. 'Girls can do Anything', or 'Your life is your message to the world', or 'If it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you', or 'A goal properly set is half-way reached' etc.), and that encourage students to think outside the box.

Two examples showing the organisation of a Career Resource Centre in one room, or in a multi-room environment

Source: *https://www.okcareertech.org/educators/career-and-academic-connections/career-information-resources/CareerResourceCenter.pdf*

Organisation of resources

- A map of the resource room to help students locate different types of resources, such as books, files, DVDs.
- Signage to help young people identify the location of specific types of career resources.
- Colour coding of signs to match specific resource guides and information hand-outs can help students locate resources on a specific topic.
- Career resources are organised around questions that students typically ask.
- Resource guides could be organised around the main topics addressed in the career education programme (i.e. learning about yourself, learning about occupations, making career decisions, making education and training pathway decisions, getting a job, etc.).
- Depending on context, a special section should be dedicated to information about scholarships and other funding sources that provide grants to support further studies. In some contexts a section on opportunities for study and work abroad is also an important addition to the resource room.
- Guidance is provided as to the sequence of resources that students should access, such as the need to understand occupational families and to review basic information before asking for an interview with the career guidance staff.
- Hand-outs are available that encourage students to carry out their own research about future options, and in ways that encourage discussion with parents and carers.
- Provision of assessment tools to further self-knowledge, to facilitate investigation of occupational interests, and to produce information and insights that can support career exploration with the guidance staff and the development of Individual Pathway Plans.

- Resources in alternative formats are available for students with disabilities, those who have difficulty reading and who are more visual in their approach to learning

Records to support cumulative input

- The resource centre can also serve as a repository for a cumulative record of the career exploration efforts of different students, in such a way that staff can follow their evolving interests and aspirations. Information obtained from tracer studies showing student pathways after leaving the school can also provide important insights that feed into the planning and management of the career service at school.

- Such records would be considered in relation to relevant and related data, such as work experience, attainment in different subject areas, as well as other data, which, however, should respect the students' right to privacy and should abide by all the ethical rules of the profession.

Staffing issues

Setting up a Career Resource Centre requires a lot of work that can be done by persons with clerical and librarianship skills, with the guidance of staff specialised in careers work. In some countries the career guidance profession is tiered, with some focusing on the production and display of career-related information. These would be ideally suited as support staff in a Resource Centre. In countries where this is not the case, career guidance practitioners might benefit from having support staff (e.g. a secretary, a school librarian) seconded for a number of hours per week to help the Resource Centre, unless the school has the capacity to employ part-time staff. The main concern here is to ensure that trained career guidance practitioners allocate as much time as possible to making the best use of their skills.

- Running a Career Resource Centre requires skills that go well beyond those that are normally associated with one-to-one or group counselling. Such skills include planning, managing and implementing programmes, developing budgets, ensuring that resources provide correct and up-to-date information, and training other staff or helpers.

- Senior students can provide a great deal of support in a range of tasks in the Resource Centre, and this can be a beneficial learning experience for them in all sorts of ways. In schools with a strong tradition of parental involvement, parents too can be invited to donate some of their time to completing specific tasks[27].

Costing concerns

While partnerships, student and parent support, and free provision of up-to-date educational and occupational information can keep costs down, a well-equipped Resource Centre does nevertheless require an annual injection of funds, besides an initial outlay if the school has to start from scratch. The Gatsby Report commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers to calculate the cost of running a career guidance service in a medium-sized school in England wishing to attain the benchmarks it set out (and reproduced in Chapter 4 above). While the cost of different elements of a career programme is not specified, the overall calculation using the Standard Cost Model for a school starting from scratch amounts to an estimated £54 (€60) per pupil from the second year onwards, or less than 1% of the budget normally available to a school. Needless to say, while this gives an indication of the budget required, there are bound to be important variations within and between countries.

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27 There are several benefits in involving parents as partners in career learning. They however need to be prepared for that role to avoid such difficulties as influencing students with their strong views or prejudices, having outdated information, or being seen as meddlers by other parents. See also A. Barnes, B. Bassot & A. Chant, 2011, *An introduction to career learning and development, 11-19*. London & New York: Routledge, p.123.

