

Synthesis Paper



Theme 3.

Improving career practitioner training and practice

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A synthesis of the perspectives of countries and international organisations attending the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy Symposium 2017

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This theme addressed the following issues:

- The role of governments, agencies and professional associations in ensuring that the initial and continuing training of career practitioners stays relevant to clients' needs
- The influence of the business and employer community in maintaining the relevance of practitioner training
- The existing national and/or regional mechanisms that ensure that practitioner competency frameworks stay relevant
- The main barriers to and the success factors in effecting reforms in the professional preparation and development of career practitioners.

1. The role of governments, agencies and professional associations in ensuring that the initial and continuing training of career practitioners stays relevant to clients' needs

Introduction

In many countries, the initial training of career practitioners has, to date, taken place mainly in universities and other higher education institutions. Given the autonomy of such institutions as places of learning and research, there is no obligation on the staff of these institutions to consult with any stakeholder (the public, ministries, national agencies, employers, professional associations etc.) on the content, methodology, and relevance of initial training programmes for career practitioners. However, all of these named stakeholders have a public and/or professional responsibility, interest, concern and role as service users, funders, employers, and standard bearers for the practice of guidance, including credentialing and professional registration. As such, they are stakeholders in the relevance of the content and method of the initial training and continuing training of career practitioners, even if the immediate responsibility lies with the universities or higher education institutions.

Governments, agencies and professional associations have a stronger tradition in the provision of continuing training for career practitioners or funding such training. Training tends to be customised to the needs of career practitioners based on the contexts and settings in which they work. Thus it is more likely that the relevance of continuing training for career practitioners is assured.

Different arrangements of stakeholder involvement, both formal and informal, exist across countries to ensure the relevance of the training of career practitioners. They can be categorised as follows:

- **Direct involvement of government ministries and agencies**
- **Professional association involvement**
- **University led.**

1.1 Government ministry and agencies

The following table lists the types of regulatory and other activities undertaken by government ministries and agencies in different countries with respect to the relevance of the content of initial and continuing training of career practitioners. They vary according to degrees of formality:

Table 1: Approaches to ensuring the relevance of the training of career practitioners

	INSTRUMENTS	COUNTRY
FORMAL REQUIREMENTS	-Obligatory Continuing Professional Development;	FI (ed.), JP (ed.), KR (ed., lab.), PH (ed.), USA (ed.)
	-Initial training qualification and/or content specified by law	FI (ed.), IE (ed.), AT (ed.), TN (ed.), WALES
	-Ministry approval required for content	DK (ed.)
	-Regulatory Board of the Professional Regulation Commission	PH
	-National Occupational Standard	England-UK
	-Combined model: specification, licensing, certification	US
	-in-house initial and continuing training	AT (lab.), CA (some provinces), WALES
PRESCRIPTIVE APPROACHES	-Subject benchmark statement by Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency	Scotland-UK
	-Programme Recognition Framework by Ministry	IE
	-Blueprint of Learning Outcomes by the Professional Association	CDI, UK
LIGHT TOUCH	-Stakeholder consultation	DK
	-Higher Education reviews	AT, CL, KR
	-Offers of placements to both	Scotland – UK

	INSTRUMENTS	COUNTRY
	Higher Education trainers and trainees	
	-Optional Continuing Professional Development	AT, AUS, CA, DK, FI, JP, MO, NO, IE, KR, NZ, PH, ZA, SG, TW, ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, WALES - UK

The table shows quite an amount of variation in how governments and agencies approach the issue of ensuring the relevance of initial training. Some have a very strong influence through the approval of course modules (e.g. DK, PH, USA), frameworks for course recognition (e.g. IE, UK-England, Wales), national occupational standards (e.g. UK-England, Wales), and quality assurance mechanisms for tertiary education (AT, KR, Scotland). These particularly apply to training programmes that lead to qualifications required by government for work as a career practitioner in the education sector. Scotland also has adopted a very pragmatic approach by offering career work placements to university staff so that they can get a feel for the actual work environment in which career practitioners work. They also offer work placements to students who are pursuing initial training programmes in the universities.

In the labour sector, there is less government requirement for particular qualifications for work as a career practitioner. Initial and continuing training is in general provided in-house, thus ensuring that it is relevant to the work setting and organisation.

There are still countries and regions within countries where there are as yet no mechanisms for key stakeholders (other than the universities) to influence the relevance of the content and method of initial training for career practitioners.

The provision of continuing training is the most common means by which governments and agencies ensure the relevance of training. However, only a handful of countries make continuing training obligatory in order to ensure the continuing professional relevance of the competence of career practitioners.

