

# Shaping the Future: Connecting Career Development and Workforce Development (International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Sydney, 2006)

## Synthesis of Country Papers

### **SESSION 2 - THEME A: CONNECTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **1. Terms of reference**

1.1 The country teams were asked to select and address two or three of six themes:

- Human capital.
- Labour supply.
- Employability skills.
- Career development services for workforce development.
- Older workers.
- The evidence base.

1.2 In practice, the detailed questions listed in the briefing document for the first four of these themes were diffuse, and overlapped with one another. As a result, material included in many of the country papers under the first three of these themes related more closely to the fourth theme (career development services).

1.3 In the light of this, the conceptual framework for the first four themes listed in 1.1 has been altered for the purposes of this synthesis. Theme A (addressed here) covers the conceptual links between these themes, which in effect establish the policy arguments for career development services in the context of workforce development. This will be followed by three reframed themes focusing on career development policies and services, but distinguishing three levels of such policies and services:

- *Workforce preparation:* Policies and services designed to support the career development of young people and develop their employability skills prior to entering the labour market (Theme B: Career development for young people).
- *Workforce adaptability:* Policies and services designed to encourage employers to support the career development of their employees (Theme C: Career development for adults at work).
- *Workforce reintegration:* Policies and services designed to support the career development of adults and develop their employability skills, which do not work directly through employers (Theme D: Career development for adults re-entering work).

The term 'workforce development' is sometimes used in a restricted sense to cover only the second of these; here it is used to cover all three (cf. also the definition in 3.1 below).

1.4 The other two themes – older workers (Theme E: Career development and older workers) and the evidence base (Theme F: Career development: the evidence base and professional infrastructure) – remain much as they were in the original formulation.

1.5 The present paper accordingly aims to draw from the country papers in order to:

- Establish the conceptual links between the original themes listed in 1.1 (Section 2).
- Establish the distinctions between the three levels of policies and services listed in 1.3 (Section 3).
- Address some generic issues that cross-cut the three levels of policies and services (Section 4).

It will also suggest some related questions that might form a basis for the discussion on this theme at the symposium (Section 5).

1.6 As a final introductory point, it is important to note that the status of the papers varies. Some represent individual contributions; some are team documents. Some have been based on a wider consultative process; some have not. Some include contributions from, or have been approved by, government policy-makers, and therefore have at least semi-official status; in others, this is not the case.

## 2. Establishing the conceptual links

2.1 **Human capital.** The theme of human capital is addressed by seven of the papers. It is defined by OECD as the knowledge, skills and competencies of the workforce. Several papers link it to human capital theory, which emphasises the importance of increasing individuals' knowledge, creativity and innovative flair as a critical means of gaining competitive economic advantage. The UK paper points out that the theory has been subject to critique, partly on the grounds that it ignores the contribution to competitiveness made by other factors, including investment, changes in work organisation, consensus-based industrial relations, and new managerial approaches. Nonetheless, it continues to be very influential on national policies in most if not all countries.

2.2 Enhancing human capital is a key policy drive in many countries – including, for example, the National Reform Agenda in Australia. In at least two country reports (Italy, South Africa) it is framed as 'human resource development'. Government is seen as having a key leadership role (e.g. Botswana). The focus tends to be on goals like increasing qualification levels, increasing participation in post-compulsory education, and increasing participation in training programmes within companies (UK). There is also a focus on enhancing the economic yield from investment in education by strengthening its links with working life (Norway).

2.3 In addition, strategies for human capital often focus on increasing levels of labour-force participation. This may have an economic purpose, in enhancing labour supply (see 2.5-2.9 below), but it may also have a social dimension, in terms of achieving a more inclusive, cohesive and equitable society. The paper on South Africa, for example, links it to the notion that development is not about delivery of goods to a passive citizenry but about active involvement and empowerment; the paper on Denmark suggests that generous welfare systems require high labour participation rates.

2.4 The Australian paper notes that the concept of human capital can be defined *narrowly* as referring to work capacities and measurable skills, or more *broadly* as including personality traits that significantly influence labour productivity. The broader concept also includes career development skills: the ability of individuals to develop, manage and deploy their knowledge, skills and competencies. Recent OECD work has underlined the importance of this broader definition.

2.5 **Labour supply.** The theme of labour supply is addressed by seven reports. In some countries, particularly those with low unemployment, concerns relate to overall labour shortages (e.g. Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand). In other cases, the focus is on more specific skill shortages. This may be framed in terms of mismatch related either to *level* (need for general upskilling) or to *field* (e.g. shortages of people qualified for particular professions or trades).