How we can improve

Organizational procedures to follow when establishing a Career Resource Centre

- Assess the present career programs
- Create a local advisory board
- Determine the objectives of the Centre
- Plan the initial set-up and operational budget
- Plan space, location, equipment and resources
- Gather existing career materials
- Determine methods of identifying and filing career materials
- Establish operational procedures
- Plan on-going reassessment
- Plan publicity and dissemination of Career Centre information

Source: R. Feller (n.d.) Developing a career center. *http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.194.8516&rep=rep1&type=pdf*

How we can improve

- Be clear about the philosophy underpinning the Career Resource Centre. This *Handbook* has often stressed that the provision of information is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The career guidance service, for which the Resource Centre can act as a hub, should aspire to help students think beyond what they implicitly or explicitly believe to be their 'horizons' of possibility[28], given that these are often delimited by socialisation and prejudice related to class, gender, ethnicity, 'ability', and other social and personal factors and dynamics.

- Check whether the hard-to-reach students, and the students that have disengaged or are in danger of disengaging from school are aware of the services offered at the Career Resource Centre. Organise a familiarisation and orientation visit to students at the beginning of each scholastic year. Have an Open Day for parents as well. Prepare advertising brochures, and prominently display information about the Centre on the school website. Launch a digital Newsletter that keeps students, parents and other partners abreast of updates, new resources, events, and so on.

- Visit a well-established and reputable Career Resource Centre. Carefully examine how it is organised and run, and the criteria and indicators that are used in order to ensure quality.

- In some contexts, particularly when schools are too small to have the resources to set up a good quality Career Resource Centre or library, it might make more sense to pool efforts across a network of local schools and set up a Centre that services them all. If this strategy is adopted, then care must be taken to ensure that distance does not limit access. Another option is to have strong links with other public or private career resource centres, such as normally provided by employment services, and to ensure that they also cater for student needs, besides those of adults wishing to find or change work.

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28 The term 'horizons of action' has been developed by P. Hodkinson, whose work is most valuable in thinking through the social an emancipatory role of career guidance practitioners. See, for instance his 2008 Memorial Lecture 'Understanding career decision-making and progression: careership revisited.' https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Understanding-career-decision-making-and-%3A-.-Hodkinson/6d4a5a943645032f4aa9336c41ece-01b4598eb5e

Strengthening the career guidance team

6. PARTNERSHIPS IN PROVISION

 What we know

6.1. Contributors to the career education programme

The importance of partnerships in support of career learning

Learning about self and career requires the concerted input of various players, including: career guidance practitioners, subject teachers, staff from public and private employment services, employers, chambers of commerce, trade unions, as well as parents, alumni, and NGOs. The potential for such varied input to be enriching, and to be a mark of quality, depends on having purposeful coordination between different contributors so that, from the perspective of the learner, career education is experienced holistically and meaningfully, as a set of powerful, connected reflections that help orient individuals towards the future.

A range of potential partners

This *Handbook* has already noted several times that while school-based career guidance specialists have a pivotal role to play in the design, coordination, delivery, evaluation and constant improvement of the career education programme in a secondary school, they can only be truly effective when they work with others, both within their institution and outside of it. They need to work with a range of partners, outlined below.

School leaders

Career guidance practitioners need the full support of school leaders so as to ensure that career education and guidance are integrated within the vision of the school, in ways that are signalled, for instance, by explicit statements in the school's mission statement, on the school's website, and through the articulation of a career education strategy firmly embedded in the school's development plan.

Subject teachers and other professionals giving a service to the school

Subject teachers who deliver important components of the school-to-work curriculum, and whose input, when coordinated in a purposeful manner, can increase the quality and effectiveness of the overall career education programme. Career guidance practitioners are also likely to need to work with other categories of educational staff, such as counsellors, nurses, youth workers, social workers, probation officers, and learning support staff, either as part of a team to address student difficulties that are multi-faceted in nature (e.g. school disengagement), or as part of a referral system that could include a regional network of schools.