1.2 Professional associations and academic societies

Professional associations also play formal and informal roles in ensuring the relevance of initial and continuing training as illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 2: Role of professional associations and academic societies in ensuring the relevance of the training of career practitioners

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY
National Occupational Standard for career practitioner	England, Wales-UK: Career Development Institute
UK Register of Career Development Professionals (CDI led and managed): Makes Continuing Professional Development obligatory to maintain registration	UK -England, Wales, Scotland
Government recognised regulatory body for training, qualifications and continuing credentialing	Quebec, Canada: Order of Counsellors and Guidance Counsellors of Quebec

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY
Continuing professional training including by webinar	Almost all countries
Induction training for school careers staff	NZ: CATE and Careers New Zealand
Development of training materials	CA (national)
Six Academic Societies dealing with career development and HR actively involved in career practitioner training and in exchanges about the relevance of the training	KR

Professional associations in most countries act to upskill members through the provision of continuing professional training. Other professional association initiatives, few in number, range from acting in a statutory capacity (CA, Quebec) to voluntary support (NZ). However, Section 3 below will show that professional associations in some countries also play a role in developing and promulgating competency frameworks for career practitioners.

1.3 Initial trainers' initiatives

In some countries, higher education staff responsible for the initial training of career practitioners take the initiative in ensuring the relevance of their training programmes through stakeholder consultation and formative evaluation as illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 3: Initiatives of initial trainers of career practitioners in ensuring the relevance of their training programmes

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY
Advisory Councils	CA
Informal stakeholder consultation	CA, NO
Reference groups	DK
Formative evaluation by trainees/students	DK

These initiatives, few in number, tend to be more of an informal nature.

1.4 Other responses

The following table shows that while some countries have no mechanisms as yet to ensure the relevance of career practitioner training, others are moving forward:

TABLE 4: Other country responses concerning ensuring the relevance of initial and continuing training of career practitioners

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY
No mechanism/initiatives	CL
No nationally agreed and co-ordinated approach	NZ
To be decided	LU
Ministry of Education and Youth interest	KH
Consultative document on competency framework for career practitioners issued by the Department for Higher Education and Training (DHET)	ZA

1.5 Conclusion

Governments, their agencies, professional associations, and initial trainers, and combinations of these, take different approaches to ensuring the relevance of career practitioner training. Some are directive, others are prescriptive, and others again are light touch. These differences appear as functions of countries' legal, societal and cultural traditions, the current state of development of career services, and of the linkages between such services across sectors. Regulation seems to be stronger in the education sector. The provision of continuing professional training is the most common approach, usually funded by government and practitioners and mainly led by professional associations. Where regulation does not exist, initial trainers show little initiative in involving other stakeholders to help make their training programmes more relevant.

2. The influence of the business and employer community in maintaining the relevance of practitioner training

Introduction

The labour market is the ultimate destination of almost all who leave education and training systems., even if the labour markets do not have sufficient opportunities to accommodate all. The labour market itself is a complex and ever changing phenomenon as are the learning pathways to arrive there. Governments share responsibility with employers and other social partners for the management the labour markets. Private and public employers provide the work opportunities. The career practitioner acts as a guide in individuals' transitions between learning and work opportunities, and as a mediator between labour market skills demand and supply. Thus the role of the career practitioner as a mediator and the content and methodology of career practitioner training are legitimate interests of private and public sector employers and of government.

In the context of education-industry linkages, the Australia paper makes the point that 'industry has long argued that universities should build closer links with employers so that they can expose students to the workplace during their training through internships and formal work placements'. This equally applies and perhaps more importantly so to the initial and continuing training of career practitioners for whom knowledge of occupations and the labour market is essential. Internships and work placements provided by employers are just one means by which career practitioners can gain a better knowledge of occupations and the labour market.

Country responses to Question 16 distinguished between the general business and employer community and the employers of career practitioners.

2.1 Business and employer community involvement

The following table lists ways in which the employer and business community support and try to ensure the relevance of the training of career practitioners:

Table 5: Involvement of employer/business community in ensuring the relevance of the training of career practitioners

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY
Employer organisations (and trade unions) represented on all formal committees who prepare laws including for career guidance	AT
Employer organisations involved in the Guidance Task Force to develop	AT

a Ministry of Education circular letter on school guidance and the training of career practitioners	
Employer organisations offer industry placements for teachers and career practitioners	AT
Employer organisations strongly involved in career practitioner training provided at the 9 Teacher Training Universities	AT
Employer organisations (and trade unions) give opinions on career practitioner training at the National Dialogue Forum	DK
Employer organisations provide speakers for career leadership training	JP
Employer organisations provide placements for participants of initial training programmes for career practitioners	NZ
Employer organisations consulted concerning career practitioner training programme approval	NZ
Industry Skills Council initiated and constantly refines a National Competency Standard for Counselling and provides training for career practitioners	KR
Employer and business organisations have no active involvement in career practitioner training	IE, JP, PH, NO