2.6 Issues relating to labour supply vary, depending on the stage and nature of economic development. They are very different, for example, in a country moving from an agro-based to an industrial economy (Botswana), from a country with a boom in 'new economy' jobs (India), or from a country seeking to diversify its economy (Oman).

2.7 Interventions aimed at enhancing labour supply are often aimed at particular target-groups. Examples mentioned in the country papers include measures designed to increase the labour-market participation of:

- Drop-outs from education.
- Sole parents / second earners / women returners.
- People with disabilities.
- Immigrants / refugees.
- Disadvantaged ethnic groups.
- Older workers (see Theme E).

2.8 These groups often require, or benefit from, interventions targeted to their distinctive needs. An example cited in the paper from New Zealand is interventions with Maori and Pacific peoples, who commonly have a different approach to the acquisition of knowledge and skills than other New Zealanders, and who benefit from a customised approach that acknowledges their cultural beliefs and values.

2.9 The link between labour supply and career development is established strongly in the papers from Australia and Ireland. The Australian paper points out that the decisions that people make about their participation in the labour market are influenced by the interaction of their own life circumstances, including their level of education and their understanding of the labour market, with the decisions and behaviours of employers, and with public policies. Career development services assist individuals to understand and manage the interaction of these forces, sometimes competing, in ways that maximise their labour-force participation.

2.10 **Employability skills.** The theme of employability skills is addressed in ten reports. 'Employability' is defined in the Latvian report as the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, it depends upon: their assets in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess; the way they use and deploy these assets; the way they present themselves to employers; and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work. This definition clearly locates career development as a core element of employability skills.

2.11 In other formulations, employability skills and career development skills are views as separate but also as potentially complementary and inter-dependent. The Australian report, for example, points out that the widely-used Employability Skills Framework describes the 13 personal attributes and 8 key skills that employers require of potential employees. This is complemented by the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (adapted from a similar Blueprint developed in Canada) which identifies 11 career self-management competencies across the life-span. The complementary nature of the two frameworks is recognised in some settings but not in others.

2.12 A further 'disconnect', noted in the report on Canada, is between career development services and the development of career development skills. It points out that government strategy documents often describe the importance of career development outcomes (e.g. changes in situation such as finding employment, or applying for further training or education; learning to search for career and labour market information; learning to identify employment and education activities), without identifying career development programmes and services as a necessary delivery mechanism to achieve these outcomes.

2.13 The report on New Zealand challenges these 'disconnects'. It affirms that improving the capacity of the learning system and of workplaces to assist in developing the employability and career self-management skills of individuals is a key way of harnessing the potential of the workforce, and therefore leading to greater productivity.

2.14 **Establishing the links.** The key issue which links these different themes is how career development services (original theme 4) can develop employability skills (original theme 3) in ways which influence the labour supply (original theme 2) so as to maximise the development and utilisation of human capital (original theme 1).

2.15 In the view of some of the country papers, these links need to be established in proactive terms that apply to the whole population rather than in reactive terms confined to limited 'deficit' groups. The Canadian report, for example, suggests that until career development is more aligned with policy issues and connected to the productivity of the working population as a whole, rather than mainly to those in crisis or deficit skill positions, it will continue to be seen as a fringe policy instrument rather than a central instrument. Similarly, the report on Poland calls for a change in the character of services from a reactive to a proactive model.

### **3. Career development and three aspects of workforce development**

3.1 Jacobs & Hawley<sup>1</sup> define workforce development as 'the coordination of public and private sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations to achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context'. They go on to state that workforce development focuses on four societal issues:

- how schools and agencies prepare individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce;
- how organisations provide learning opportunities to improve workforce performance;
- how organisations respond to changes that affect workforce effectiveness;
- how individuals undergo life transitions related to workforce participation.

3.2 For the purposes of the symposium, it is suggested (see 1.3) that the first of these be labelled 'workforce preparation', that the second and third be merged as 'workforce adaptability', and that the fourth be labelled 'workforce reintegration'.

3.3 Theme B, then, will focus on career development for young people (workforce preparation). It will explore services, programmes and policy initiatives related to young people,

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobs, R. & Hawley, J. (in press). Emergence of workforce development: definition, conceptual boundaries, and implications. In MacLean, R. & Wilson, D. (eds.): *International Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training*. Amsterdam: Kluwer.

including those in schools and tertiary education. It will also place career development provision in the context of wider employability agendas (design of learning pathways etc.).

3.4 Theme C will focus on career development and adults at work (workforce adaptability). It will examine employer-based services and programmes related to the career development of employees, and their relationship to wider human resource development (HRD) and training provision. It will also explore public-policy initiatives designed to encourage and support employers in this area. It will include attention to ways of making the case to employers (in terms of organisational/business benefits), the distinctive needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the role of government as an employer, and the role of sector bodies.