Students

Students themselves are important partners in the provision of career guidance services: many of them have first-hand or vicarious experiences of the world of work, either through holiday jobs or through exposure to working relatives or family-based enterprises. Students are a very important resource that are often not considered as contributors to career guidance programmes, and yet they can participate in and even lead peer learning and mentoring initiatives which are well known to be very effective, especially in reaching out to disengaged students[29].

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29 This website provides information and links to several studies on the value of peer to peer career counselling: http://www.peer.ca/Biblio6.html

FHE staff and students

Further and higher education staff and students can help secondary school students become familiar with the education and training paths open to them, and the occupational opportunities these open up to them. They can host visits, and also facilitate course 'tasters'. Tertiary level career guidance specialists also have a significant role to play in providing professional development opportunities to guidance practitioners in schools, and in working with them in the design, implementation and evaluation of services, particularly through action research projects.

External guidance specialists

Other potential partners are external guidance specialists. These could include private service providers on contract with the school (who, in some education systems, actually have the main role in the delivery of the career guidance programme), as well as members of the employment services (whose knowledge of the labour market is likely to be broader given the nature of their work). Often, external specialists are also responsible for the provision and update of a career information platform, thus contributing a crucial element to career learning even when they are not on site.

Employers

Employers and representatives of employers, such as members of the chambers of commerce and of cooperatives, are often the most sought after partners in the field of career guidance. They can share their knowledge and experience with students in all sorts of ways, including through presentations, making an input in the preparation of career information resources, supporting and participating in career fairs, offering opportunities for work experience and job shadowing, mentoring entrepreneurship initiatives, and so on.

Trade union officials

Trade union officials are not often referred to in the career guidance literature, but we consider these to be very important partners in the provision of authentic insights about the realities of work in the contemporary world. They highlight the rights of workers at a time when political, social, economic and technological dynamics have eroded security and conditions of work in what has been called a 'risk society'[30]. Many trade unions moreover offer career guidance services to their members, either when they are rendered redundant due to 'restructuring', or when they are seeking to change jobs. Such experience and perspectives are of critical importance.

Members from the local community

A whole range of community members can contribute other perspectives and insights to the school's career education programme, be they ex-alumni who are now in employment or entrepreneurs, parents who can share their first-hand experience in the labour market (not just through presentations, but also through 'take-to-work-for-a-day' schemes), and non-governmental and voluntary organisations that can bring in alternative perspectives on the world of work, while also highlighting the value of non-paid work, leisure, healthy and balanced lifestyles, and so on. In multi-cultural contexts, members of ethnic minorities can help ensure that services and products are respectful of diversity.

Strengthening career guidance in schools through partnerships

This chapter of the *Handbook* considers the way a purposeful partnership between school-based career guidance practitioners with the above enhances the quality of the career

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30 See R.G. Sultana (2012). Learning career management skills in Europe: a critical review.' *Journal of Education and Work*, 25(2), 225–248.

education programme, and is indeed one of the key indicators of quality. In the following chapter we go on to note that for such partnerships to truly work, career guidance staff need to have adequate professional training that enables them to be the 'reflective practitioners' that are the guarantors of a quality service.

6.2. Partnerships as an indicator of quality provision

Strong partnerships enhance quality: the evidence

The reviews of career guidance carried out since 2004 by the OECD, the European Commission, and other international agencies, which cover more than 55 countries between them, all highlight the importance of having strong and productive partnerships. So too does an even more recent report published in the UK, which tried to identify the characteristics of good guidance. The Gatsby report based its conclusions on an extensive review of the international literature, visits to five independent schools in England, as well as to six countries with a reputation

> *The reviews of career guidance highlight the importance of having strong and productive partnerships.*

for strong career guidance provision and high educational attainment (Canada, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, and the Netherlands). Besides visiting schools the report team interviewed teachers, pupils and ministry officials. It highlighted coordination with employers as one of the key markers of quality provision.

