

CAREER GUIDANCE
CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW CENTURY UNDER AN
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE (1)

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Abstract

This paper is dedicated to key issues of the actual challenges in all societies regardless their developmental level and how the international guidance community is coping with these challenges. It deals with the importance of guidance in a changing society, quality assurance, access to services and qualification of guidance practitioners under an international perspective.

Key words: globalization; guidance; inclusiveness; politics; career.

As President of IAEVG it is a pleasure for me to address this Ibero-American conference here in La Plata. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with many colleagues from Argentina and the Ibero-American region. It is my second time to be here in Argentina. I am very grateful to the organisers that they did so many efforts to make my attendance possible. I am convinced that my visit will strengthen the liaison and partnership between the International Association and the national guidance movement in Argentina and also encourage the efforts of all professionals in your country to promote the advancement of career guidance in a time of serious social problems. Only if we demonstrate that career guidance and counselling is performed with excellence then we can convince policy makers in our countries that guidance serves productively individuals, economies and the society as a whole. The high participation rate of this conference is again a demonstration for the big need of an international exchange of ideas and experience in the field of vocational guidance on this continent. On the occasion of the IAEVG World Congress on Quality in Guidance in Bern early September a new Board of Directors of IAEVG was elected. I am pleased to convey the greetings of my colleagues from the Board to the participants of this conference.

Global changes and the increasing importance of guidance

Facing the enormous changes and consequences of globalisation at the beginning of the new millennium and its impacts on human and social life there is an urgent need to rethink guidance and counselling. The globalisation process forces economies on local, regional and national level to react to the impulses of the world market and the international

competition. Globalisation as the free flow of capital in search of cost minimisation, the move ability of manufacturing capacity, of information, goods, services and even people brings one state a loss of investment and employment accompanied by a win in other regions of the world. This competitive movement results in an extreme pressure to increase productivity by taking advantage of technological changes of all kinds. It affects the marketing distribution and general administration processes. While new technologies changed the nature of work in industry, services, computers, bio-technology and especially in information and communication technologies and lead to job loss and unemployment, new workplaces are created elsewhere. This process requires adaptability and qualification adjustment of workers and enterprises alike.

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) especially influence the nature of work and employment structures with big challenges for individual workers and enterprises and calls for new labour market policies and a shift of skills requirements. Instead of a highly specialised workforce the new jobs in a more flexible and holistic work process require more general knowledge, a basic computer literacy and diverse vocational abilities to acquire multiple and interpersonal skills and social competencies in relation to increasing reliance on teamwork and networking .

The consequences of these global changes are not only changes in qualification requirements but also at the same time a growth of personal disorientation and displacement of people which calls for personal assistance through guidance and personal counselling. Unemployment and specially youth unemployment is a major problem in many countries. In many developing countries young women and men have to choose between informal work or no work. The ILO estimates that around 74 million young people are unemployed throughout the world. In this region of the world youth unemployment is about 30 per cent in Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela and about 40 per cent here in Argentina and Colombia. In 1997, before the onset of the current crisis , open youth unemployment in Argentina from poor urban households was 55 per cent, compared with a national average for all young people of 24 per cent (ILO,2003).

The transition from school to work determines a person's chance to escape from poverty and opens positive future life perspectives. Therefore the struggle against youth unemployment is a major public goal and career guidance the best means to support this. In this concern the concept of developing and sustaining the "employability" of young persons and the work force in general and the access to decent work will become more and more of key importance in public labour policies and is also recommended by the EU and ILO (Lee,2001). This means that employees should take on more responsibility by

constantly refining, upgrading and increasing their skills through life long learning. To motivate clients to do this will become a part of guidance activities.

Lifelong learning needs lifelong guidance

Within this context one of the major social and economic trends is the rise of a knowledge-based society which brings the need along to create education and training within a life long learning system to offer every citizen learning facilities to adapt the latest knowledge and skills.

Further UNESCO recommends in this concern a human-centred lifelong learning society, “which holds a culture of peace and environmentally sound sustainable development as its central feature” (Tang, 2001). The foundation of such a new human oriented society is the requirement of values, attitudes, policies and practices which will encompass inclusiveness and wider access to all levels of education, and at the same time a shift to human and career development needs which enable people for an equal participation in education and the world of work. UNESCO argued that this can only be achieved through a policy of providing skills for all with no exclusions and making education and training an accessible basic human right. Precondition is to achieve the UNESCO’s main goal to achieve “education for all” until 2015. Such a new holistic approach for education combines the preparation for life and the world of work and includes all domains of learning incorporating general and vocational education as a continuum of knowledge, values, competencies and skills. Under this view guidance and counselling become a crucial role to enable people for the new learning needs and empower them to balance life, learning and work.