3.5 Theme D will focus on career development and adults re-entering work (workforce reintegration). It will explore services, programmes and policy initiatives related to unemployed people, to immigrants and refugees, and to those re-entering the labour market, plus services available to individuals (including employed individuals) in the community (education-based, community-based, private-sector). It will include attention to assessment and recognition of prior learning.

3.6 As noted in 1.4, older workers are given separate attention as Theme E. This is partly because this was addressed as a separate theme by four country papers, and partly because it cross-cuts elements of workforce adaptability and workforce reintegration.

#### **4. Some cross-cutting issues**

4.1 A number of issues cross-cut the relationship between career development and the three aspects of workforce development, in the sense that they relate to career development on a lifelong basis. Two of these are addressed in Theme F:

- Improving the evidence base: routine data collection; research studies; strategies for developing more policy-related research; strategies for disseminating research to policy-makers and/or practitioners.
- The professional development of the field: whether career development is a role or profession; initiatives related to staff development and quality enhancement (including those relevant to employer-based provision).

4.2 Two further issues, covered in several of the country papers, merit attention here:

- The need for career and labour market information.
- The need for lifelong career development strategies, and mechanisms to develop and implement them.

4.3 ***Career and labour market information.*** The need for high-quality labour market information to underpin career development provision at all ages is widely recognised. In several countries, such information exists, but is not communicated in forms which make it accessible to the general public for use in career decision-making (see e.g. reports on Ireland, South Africa, UK). A number of initiatives are under way to address this issue.

4.4 Linked to this is the need for comprehensive career information systems. The development of such systems requires a strong collaborative structure. Examples include that developed for the Australian on-line system (myfuture.edu.au), and the Canada Career Consortium. An initiative to develop such a system, based on collaboration between the two main relevant government departments, is currently under way in Ireland.

4.5 ***Lifelong career development strategies.*** There is a widely-recognised need more broadly for strategic mechanisms to develop and implement lifelong career development strategies. A number of relevant initiatives are mentioned in the country papers:

- In Australia, the Career Industry Council of Australia has played an important leadership role, and a feasibility study has been conducted on the establishment of a national institute for leadership for career development.
- In Canada, a pan-Canadian symposium has been held on career development and public policy; several provinces have subsequently developed their own strategies.
- In Finland, national working groups have periodically been established by the two relevant ministries with a broad membership including the social partners.
- In Ireland, the UK and some other European countries, national guidance forums are being established, with some networking support from the European Commission.
- In Latvia, a working group has been established by the two relevant ministries to review existing legislation and clarify the respective tasks and services of different career development providers.

4.6 If such strategies are to include a strong focus on the relationship between career development and workforce development, it is crucial that the social partners are closely involved in these developments. The difficulties of securing employer involvement is mentioned in, for example, the papers on Canada and India.

4.7 Conversely, it is important that the career development field is represented in any mechanisms designed to develop national or regional strategies for workforce development (see e.g. papers on Botswana and Canada).

4.8 One of the goals of these various mechanisms could be to develop a career development culture. The paper on Canada suggests that 'pockets' of such a culture are beginning to develop, but that much more work is needed.

## **5. Questions for discussion**

5.1 Questions arising from the country-paper contributions on this theme, as summarised above, include:

- Is the role of career development services in maximising the development and utilisation of human capital now sufficiently well-established in conceptual terms? If not, what further work is needed on this?
- Are there tensions between viewing career development in these terms and the views of it taken by career development professionals? How are these tensions to be resolved?
- What are the implications for public policy of the link between career development and human capital, in relation to the three aspects of workforce development: workforce preparation, workforce management, and workforce reintegration?
- What strategic mechanisms are needed at national (and, where appropriate, sub-national) level to promote and pursue these implications?
- How can employers be encouraged to participate in these mechanisms?

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## Synthesis of Country Papers

### **SESSION 3 - THEME B: CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (WORKFORCE PREPARATION)**

#### **1. The issues, and what career development services are doing about them**

##### *Introduction*

The country papers show wide variation in their understanding of ways in which career development services and programmes for young people can help to increase labour supply, improve the level of human capital, and improve the quality of human capital by developing career self management and employability skills. They also vary widely in their descriptions of what career development services and programmes and services are doing about these issues.

In some cases, for example in the papers from India and Botswana, the limited material on strategies that are being adopted in services for young people to address these issues is largely because career development services remain poorly developed and accessible only to very limited numbers of young people. And it is probably true to say, even if not surprising, that most papers focus more upon adults, the existing work force and those who have left the education system than upon services for young people.