The role of employers as partners in career learning

One of the key conclusions of the Gatsby report states that "one can think about career guidance in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors. 'Push' factors are school-based; 'pull' factors come from employers. Push and pull complement each other, and our conclusion from this study is that employer-pull is as important as school-push" because "employers can give an authentic picture of work that schools alone can never convey. However, employers need to work in close collaboration with schools."

Key recommendations from the report include the injunction:

- To schools to "Improve access to employers so all schools can provide multiple encounters for their pupils with the workplace"; and to ensure that a member of their governing board has the "remit to encourage employer engagement and to take a strategic interest in career guidance".

- To employers, their representative organisations and organisations promoting business links to jointly carry out a comprehensive review of the opportunities for students to have encounters with employers, the self-employed and the workplace, and to consider "what could be done to make sure every school has enough employer links" to meet the benchmarks identified in the report.

Source: Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014). Good Career Guidance. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation: *http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf*

Creation and coordination of a partner network requires skill
The benefits of partnerships are clear, and it is actually difficult to imagine how career guidance services and products can attain quality standards without involving a whole range of contributors. Partnerships are however often volatile, dependent as they are on good will, personal relationships and networks, and perceptions of mutual benefit. They also require a signifi-

cant investment of time and money to build up and maintain. Unless publicly mandated, acknowledged, and supported they are likely to dissipate and lose steam. One of the roles that practitioners in schools need to perform is to reach out to, and network with, as many partners as possible. This requires special skills and the allocation of time and resources. Such requisites are highlighted in the NICE curriculum framework for the training of career practitioners, in the area dealing with 'social systems intervention and development', as follows:

Social Systems Interveners & Developers are competent in...

- Making arrangements with stakeholders with-in systems
- Approaching and intervening in existing networks and communities and building new ones
- Consulting organisations in career-related questions of their stakeholder (e.g. recruitment, placement or personnel development of employees, career management competences of pupils)
- Making referrals
- Coordinating activities of different professionals
- Collaborating with different professionals (for instance, career workers, social workers, educators, psychologists, rehabilitators, probation officers, etc.)
- Advocating and negotiating on behalf of their clients in relevant contexts (e.g. work teams, families, formal proceedings)
- Mediating conflicts between clients and their social environments.

Source: C. Schiersmann, B.-J. Ertelt, J. Katsarov, R. Mulvey, H. Reid & P. Weber (2012) NICE Handbook for the academic training of career guidance and counselling professionals: Common points of reference. *http://www.nice-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NICE_Handbook_full_version_online.pdf*

An example of a partnership agreement from Barcelona

The *Barcelona Orienta Agreement* represents an interesting example of career guidance offered to students through a partnership between 45 different organisations, targeting several groups of citizens, including Early School Leavers.

Set up in December 2014 and coordinated by the city's Institut Municipal d'Educació, the initiative brings together the different public and private guidance providers in order to be in a better position to offer efficient, consistent and high quality services and resources. A technical secretariat promotes the Partnership Agreement, and oversees and supports the different working groups.

Source: http://www.guidingcities.eu/best-practices/barcelona-orienta-agreement/

How we can improve

Key questions/tasks

- Draw up a list of the partners that provide you with regular support in the delivery of your career guidance programme. Do you note any important gaps? What can you do in order to strengthen your current partners and bring others on board? You can use the following template to carry out a situation analysis. This helps you consider potential partners in terms of their likely level of interest in supporting the school, and their overall influence in promoting career learning and development. Comments could include relevant contact information, input they can make with specific groups of students, such as those in danger of disengaging from schooling, and so on.

Partner	Interest	Influence	Comments

- Is there a municipal, regional or national body that brings together the social partners to discuss their engagement with education and training? In recent years the European Commission has made a number of policy recommendations promoting inter- and cross-sectoral collaboration, which is seen as necessary in if member states are to develop lifelong career guidance systems. Some countries have set up a national forum where career guidance stakeholders meet on a regular basis. This could provide a good platform and support to expand the school's partnership base.