In the recently updated Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education (2001) UNESCO stated clearly that career “guidance should be viewed as a continuous process...” and its role should be extended to “preparing students and adults for the real possibility of frequent career change which could include periods of unemployment and employment in the informal sector.” (UNESCO and ILO, 2003). To manage and to adapt to the ongoing changes will also be a major goal of guidance. In this sense UNESCO also sees guidance as a lifelong process to accompany the lifelong learning journey with many pathways, thresholds, barriers and chances.

For ILO too, “education and training are a “right for all” which should be “universally accessible... In addition to education and training, career guidance and job placement services (career development services) embracing career education, career counselling, employment counselling and educational, vocational and labour market information, all have a crucial role to play in human resources development.” Thus a “career development culture” among youth and adults has to be developed and will be of “particular importance

for ensuring their employability and facilitating their transition from education and training to work or further training.” (UNESCO / ILO, 2003)

IAEVG together with the International Association for Counselling (IAC) supported UNESCO by a contract in compiling a book on “ Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Twenty -first Century: New Roles and Challenges for Guidance and Counselling” (UNESCO/IAEVG/IAC, 2002) where several international experts focus on the crucial role of guidance to enhance the development of technical and vocational education and training.

A recent review of OECD on "The Transition from Initial Education to Working Life" (OECD, 2000) within a life long learning framework was concerned with the transition outcomes of all youth from the different education settings in 14 OECD member states. A major conclusion of this study was that well organised information and guidance is an essential feature of effective transition systems. Although the importance of guidance and counselling in this respect is very high it has often not been given a sufficient priority by those responsible for youth transition policies. To follow up this observation OECD has launched a further project on "Policies for Information, Guidance and Counselling Service" ([web page: www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews](http://www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews)). In 14 countries this review has examined ways in which the organisation, management and delivery of information, guidance and counselling services can help to meet key public policy objectives like: making lifelong learning for all a reality and combining more active labour market approaches to welfare assistance and further social cohesion. That means that policy issues of guidance and counselling like: Delivery models; costs and benefits, role of the parties, staffing, financing, quality, the knowledge base and career information have been given a high priority also from OECD to meet the new demands in a changing economy and society.

The World Bank and the European Union have linked up with this project and carried out a similar review with the same questionnaire in another 22 countries. IAEVG has closely co-operated with OECD and the other partners in this project and is also co-sponsoring (together with the World Bank and EU) an international conference in Toronto (4-6 October 2003; [www.....](http://www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews)) organised by the Government of Canada together with OECD to disseminate and discuss the results of this universal study.

Like UNESCO and OECD also the European Union has emphasised in the "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning” (European Union, 2000) a comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategy for Europe which should aim to

- guarantee universal and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society;
- visibly raise levels of investment in human resources;

- to build an inclusive society with equal opportunities for access to quality learning;
- to achieve higher overall levels of education and vocational qualification;
- to encourage and equip people to participate more actively in public, social and political life at all levels of the community.

As a key tool to achieve these goals a new thinking of guidance and counselling has to ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information about learning opportunities and personal advice how to combine living and working and to pursue as self-motivated and active citizens their own personal and professional development. The EU envisages guidance as a continuously accessible service for all with a holistic style of provision, able to address a range of needs and demands of a variety of clients including the disadvantaged and people with special needs. That means that guidance provision systems must shift from a supply-side to a demand-side approach with a proactive reaching out towards people, using all ICT/Internet-based sources to enrich the professional role and develop an information management and networking capacity of counsellors together with increasing use of the more non-formal channels of information and facilities of volunteers and peers.