A notable gap in nearly all papers is a substantial absence of any discussion of career development services within higher education, although the Canadian paper does point to research on student's limited access to on-campus services, and Finland's paper points out that Finnish universities and polytechnics are required to put into place individual study plans for students with a portfolio approach that takes account of both learning and career management skills.

Despite the gaps, there are some excellent examples in which country papers show a clear understanding of the implications of recent labour market trends for career development services for youth, of the implications of what a decision to focus upon developing employability skills and to raise the quality of human capital, (as opposed to simply raise its level) means for career development policies, strategies, and programmes, and of the barriers that need to be addressed in implementing these strategies and policies. The New Zealand paper, for example, presents a very clear analysis of the national labour market context (an ageing population; low productivity despite high participation rates; high immigration from Asia and the Pacific but high emigration of the young and highly qualified) and attempts to draw out the implications of this for national human resource development strategies and for the role of career development services, including those for youth, within these strategies.

##### *Increasing labour supply and raising the level of human capital*

Understanding of the link between the issues on the one hand and services for youth on the other is perhaps clearest in the case of labour supply. The papers commonly recognise that career development services should, can and do play a role in helping to address early school leaving, both by preventing early drop outs and by helping drop outs to return to study. This is linked to the role that services can play in helping unemployed young people to get jobs. There are close links between this role of career development services for youth and their role in

improving the level of national human capital by helping school drop outs to return to study, or by preventing early leaving in the first place.

For example Austria describes its three-tiered guidance system in schools (curriculum subjects; school counsellors; school psychologists) as helping to improve educational participation, thereby raising educational achievement and reducing unemployment. It also sees services that help young people at the first point of transition from school as helping to reduce youth unemployment (as well as addressing life and social problems).

Denmark devotes significant space to a description of programmes to connect young people with special needs for guidance to adult mentors and to description of its early guidance intervention policies, each designed to improve students' motivation and reduce school drop outs. The Danish paper also highlights the high priority that Denmark gives to interventions, of which guidance is a central part, that are targeted at those who have dropped out of upper secondary education and that are intended to help them to re-engage with learning.

#### *Improving the quality of human capital and raising employability skills*

Some of the papers recognise that career development services can, and do, extend beyond a role in improving the *quantity* of human capital by helping to raise national educational achievement levels to a role in improving the *quality* of human capital by developing young people's career self management skills, and to a closely related role in developing employability skills. Those that recognise this generally recognise that it involves a change in approach, and in particular a new emphasis upon developmental, curriculum-based and experiential interventions, not simply traditional one-to-one interventions at the point of leaving education.

Ireland, for example, clearly recognises that this shift needs to be made if career development services are to play a greater role in developing employability skills and in raising the quality of human capital, and accordingly has taken steps to embed career education in the school curriculum. Similarly, Norway is taking steps to embed career education more strongly in the curriculum, to develop local partnerships with employers, and to help students to develop individual action plans for their learning and careers. Denmark and Finland are other countries in which an emphasis upon individual action planning for all students is described in terms that recognise that this can help to develop important employability and career management skills.

Australia describes the development of a national employability skills framework. The paper indicates that its consideration and application seems largely confined to vocational education programmes outside of schools, but does point out that it is currently being considered for incorporation into all industry skills standards (and hence could flow through into all vocational education curriculum packages).

#### *Barriers*

A few of the papers quite clearly recognise and describe the barriers that need to be addressed if career development services for youth are to move from an emphasis upon a one point in time, decision-focused approach to one that is developmental, occurring over time, and focuses upon improving and developing skills. For example the Irish paper points to a need to address traditional paradigm thinking among guidance practitioners. Similarly the Norwegian paper recognises the need to make a cultural shift among practitioners, arguing that:

“Norwegian career guidance has had too great a focus on providing information on education opportunities and career choices. The new aim is that career guidance should become more development and process oriented. Importance shall be attached to allowing individuals to

develop the competence to plan their own future and to develop a career plan in cooperation with the career counsellor.”

## **2. Questions for discussion**

- What needs to be done to ensure that career development services for youth can play a stronger role in preventing early school leaving and in helping early leavers to return to education?
- How would career development services need to be changed to provide a broad focus upon employability and career management skills, not only upon decisions at the point of leaving education?
- What priority should national career development policies give to services in higher education in order to better promote the development of employability and career management skills?
- What changes in practitioner training and qualifications are needed to ensure such a broader focus in career development services for youth?