- One of the key principles in the European Reference Tools for quality provision of lifelong career guidance is 'user involvement' in the design and delivery of services. Have you set up a peer mentoring system in your school? Career planning support offered by peers and monitored by professionally qualified guidance practitioners can be a very effective way to reach more students, with the experience also serving to develop important soft skills to mentors as well. Students in the process of disengaging from schooling may be more open to advice from senior peers than from staff, who might be seen to represent the institution they are rejecting.

- Establish a Partnership Award Scheme, whereby the school formally acknowledges and presents an award to partners who make a significant input in the institution's career education programme.

The guarantor of quality provision
7. THE REFLECTIVE PRACTIONER

What we know

7.1. Competent professionals as guarantors of quality

Career guidance: towards professional status

Partnerships with the range of actors referred to in the previous chapter cannot possibly work unless there is a person – or, depending on the size of the school population, a group of persons – who have been professionally trained to design and coordinate the delivery of the career guidance service, and to review efforts on a regular basis. Career guidance has been described as a 'truncated profession'[31], in the sense that it has yet to establish itself as a sphere of activity that requires specialised training and that can only be exercised on the basis of a licence or warrant. Many practitioners in fact have 'proxy' degrees in related areas such as psychology, education and the social sciences, without having studied career guidance as such. And yet, one major marker of quality provision is the level of training of providers.

Strengthening professional development

Increasingly, however, career guidance practitioners are required to obtain formal qualifications before they can be appointed to schools, and expected to keep up to date through

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31   R.G. Sultana (2004). Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society: Trends, Challenges and Responses across Europe. Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP [especially Chapter 8]. Available at: www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5152_en.pdf

participating in continued professional development. There is as yet no international or European benchmark as to the duration of the pre-service training, with courses ranging from a few undergraduate modules worth 15 to 30 ECTS, to a specialisation stream in teacher training courses, or post-graduate Masters courses on the back of a first degree that is not necessarily related to the field.

Competences required by career guidance practitioners

There is also no formally recognised international or European benchmark regarding the content of the curriculum that trains career guidance practitioners, though there is a fair degree of consensus about the kinds of competences that they should master. The International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance published one such list of competences in 2003, with another being published by the NICE network in 2016. Such lists are typically consulted when designing training programmes, with competences featuring prominently in the shape of learning outcomes of specific modules or study units[32].

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32 A case in point is the Curriculum Framework proposed by the NICE Network as a reference point for the design and evaluation of degree programmes in career guidance and counselling. The framework presents nine modules with learning outcomes dovetailing with the target competences that novice practitioners should master. The curriculum framework is available at: http://www.nice-network.eu/cpr/curriculum/ See also the Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners, available at https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/cica_prof_standards_booklet.pdf

The International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) list of competences that career guidance practitioners should have distinguishes between core and specialised competences. The latter includes assessment, educational guidance, career development, counselling, information management, consultation and coordination, research and evaluation, programme and service management, community capacity building, and placement. The list can be found here: http://iaevg.org/crc/files/iaevg/Competencies-English.pdf

The NICE group (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe) published its own European Competence Standards in 2016.

These are organised around the following categories of competence: generic, career counselling, career education, career assessment and information, career service management, social systems intervention.

These inevitably overlap with the competence list of the IAEVG, but significantly organises them around different levels of mastery, thus acknowledging a hierarchy (and hence progression paths) in the fledgling profession. The different levels of career advisers, career professionals, and career specialists are pegged to different levels of training, corresponding to the different levels in the European Qualification Framework (EAF). Thus, Careers Advisors would have followed short-cycle higher education courses (within or linked to the first cycle, i.e. EQF 5); Career Professionals are expected to have gone through a full first-cycle training programme (EQF 6) and preferably through a second cycle programme (EQF 7). Career Specialists are expected to have second or third cycle training (EQF 7 or 8).

While NICE does not have any formal discretion in endorsing training programmes or licensing practitioners, the fact that it represents more than 40 higher education institutions offering degree programmes and promoting academic training in career guidance and counselling from 29 European countries does give its views some weight.