New understanding of career development

Under consideration of the ongoing changes in work, employment, technologies and social life and the visions of the international organisations for the future development of a learning society career and career development have to be re-conceptualised. The new mode of employment generates a new understanding of career on the objective side. Stable, waged employment with clear-cut job descriptions is being replaced by more flexible forms which do not guarantee long-term job security and influence the whole system of social security. As modern careers are more fragmented so called patch-work biographies become more and more common and need appropriate assistance through guidance and counselling during career transitions. Under the subjective understanding of career it has to be questioned, how individuals make sense of their careers and their personal histories and the skills, attitudes and beliefs they have acquired. (*Arnold and Jackson, 1997*). Another view suggests not only to acquire career skills but also build up a career identity (*Meijers, 1998*). This is similar to the constructivist or socio-dynamic approach (*Peavy, 2000*) which emphasises that individuals are building up their own personality within their social framework under consideration of wholeness, capacity, identity, self creation and transformation. With reference to work, employment or its absence, the question is “ How shall I live? And - How does my job or my work, or its absence, fit into, and influence my life plan or career?” Career has to be seen as a

connected relation of life and work and career planning is linked to life planning which turns more into life management. Career development has to be combined with overall life planning. And guidance and counselling has to support the development of life planning skills which equip people to cope with the permanent changing social and individual life situations. Choosing a career or work has to implement the self-concept and to bestow a meaningful social identity to the person if it enables an individual to perform productively for the community and thereby become self-supporting, successful, satisfied, stable and healthy in his own personal life. (Savickas, 2000)

Career development has now to be understood as a developmental learning process that evolves throughout our lives and combines (according Watts) the three main areas:

- Self-awareness prepares and helps individuals to develop personal values, strengths, potentials and aspirations which lead to a self-development to build up a personal meaning of a satisfying and valued life and enables a balance between work and other life roles.
- Opportunity awareness enables to identify and analyse available education, training and employment opportunities, evaluate them for the own life goals and how to access them.
- Decision and transition learning build up the individual's capacity to transfer skills how to cope with unexpected life situations.

Career development is the process of managing learning and work over the life span (Watts, 2001). Career development services regardless their location and organisational structure as career education programmes, career or educational counselling services or employment services have to combine the above mentioned three main developmental areas and thus can assist in developing human potentials and a strong resource base in communities and societies.

IAEVG and quality of guidance

In the face of such monumental changes in economy and social life in all regions of the world and under consideration of a new meaning of career development which integrates life and work planning IAEVG requires the most effective guidance and counselling services possible and adequate state policies on guidance and counselling which foster an development of quality guidance delivery in all parts of the world. Quality issues like ethical behaviour of counsellors, qualification of the guidance personnel and the access to services become more and more important.

Professional performance of practitioners

To ensure quality of guidance delivery and services as well as an adequate behaviour towards clients IAEVG achieved the adoption of a code of ethics for counsellors and for guidance services. 1995 the General Assembly IAEVG approved the internationally recognised Ethical Standards which describe the ethical responsibilities of the counsellors to their clients, the attitudes to colleagues and professional associates, the attitudes to the government and other community agencies, the responsibilities to research and related processes and finally the responsibilities as an individual practitioner (IAEVG,1996; van der Burgh,1996). Every member of IAEVG is committed to this code of ethics which is dedicated to the enhancement of the worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of those persons whom IAEVG members serve. Many member associations have directly endorsed these international standards to their national associations or have them adapted under special consideration of their cultures and regional social conditions.

Counsellor Resource Centre (CRC)

Besides the ethical behaviour counsellors' professionalism is marked by a permanent updating of their professional knowledge and a reflection of his own daily work through exchange of practical experiences with other practitioners and organisations working in the area of educational, vocational and career guidance and counselling. IAEVG and Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) has set up an internet based **International Counsellor Resource Centre (CRC)** in 5 languages English, French, Spanish, German and Finnish which serves the increasing needs of counsellor self-care and is organised around the types of questions and problems professionals typically ask and support individual counsellors in both their practical work and their professional development. The aim of the CRC to support career counsellors world wide in getting established in their own profession, in helping them to serve clients in special situations and addressing special needs of special types of clients, in helping each other through a professional discussion offer and in providing counsellors with future perspectives.