Richard Sweet  
4.4.06

# **Shaping the Future: Connecting Career Development and Workforce Development (International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Sydney, 2006)**

## **Synthesis of Country Papers**

### **SESSION 4 - THEME C: CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULTS AT WORK (WORKFORCE ADAPTABILITY)**

#### **1 Introduction**

Career development is seen as having a significant role to play in achieving the objective of upskilling the existing workforce so that employees can adapt to evolving skill requirements. It is cited as an important, though rarely operationalised response to a range of workforce management problems/issues (skill shortages; the increasing rate of technological change resulting in people's existing skills becoming outdated coupled with an ageing population) that confront employers. The role of career development in improving recruitment and retention practices or the quality of working life was less often described.

#### **2 Key Issues and Strategies**

##### **2.1 Limited Access**

The body of research on career development in workplaces is not large and Canada and the UK suggest that career development services in workplaces need to be mapped and the effectiveness of strategies assessed.

The OECD Study observed, and countries papers confirm, that in all countries represented, employed adults, especially those in small to medium sized organizations, have limited if any access to career development services. There is a gap in the provision of services for employed adults to help sustain their employability and to encourage career self-management throughout the life span. Even in the UK, where it is recognised that employers play an important role in delivering career development services in the workplace, greater access for existing workers is an important policy objective. One of Careers Scotland's strategic aims, for example, is to develop people who are in work.

The key stated objectives for employed workers include supporting individuals to achieve their ambitions through better information, advice and guidance; creating stronger links between employers and the career development community; and encouraging the role that employers and trades unions play in encouraging learning and work development.

The use of online career information and guidance in some countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Wales) enhances access to career information for employed workers. However, this seems to be an individual activity rather than part of an employer-sponsored workforce development strategy.

In most cases countries are seeking to expand access for employed adults, by seizing the opportunities inherent in broader skills development, employment or human resource development strategies that have traction in their countries. For example, Canada suggests that while the government's Workplace Skills Strategy does not explicitly highlight the role of career development, there is an opportunity for the links to be made.

##### **2.2 Embedded in Skills Development Strategies**

Meeting the demand for higher-level skills is an increasingly important objective in many national educational and labour market policies. Efforts to up-skill the labour force, including those already in employment, are reported by many nations. Career development is seen as having a role to play in engaging people in such employer/government sponsored skills development initiatives (Ireland), and in particular in encouraging people to have their prior learning recognized (Denmark and Canada).

Ireland notes that career guidance gives employees the confidence to avail themselves of available learning and work opportunities. Austria suggests that it should be a priority in skills programs for adults enabling them to anticipate and adapt to new skill requirements.

### 2.3 Embedded in Human Resource Development Strategies

In some countries the vehicle to give prominence to career development is through human resource development policies/strategies. One of the strategic objectives of South Africa's HRD Strategy is described as "increasing employer participation in life long learning" and one success indicator is specified as *public sector education and training* to support service delivery, in addition to private sector commitment to skills development. However, it is noted that even in the public service there is a gap between the vision and the reality.

### 2.4 Embedded in Employment Strategies

New Zealand notes that the government has broadened the focus of its employment strategy, placing *greater emphasis on the quality of work and the rewards from it*. The strategy, "Better Work, Working Better", aims to achieve high quality employment in industries, regions and businesses. It would seem that greater employer responsibility for the ongoing development of employees is implied in this strategy.

### 2.5 Not a Homogenous Group

Several papers note the diversity of need within the employed workforce, including workers in transition; the underemployed; those with family responsibilities; the working poor; those with low level qualifications or skills; the well educated; and individuals with high levels of education and training who are looking for a mid-life career change.

Both NZ and South Africa draw attention to the significant number of people in the workforce with low literacy, numeracy and language skills, which restricts their ability to adapt to changing workplace demands.

**Older workers** wishing to modify their career activity without withdrawing completely and older workers wishing to keep up with technology and other changing workplace dynamics are considered to have particular needs. The Australian National Strategy for Ageing asserts that "opportunities should exist for Australians to make a lifelong contribution", and a government website is dedicated to promoting mature age employment, as a key strategy for managing the impact of demographic change. Botswana, in noting that much more needs to be done in retaining the skills of older workers, reminds us of the complementary roles of career practitioners, employers and policy developers in retaining older workers, and the importance of lobbying and advocacy. Italy advocates that older workers should be a priority group for workforce development strategies and suggests that policy makers have been slow to mobilize career development services in support of active ageing. The USA paper reports that the absence of career services for the active older worker is evidence of a structural lag between services and programs and the reality of an ageing population. While the USA reports signs of some proactive responses by some American companies, it concludes that career services for older workers, where they are available at all, lack government funding support and are disconnected from services that support positive ageing.

### 2.6 A Shared Responsibility

Several countries assert that responsibility for career development should be shared between employers, governments and employees (including employee associations/unions). Botswana notes that despite government expectations that social partners will help in the development of social capital few private sector employees have access to development programs.