The complete list of NICE competences can be found here: *http://www.nice-network.eu/download/ecs-en-2016/?wpdmdl=973*

Career guidance: the road to professional status

The route to professionalisation of CEG includes a mix of the following strategies:

- **Legislation**, i.e. formal societal recognition of CEG as a distinct profession, with the special responsibilities and privileges society accords to professions. An example can be found here: http://iccdpp. org/decret-du-4-mai-2011-french-government-decree-on-establishing-a-national-quality-label-for-career-services/

- **Identification of the competences** that career workers need to have in order to be able to practice. Competence frameworks can be comprehensive in scope (e.g. those of the IAEVG (http://iaevg.org/crc/files/iaevg/Competencies-English.pdf and of South Africa (http://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/Competency%20Framework%20for%20Career%20Development%20Practitioners%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf). Others target a specific range of skills, (e.g. providing services in multicultural settings: https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/guidelines).

- **Establishing standards of service provision**: These can be enshrined in law, or can be promulgated by the practitioners' association itself (e.g. the Career Industry Council of Australia: https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/cica_prof_standards_booklet.pdf and the NACE Center for Career Development and Talent Acquisition: http://www.naceweb.org/career-development/standards-competencies). Standards can be comprehensive, or targeted (e.g. standards for career information: https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/guidelines).

- **Ethical code of conduct:** As with all professions, various CG organisations have published codes of conduct, such as the one by the UK Career Development Institute (http://www.thecdi.net/write/227_BP260-X8513-Code_of_Ethics-A4-digital.pdf) or the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in Ireland (http://www.igc.ie/About-Us/Our-Constitution/Code-of-Ethics).

- **Specialised training routes:** Professionalisation usually entails the establishment of a compulsory training route recognised as legitimate by the state, and generally offered by higher education institutions (see the NICE group comparative study of training programmes across Europe https://shop.budrich-academic.de/product/european-competence-standards-for-the-academic-training-of-career-practitioners/?lang=en&v=11aedd0e4327, and the CEDEFOP report on *Professionalising Career Guidance: Practitioner Competence and Qualification Routes in Europe*: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5193).

Efforts to absorb experienced but not formally trained personnel may include the use of APEL (e.g. http://www.corep.it/eas/output/HB_cop_piu_interno_final.pdf).

- **Formal warranting of practitioners** through licensing and keeping of a register of CEG practitioners who have fulfilled the training requirements established by law (see for instance the UK Career Development Institute: http://www.thecdi.net/Professional-Register-). Participation in professional development programmes is generally a condition for remaining on the register.

- **A formally** constituted **professional association** recognised by the state. Associations promote the profession's identity at a national level, create policy forum with stakeholders, offer in-service training, disseminate relevant research through journals and newsletters (e.g. http://www.ncge.ie/news/archive-ncge-news and https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/home), and are members of the international body representing the profession (i.e. the IAEVG: http://iaevg.net, with its member base: http://iaevg.net/?page_id=70&menuid=41&smenuid=0&tpage=1&t1=275&t2=289&t3=290&t4=291&t9).

- **Quality Assurance protocols** which ensure on-going evaluation of both career development practitioners and of service providers. QA strategies deployed in a range of countries can be found here: http://iccdpp.org/posts-by-document-type/#tab-2-4. Another example is the Career Development Benchmarks for secondary schools in New Zealand: https://www.careers.govt.nz/practitioners/planning/career-development-benchmarks/secondary/).

- **A Research centre** dedicated to advancing research on CEG, such that policy and practice develop on the basis of robust theoretical and empirical foundations (e.g. the International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby (https://www.derby.ac.uk/research/icegs/), and the National Research Centre in the USA (http://www.nrccte.org/core-issues/career-guidance-counseling).