This table shows that strong links between business and industry employer organisations and the training of career practitioners exist only in a handful of countries. Austria is a particularly good example of such links where, as a consequence, career guidance is a topic of high interest to employers. They want to ensure that career practitioners have the necessary insights into the world of work so that they can better assist the career decision-making of students. Other countries recognise the importance of such links for the training of career practitioners as the following table shows:

Table 6: Importance of employer involvement in career practitioner training

RESPONSE	COUNTRY
Important that employers' needs are analysed and that the information gathered has an impact on the content of career practitioner training	KH
More networking with the private sector should be incorporated into career practitioner training	KH
Employers have concerns about career practitioner knowledge of work opportunities, occupations, sectors, and future skill needs	NO
Important role of employer organisations in providing labour market and skills intelligence information to career practitioners	IE, TN, Scotland, Wales
Strong emphasis on labour market information (sector, regional) in the initial training of career practitioners	NZ
USA Chamber of Commerce proposal: career practitioners should become 'employment account managers' maintaining relationships with the business community and ensuring that career practice is relevant to workforce needs	US
Business/industry sector considered a strategic partner for national human resource development initiatives	KR

Business and industry have a key role to play in addressing the occupational and labour market knowledge gap of trainees and career practitioners, a gap that cannot be addressed by the initial trainers of career practitioners acting in isolation from the labour market actors. However, the overall picture is one in which the training of career practitioners takes place mainly without the

involvement and engagement of labour market actors, which is really surprising given that the labour market is the main destination of education and training graduates, guided and mediated by these same career practitioners.

2.2 Involvement of employers of career practitioners in the training practitioners

As noted in section 1.2 above, some employers of career practitioners in some countries provide them with initial training. Many such employers also provide them with continuing training. The following table provides some additional information:

Table 7: Involvement of employers of career practitioners in the training of career practitioners

ACTIVITY/RESPONSE	COUNTRY
Employers of career practitioners represented in reference groups who give feedback to trainers and the Ministry on training modules and changes to these	DK
Employers involved in the development of National Competency Standards for Counselling	KR
Employers involved in the creation and development of a Higher Apprenticeship in Career Practice in cooperation with the Career Development Institute	England, Scotland
Employers becoming more influential in training career practitioners in cooperation with public and private providers of training and provincial professional associations	CA (NS, NB, ON, AB, BC)
Not all employers of career practitioners recognise career development as a distinct professional field with its distinct knowledge and skills base	CA

Employers of career practitioners are involved to a limited degree in influencing the initial training of career practitioners and in a very few countries. They do not appear to be considered as legitimate stakeholders in influencing the initial training of career practitioners.

2.3 Conclusions

The country responses on the involvement of the industry and business community in ensuring the relevance of the training of career practitioners raise many issues:

-How can university/ tertiary/higher education trainers and professional associations properly prepare career practitioners as learning and work mediators, when and if they try to do so without the significant involvement of labour market actors?

-Which forms of involvement should the industry and business community ideally have in the training of career practitioners?

-Who should take the first step in building this relationship: the trainers and professional associations? The business/employer/trade union organisations? The government ministries and agencies?

-What is the impact for the profession - impact on the general public, on the industry and business community, and on employers of career practitioners - when career practitioners demonstrate limited knowledge or ignorance of occupations and labour market opportunities?

-To what extent, if any, are occupations and the labour market learning a significant part of the initial training programme of career practitioners in your country? Should it be and why?

-How is it that the profession of career practitioners sees itself as misunderstood and not taken seriously by the business and industry community and why this is the case?

-How can the academic and professional communities talk in a credible way about career learning and transition skills for young people and adults when they provide training programmes at a distance or in isolation from the business and industry community?

3. Ensuring that career practitioners' competency frameworks stay relevant

Competency frameworks are tools that set standards for effective job performance related to organisational goals. They usually define the knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours required to undertake a particular role in an organisation. They act as a guide in the development and customisation of initial and continuing training for effective job performance; help to identify personnel and organisational competency gaps; and they act as a tool for review, evaluation and development of individuals and organisations.

In the field of career practice, professional associations have taken the lead in developing competency frameworks for career practitioners. These frameworks tend to be generic across different work settings rather than sector or organisation specific.