Interestingly most examples of strong partnering arrangements, such as Norway's Partnerships for Career Guidance, focus on career development for young people – the emerging workforce.

Their focus, therefore, is on recruitment, rather than retention of workers, suggesting a lack of understanding of career as a developmental process. In Canada, the Petroleum Sector Council is working with career development specialists to explore outreach strategies to attract more non-traditional workers. While this is encouraging, there is little evidence in the papers of similar considerations being given to career development as a retention strategy.

Ireland suggests that funding arrangements for employed workers need to take into account the capacity of the individual to pay for services received in order to ensure financial sustainability. Poland suggests that employer and trade union funds should be used to finance services for workers. In England, Scotland and Wales, the launch of the Union Learning Fund has been a major catalyst for the development of the role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in the workplace.

## 2.7 Links between employers and career development community are not well established

As Canada notes, connections between the career development community and industry/business/labour are not well established and employers do not readily identify the career development agenda as relevant or helpful to them. Furthermore, career practitioners did not rate the priority issues facing employers as high priorities for their practice.

Links between the career development sector and the business community sector (especially small to medium sized enterprises) are not well developed and there is concern that the career community has not proven its case to business/industry in terms of the contribution of career development to productivity, worker motivation, organizational “fit” and the return on investment.

## 3 Questions for discussion

Questions arising from the country-paper contributions on this theme include:

- What is the most effective way of raising the profile of ‘career’ and its potential for actively supporting the key workforce management goals of employers? How can employers and trade unions best be engaged?
- How can the perceived dilemma/conflict in serving the needs of employers and the needs of employees in the workplace be resolved for career development practitioners?
- What role can/should governments play in encouraging employer-based provision of services?

Christine Haines

4.4.06

## Shaping the Future: Connecting Career Development and Workforce Development (International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Sydney, 2006)

### Synthesis of Country Papers

#### SESSION 6 - THEME D: CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR RE-ENTRANTS TO WORK (WORKFORCE REINTEGRATION)

**This theme was addressed in a number of country papers under the original themes such as labour supply and employability skills.**

1.1 A number of country papers identified groups that have been traditionally under-utilised and under-represented in the workforce such as unemployed people, migrants and refugees, women re-entering the workforce, indigenous people, people with disabilities and mental illness (e.g., Australia, Austria, Botswana, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom). A goal of these countries is to raise the workforce participation rate of these groups.

1.2 Individuals with low literacy, numeracy and language skills were also identified as a group that warrants attention if they are to be adaptable to changing workforce demands (e.g., New Zealand, South Africa).

1.3 Policy initiatives to support those with specialised needs were briefly described in several country papers (e.g., Austria, Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway). For example, Norway has introduced a number of measures to achieve its goal of becoming a more inclusive society. The UK also expressed a commitment to social inclusion.

1.4 Services to these groups are provided by both government services and community-based and private sector organisations. For example, the Canadian paper described the situation where 55% of career development practitioners work in community-based organisations and provide services to a broad client group including immigrants and individuals with specialised needs. On the other hand, Botswana described high levels of reliance on government services and limited private sector contribution.

1.5 The Canadian paper reminds us that the provision of career development services for such groups has traditionally been an arena where policy has recognised the need for career development services. For example, Ireland's vocational training and employment authority gives priority to these groups to assist them reach their full potential in the labour market.

1.6 An Australian initiative run by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is identifying industries best able to provide job opportunities and developing, with small grant funding, innovative recruitment, employment and retention strategies to increase participation of people with a disability, mature age job seekers, parents and the very long-term unemployed. This initiative points to the need for collaboration between government and other stakeholders including industry and employers.

1.7 ***Migrants and refugees.*** The under-utilisation of immigrants' competence was identified as a particular challenge by some countries (e.g., New Zealand, Norway). Norway provides language training for immigrants.

1.8 The New Zealand Settlement Strategy is worthy of note. Led by the Department of Labour, the Strategy focuses on improving the settlement outcomes, including labour market

outcomes for migrants and refugees. It recognises and attempts to address such difficulties as a lack of localised knowledge and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications

1.9 ***Unemployed people and women re-entering the workforce.*** The provision of career services to the unemployed has long been a priority of service provision in many countries (e.g., Australia, Austria, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, UK). For example, in Latvia although the Professional Career Counselling State Agency has a mandate to provide services to a broad range of clients, their focus is on school leavers and the unemployed.

1.10 Italy makes the point that the extensive focus on unemployed people has reduced the focus on other groups such as those in employment and older workers.

1.11 The UK government is committed to a policy of social inclusion through a process of welfare to work. Given this commitment, and the need to make best use of public funds, public employment services in the UK have a particular focus upon those who are unemployed and/or those with low educational attainment.