Pitfalls to avoid when professionalising career guidance

The formal training of school career guidance practitioners is an important step on the road to professionalisation of services, and from the perspective of quality provision is to be

encouraged and endorsed. Nevertheless, it presupposes a number of conditions, two of which are worth highlighting here. While, a strong case can be made for such training to be offered in higher education institutions, it is important that strong and effective bridges are built between the multi-disciplinary knowledge base and the world of practice and of work. Furthermore, the professionalisation of services should not be a pretext for unilateral 'occupational closure': space must be allowed for the input of paraprofessionals and others who, while not formally trained, have much to when it comes to providing career information, advice and guidance. Indeed, this is why partnerships in service provision are highly recommended. Such partnerships are more likely to be effective and to reach high standards when they are coordinated by well-trained career professionals.

A holistic approach to professionalism in service provision

The identification of competences and pre-service and in-service training to ensure practitioners achieve mastery of them is a necessary but not sufficient step to guarantee quality of provision in schools. As we have already noted in Part One of this *Handbook*, quality is unlikely to result from the technocratic ticking of checklists or quantification of indicators or measures of impact. The approach we have adopted here is more holistic: while recognising the importance of discrete aspects in the rolling out of a service to students, it is the way all these competences come together and are embodied and enacted in response to ever-changing situations that makes all the difference[33]. In our approach, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and true professionalism lies in the manner in which knowledge, skills, values and dispositions come

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33 See R.G. Sultana, R.G. (2009). 'Competence' and 'competence frameworks' in career guidance: complex and contested concepts. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 9(4), 15-30

together at the service of students in specific contexts, and particularly on behalf and benefit of students experiencing difficulties at school.

7.2. Towards a 'reflective practitioner', 'action research' model

Reflective practice and self-regulation as a hallmark and guarantor of quality service

Such a holistic approach, non-technocratic, interpretive and emancipatory approaches to providing and ensuring career guidance have been articulated in a range of different professions under the title 'reflective practice'. The notion of a 'reflective practitioner', as coined by Donald Schön[34], acknowledges that there are no recipes in human-related tasks where 'variables' cannot be 'controlled' as if in a laboratory setting. Rather, the complexity of interactions within and between persons creates a serendipity, which is always open to interpretation, and always infused with power. The task of the 'reflective practitioner' is to draw upon the knowledge and skills gained from training and experience, and, driven by a set of values and dispositions, to respond in ways that further the true interests of the students[35]. Becoming a 'reflective practitioner' involves creating a habit, structure, or routine around reflecting on experiences before, during and after one's engagement in specific contexts.

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34 D. Schön (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

35 The word 'true' is clearly tricky, but it is here being interpreted pragmatically in the sense that the philosopher and educator John Dewey would give it when he claimed that that which "the best and wisest parent wants for his [sic] own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy" [J. Dewey (1907). The school and social progress. *The School and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (p.19)]. Available at: https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1907/Dewey_1907a.html

Participative action research as a QA methodology

If 'reflective practice' is the hallmark of quality, then 'participative action research' is the corresponding hallmark of quality assurance. The two notions are intimately linked in philosophy and approach, for both acknowledge the professional's competence in heightened awareness of situations, in critical analysis, and in the strategic renewal of action and systems in relation to sought after outcomes. The relationship between 'reflective practice' and 'action research' is represented in the figure below:

The 'reflective practice' cycle

The 'action research' cycle

Benefiting from the input of 'critical friends'

This kind of critical reflection that leads to the reconstruction of action at both an individual and systems level does not take place in a vacuum: it is embedded in a social context where the career adviser is a member of a community of practice. The career adviser can therefore draw on the support of critical friends, both within and outside the institution, in order to sharpen analysis and to be more effective in overcoming challenges and reconstructing practice. This external support in service review and improvement can be informal. It can, however, be more formal, with the process

measuring the school's efforts against a set standard. A positive review can, in some cases, lead to the accreditation of a service (at local, regional or national level), and to the award of a 'quality label', which sends a signal to parents and carers that the services students are receiving in a particular school

> 66 *This kind of critical reflection is embedded in a social context where the career adviser is a member of a community of practice.* 99

are commendable. An example of this more formal process, which has some compatibility with the action research approach described earlier, is the Matrix Standard for career guidance services. This is particularly the case when the 'assessor' works closely with the career guidance team, and the focus is more on promoting reflective practice than on assessing or accrediting[36].