The following table summarises the country responses on ensuring the relevance of career practitioner competency frameworks:

Table 8: Career practitioner competency frameworks by country, lead body, and reach

FRAMEWORK	COUNTRY	PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION VS GOVT. INSTITUTION-LED	GENERIC VS ORGANISATION OR SECTOR SPECIFIC
Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners	AU	Professional association standards – Career Industry Council Australia	Generic
Competence Profile for Career Practitioners	AT	National Committee of University Regional Coordinators for Guidance and the Ministry of Education	Sector specific - schools
Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners	CA	Professional association – Canadian Council of Career Development Associations	Generic
Competency Framework for Guidance Practitioners	IE	National Guidance Forum – govt. led	Generic

FRAMEWORK	COUNTRY	PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION VS GOVT. INSTITUTION-LED	GENERIC VS ORGANISATION OR SECTOR SPECIFIC
Programme Recognition Framework		Ministry of Education	Sector specific – schools
Guidance Counselling: Core Competencies and Professional Practice		Professional association – Institute of Guidance Counsellors	Generic
CDANZ Professional Standards (in development)	NZ	Career Development Association of New Zealand	Generic
Competence Standards for Career Practitioners (in process)	NO	National Unit for Lifelong Guidance, Skills Norway – govt. led	Generic
Career Practitioner Competence Framework		Ministry of Education and Training	Sector specific - schools
National Competency Standard - Counselling	KR	Industry Skills Council – Human Resource Development Service Korea - govt. led	Generic
Organised Framework for Occupations – Career Counsellor (proposal to broaden it to include Career Development Practitioner)	ZA	Department for Higher Education and Training – govt. led	Generic
Consultative document on Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa			
Career Counselling Competencies	US	Professional association – National Career Development Association	Generic
National Occupational Standards: Career Development	UK – England, Scotland, Wales	Employer led through the Career Development Institute	Generic
Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the UK Career Development Sector		Professional association – Career Development Institute	
No competency framework yet	KH, CL, FI, JP, LUX, PH, TN, SG, TW, MO		
Professionalising career guidance: practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe		CEDEFOP comparative country study	Generic

These competency frameworks are prescriptions for excellence. The *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners* and *Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional*

Roles in the UK Career Development Sector have particularly good standards on occupational and labour market information relevant to section 2 above on the involvement of business and industry in career practitioner training. They are also relevant to Theme 1 of this Symposium: *Understanding how work opportunities are changing*.

However, the competency frameworks are mainly (including government led) voluntary in nature. As such they do not oblige any career practitioner or any organisation providing career guidance or any tertiary training institution to follow them. There is thus less pressure for them to be reviewed regularly for updating and relevance. Some of the frameworks have not been revised for many years.

The fact that they are mainly generic may also be a limiting factor in improving career practitioner performance in sectors or organisations, in supporting the development of a professional identity of career practitioners within a particular sector, and in achieving employer recognition of the profession of career practitioners within a sector.

4. The main barriers to and the success factors in effecting reforms in the professional preparation and development of career practitioners

As the preceding sections have shown, while the initial and continuing training of career practitioners is an important focus in itself, it takes place in a broader public, private and professional context in which policy, legislation, and professional regulation or the absence of some or all of these play a key role. One might legitimately expect, given the content of the previous sections, that the number of barriers to effecting reforms in the preparation and professional development of career practitioners will outnumber the success factors, and that they will reference the education sector more than the labour market sector. The success factors are first presented.

Table 9: Success factors that enable the development of reforms in the preparation and development of career practitioners

Policy maker positive perceptions of the policy relevance of career guidance provision	AT, AU, DK, IE, KR, LU, SG,
Stakeholder participation	AT, LU, NO, NZ
Tools for improvement: professional networks and coaching; accreditation of prior learning for career practitioners; national portal for sharing best policy and practice	Scotland – UK; AT; AU

Not surprisingly, stakeholder participation and perceived policy relevance feature in the success factors.

The barriers and challenges to effecting reforms are of a broader nature.

Table 10: Barriers and challenges to effecting reforms in the preparation and development of career practitioners

Not referenced in public policies	CL, NZ
Lack of awareness and/or official recognition by public administrations and public employers	CL, IE (lab.), KH, KR, KSA, SG, ZA
Insufficient government financial investment for training and	AT, CA, FI, KSA, NO, PH,

development	England - UK
Structural barriers: cross sector nature of career guidance provision; federal and regional government structures	CA, TN, US; CA, FI, US,
Absence of professional standards	NO, NZ
Absence of evidence of impact	CL, DK
Initial training out of touch with societal and labour market realities and limited in its scope	JP

Lack of public/societal and business awareness of the value of career services features strongly as indeed does insufficient financing. The cross sectoral (education, labour) shared policy and administrative responsibility for career services adds to these awareness challenges. So also does the devolution of policy and administrative responsibility for career services from national to provincial/state/ regional governments.

5. Conclusion to Theme 3

Looking to the future, in order to ensure the relevance of the initial and continuing training of career practitioners, two things must happen:

- Increased stakeholder involvement in decisions concerning the content and method of training. These stakeholders include the public (users of services), the funders of career services (government and agencies), employers of career practitioners, and the major labour market actors -the business and industry community
- The establishment of a very strong formal relationship between the initial (and continuing) trainers of career practitioners and the business and industry community.

The outcomes from these actions will provide levers for ensuring that training of career practitioners does not take place in isolation from the labour market and that the training provided stays relevant.