1.12 Several countries (e.g., Australia, Ireland, UK) described programs to assist these groups enter the workforce. For example, the UK has piloted a 'skills coaching' program designed to support unemployed adults into education and/ or work. This program will be expanded in the future to assist low-skilled women return to work.

1.13 In Ireland, the Expanding the Workforce Initiative proactively encourages women to return to the workforce. It is worth noting that an important factor in the success of this program is ease of access to the program.

1.14 ***People with disabilities.*** Some countries described programs specially designed for disabled people (e.g., Finland, Ireland). Such programs may include strategies such as examinations of the health and aptitude, rehabilitation examinations, expert consultations, work and training try-outs, and practical support such as workplace equipment/adaptation grants and personal interviewer interpreter grants.

1.15 Finland described a Vocational Rehabilitation service where individuals and officials cooperatively plan solutions related to work or training that take into account the client's health needs.

1.16 Some countries (e.g., Ireland) provide funding to employers to assist people with disabilities transition into employment.

1.17 ***Indigenous people.*** The employment policies of Australia and New Zealand have a particular focus on the employment needs of indigenous people. For example, in Australia Specialist and Intensive Assistance services are available through the federal government agency, Centrelink, to support those most at risk of finding long-term or appropriate employment including indigenous people.

1.18 New Zealand draws attention to the cultural appropriateness of career services and describes providing a customised service within a framework that acknowledges Maori and Pacific People's cultures.

## **2. Questions for discussion**

Questions arising from the country-paper contributions on this theme, as summarised above, include:

2.1 What strategic mechanisms are needed at national (and, where appropriate, sub-national levels) to ensure that the skills, knowledge and competencies of unemployed people, migrants and refugees, women re-entering the workforce, indigenous people, people with disabilities and mental illness are appropriately utilised in the labour market? Who are the stakeholders and what is their responsibility?

2.2 What strategic mechanisms are needed at national (and, where appropriate, sub-national levels) to ensure that unemployed people, migrants and refugees, women re-entering the workforce, indigenous people, people with disabilities and mental illness receive appropriate and culturally sensitive career development services?

Mary McMahon  
5.04.06

## **Shaping the Future: Connecting Career Development and Workforce Development (International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Sydney, 2006)**

### **Synthesis of Country Papers**

#### **SESSION 8 - THEME F: CAREER DEVELOPMENT: THE EVIDENCE BASE AND PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**The theme of the evidence base was addressed directly in the papers of five countries and indirectly in the papers of a number of others. Professional infrastructure was not one of the original six themes. However, it was addressed in the papers of a number of countries.**

##### **1. The Evidence Base**

1.1 The critical need for a stronger evidence base to inform and support policy decisions at national and international levels is a long established issue that was highlighted at the international symposia held in 1999 and 2001 and also by international reports such as those of the OECD and the World Bank.

1.2 Each of the five country papers provided examples of research that is contributing to an evidence base. However, none described coordinated, comprehensive national research programs.

1.3 The research projects described in the country papers highlighted the breadth of research that is possible including evaluation of services (e.g., Australia, Finland, Latvia), review of services (e.g., Ireland), assessing service and information needs (e.g., Finland, Ireland), review of performance indicators and benchmarks (e.g., UK), links between career goals and educational attainment (e.g., UK), and assessing the effectiveness of career work (e.g., New Zealand, Norway, UK). Finland described the use of a national web-based institutional evaluation tool.

1.4 The UK paper highlighted the ongoing need for research into the cost of service delivery and also the relationship between delivery costs and outcomes of delivery.

1.5 The Australian paper drew attention to the need for career development to be seen as a discrete field of research and not a subset of, for example, education or psychology.

1.6 Two country papers (Finland and the UK) described the formation of research centres to build the evidence base and to bring policy, research and practice closer together. A feasibility study conducted in Australia supported the formation of such a centre but at the time of writing, no decision had been made. These centres would have links to the ICCDPP.

1.7 In Canada, the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice has the potential to lead career development research and has developed a draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career interventions.

1.8 The Canadian paper discussed the tension that exists between the quantitative evidence base favoured by policy makers and the qualitative approach favoured by practitioners

1.9 Dissemination of research findings to practitioners, policy makers, employers and labour organisations remains an issue of ongoing concern.

1.10 Despite the projects described in the country papers, the need to build an evidence base to support and inform policy still remains.

## 2. Professional Infrastructure

2.1. Professional infrastructure refers to the systems, procedures and organisations that could contribute to the development of national policies and delivery systems that facilitate lifelong access of all citizens to career development services.