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36 The Matrix Standard accreditation process can, however, be both costly and time consuming to run, and can be applied in ways that introduce heavy bureaucratic demands on practitioners. See J. Bimrose, D. Hughes & A. Collin (2006) *Quality assurance mechanisms for information, advice and guidance: a critical review*. Warwick Institute for Employment Research.

The 'Matrix' standard:
an opportunity for reflective practice and action research

The *Matrix Standard* ™ for career information, advice and guidance focuses on four elements in a career guidance service, i.e. Leadership and Management, Resources, Service delivery, and Continuous Quality Improvement. Each element contains criteria, which a career guidance service needs to meet in order to be awarded the standard. Outcomes of the service are stressed, with providers expected to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the processes they lead.
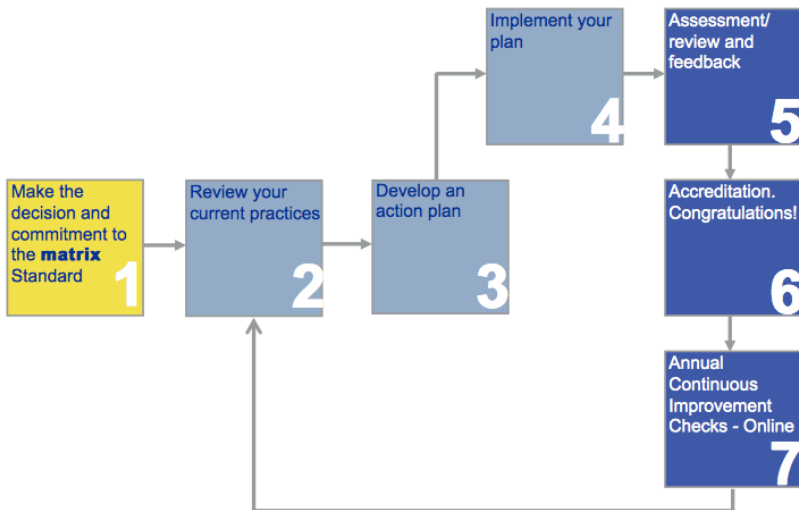
Details of the process are available at www.matrixstandard.com while a webinar can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe3vyftKUJI

How we can improve

Key questions/ tasks

- While as a committed practitioner you inevitably engage in critical reflection before, during and after exercising your profession, it is important to set aside time for more structured reflection on your efforts. How often do you schedule such critical sessions throughout the year? Who do you invite as critical friends to give you feedback on your efforts? Are students part of the feedback process?

- Have you developed or used instruments (e.g. checklists, student satisfaction surveys, quality assurance protocols) to assess the different aspects of the career guidance programme you are offering? Several such instruments exist, and these can be readily adapted to be fit for purpose in your context. Some focus on input, while others look at outcomes, in terms of career management skills mastered by students, as evidence of a strong guidance programme (as noted in Chaptesr 1). For examples of both see:

- http://mevoc.net/download/Checklist_GB_web.pdf
- https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/MSIP-Checklist.pdf
- https://www.ksde.org

- Extract quality criteria from the different chapters of this Handbook and examine your career guidance programme in relation to those criteria. You might wish to focus on specific aspects, or you might wish to take a more comprehensive approach.

- Use the reflection cycle suggested in this chapter. Much can be gained by carrying out this exercise with a small group of trusted colleagues, or with members of the advisory board of your Resource Centre.

- Identify a key challenge that is troubling you as a career guidance professional and devise a participative action research project about it. Draw on staff and student resources at school, as well as on experienced researchers in order to increase effectiveness. You might wish to consult examples of how such action research leads to change and improvement of services in the field of career guidance[37].

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37 See, for instance, D.S. Furbish, E. Bailey & D. Trought (2016). Using participatory action research to study the implementation of career development benchmarks at a New Zealand university. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 16(1), 153–167. See also R. C. Lo (1994) *An action research on a developmental guidance programme in a Hong Kong Secondary School*. Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Hong Kong. Available from: https://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/26657/1/FullText.pdf?accept=1