2.2 Two of these elements will be discussed separately. They are:

- the professional standing of career development practice
- strategic leadership

2.3 **Elements of professional infrastructure.** There is evidence throughout the papers that professional infrastructures are being developed in several countries (e.g., Australia; Canada; Finland; Ireland; New Zealand; UK).

2.4 Elements of such infrastructures include:

- organizational structures that can provide strategic leadership (e.g., CICA in Australia; Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Canada; Professional Career Counselling State Agency, and National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance in Latvia; Career Services rapuara in New Zealand; National Guidance Policy Forum (NGPF), National Library Resource for Guidance, and National Resource Service in the UK; )
- practitioner professional standards (e.g., Australia, Canada, USA)
- quality standards for service products (e.g., Finland)
- national guidance strategy (e.g., Austria)
- career development competency frameworks (e.g., Australia; Canada )

2.5. **Professional standing of career development practice.** The professional standing of career development practice has repeatedly been raised as an issue of concern in international reports such as those of the OECD and the World Bank.

2.6 The training and qualifications of career development practitioners have received great emphasis in some countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK, USA) with varying degrees of implementation success. However, it still remains a concern in these and other countries (e.g., Botswana, India) where career development practitioners are few in number and career development services are less established.

2.7 A contrast that highlights the importance of national coordination and strategic leadership in the implementation of practitioner standards is evident in the Australian and Canadian examples. The implementation of standards in Australia is being coordinated at a national level through the Career Industry Council of Australia and its member associations. Standards are being phased in over a six year period and all Australian career development practitioners will meet entry level training qualifications by 2012. In Canada where there is no such national coordination, implementation of the standards is voluntary.

2.8 Through Australian Career Development Studies, Australia provides free online training opportunities to career development practitioners. These modules may articulate into career development qualifications at either the Certificate IV vocational qualification level or postgraduate certificate level. By 2012, the Certificate IV in Career Development will be the

minimum qualification expected of associate career development practitioners, and postgraduate certificate or vocational graduate certificate level qualifications will be the minimum qualification expected of professional career development practitioners.

2.9 **Strategic leadership.** At a national level in all countries, strategic leadership is an important factor in moving the career development agenda forward and building alliances with stakeholders such as policy makers, employer groups, and labour organisations.

2.10 Two country papers (Australia and UK) provided examples of closer working relationships between policy makers and other stakeholders such as practitioners. In the UK, this is done through the formal mechanism of the National Guidance Policy Forum (NGPF), whereas in other countries such as Australia practitioners have been represented on steering committees for national career development projects.

2.11 Australia provides a strong example of strategic leadership by practitioners through the Career Industry Council of Australia and by policy makers such as the Department of Education Science and Training. Such leadership has been instrumental in and critical to the development and ongoing implementation of Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners. Canada is investigating the creation of a national practitioner body.

2.12 Canada described the poorly developed links between the career development sector and the business community sector. Related to this is the absence of a forum for stakeholder dialogue on career development public policy and workforce development.

2.13 Several countries describe the fragmentation of responsibility for career development services at government levels (e.g., Australia, Canada, Ireland, Italy) which may lead to duplication of services and the lack of a coordinated approach.

2.14 India provides an example where, in the absence of government policy and leadership despite the existence of a Central Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance, career development may be slanted towards commercial interests such as fee-paying institutes and industry with little emphasis on the career development needs of individuals.

2.15 Attention was drawn to the issue of insufficient funding for career development services (e.g., Italy) and practice and theory (e.g., USA).

2.16 Poland suggested that funding be drawn from a number of sources given its contribution to private, organisational and public policy goals. Such sources included the national budget, local government, employers, and trade union funds. They also suggested that individuals could pay for some services such as assessment of competence.

2.17 There remains a great need to build alliances with stakeholders such as practitioners, policy makers, employer groups, and labour organisations.

2.18 An example of building such alliances is provided by Norway through its national policy, Partnerships for Career Guidance, that is being implemented at a county level. Such partnerships involve county governors, employer and employee organisations, relevant public and private agencies and institutions of higher education. It is expected that such partnerships will facilitate more targeted and effective guidance programs and that job-seekers will find work more rapidly.

### **3. Questions for discussion**

Questions arising from the country-paper contributions on this theme, as summarised above, include:

- What strategic mechanisms are needed at a national (and, where appropriate, sub-national) level to develop a comprehensive evidence base?
- What strategic mechanisms are needed at a national (and, where appropriate, sub-national) level to support the development of a professional infrastructure?
- What strategic mechanisms are needed to facilitate closer collaboration and dissemination of research between policy makers, practitioners, researchers, employers, labour organisations, and other stakeholders?

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5.04.06