The architecture of this counsellor support centre is divided in four main areas:

- Helping yourself with the subsections *about the field of career and employment service* (professions, associations, professional and ethical standards); *getting established in your profession* (electronic labour exchange, job listings, starting a consulting firm, search partners for projects) and *maintaining professional excellence* (conferences and workshops, education and training, suppliers, articles and journals, counselling practices and care of counsellor health)

- Helping clients with the subsections *type of situation* (self-assessment tools, gathering career and labour market information, education and training planning, work search, self employment, retirement preparation) and *type of clientele* (women, aboriginal persons, immigrants, persons with disabilities and youth)
- Helping each other with the subsections personal strategies, discussion groups and a seminar room as forum for professional development.
- Helping for the Future including information on new economy and market analyses and future prospects, new tools and improving practices

There is also the possibility to join this international development of the CRC and add new resources and web sites from different countries in one of the above mentioned five languages. I would like to invite you to visit the CRC under <http://crccanada.org> and if you want to contribute get in contact with the webmaster. The more professionals, practitioners and researchers will use these modern technological tool, contribute and communicate with colleagues from other countries the better will be the professional outcome and benefit.

Competencies and qualification of guidance practitioners

One of the main criteria of good and quality guidance is the identification, recognition and assurance of competencies. It is necessary that those who deliver the service to the clients really have the competencies they need to deliver quality educational and vocational guidance. As there were no internationally recognised standards of qualification or competencies the IAEVG General Assembly 1999 unanimously agreed to set up a project to develop International Counsellor Qualification Standards. As a follow up there should be developed training and further training modules which take into account the different needs in different regions.

An international committee was formed under the leadership of Prof. Elvira Repetto from Spain which explored similar national initiatives, used best components of existing models and created a framework for a large international scale validation (<http://www.uned.es/aeop/index0.htm>). All regions of the world were included in this project and I am happy that also Argentina and the Ibero-American region is involved by Diana Aisenson, Silvia Gelvan de Veinsten and Gabriela Cabrera. The name of the project has changed during the work process to reflect the competence based approached and the wider perspective not only for counsellors but all practitioners working in the educational and vocational guidance field. The "International Competencies for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioners" focus on the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to provide quality services. They are divided in two major sections Core

Competencies that all practitioners need regardless their work setting and ten areas of Specialised Competencies depending on the type of job setting and clients groups. *Core competencies* are:

- Ethical behaviour and professional conduct;
- Advocacy and leadership in advancing clients learning, career development and personal concerns;
- Awareness and appreciation of client cultural differences;
- Ability to apply theory and research to practice;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating guidance programmes;
- Awareness of one's professional limitations;
- Ability to communicate effectively with colleagues and clients;
- Knowledge of updated information;
- Social and cross-cultural sensitiveness;
- Co-operate effectively in a team of professionals;
- Knowledge of lifelong career development process.

In addition to the Core Competencies for all practitioners there are the *10 Specialised Competencies*, only be required by some practitioners, depending on the nature of their work:

1. Assessment,
2. Educational Guidance,
3. Career development,
4. Counselling,
5. Information Management,
6. Consultation and Co-ordination,
7. Research and Evaluation,
8. Programs and Service Management,
9. Community Capacity Building and
10. Placement. Every area has a specific set of various competencies.

After a Pilot Study the competencies were validated in a large international Validation Study with over 700 responses coming from practitioners of different work settings and various specializations in 41 countries. Looking at the general results all the Core Competencies were thought to be relevant or very relevant by more than 75 %, and the training in these core competencies was thought to be effective, except for 30% in program evaluation or cross-cultural sensitivity.

Perceptions of the relevance of the Specialised Competencies were –as expected - more varied. But in general assessment, career development and information management competencies (with some exceptions) were thought to be relevant, although 30% of the responses noted that they had received little or no effective training in these three areas. The General Assembly 2003 at the Bern conference approved unanimously the Final Report and the Framework of the International Competencies with the following *Next Steps and Recommendations*:

- To develop and provide training opportunities and to help practitioners to acquire the competencies.
- To develop mechanisms for a formal international recognition of competency attainment.
- National endorsement by professional associations, governments agencies and relevant bodies.
- International dissemination of the International Competencies and support of their implementation into training programs.

With this project IAEVG made a big first step forward to international awareness of more quality and the training needs of guidance practitioners.

IAEVG goals for better guidance services around the world

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary at the congress 2001 in Paris IAEVG has adopted the "Declaration on Educational and Vocational Guidance" (van Esbroeck, 2002) to state clearly which features of guidance and counselling services are essential in meeting personal, social and economic development needs and to encourage the further sustainable and peaceful development of a knowledge-based society: This is the associations confession for quality and demonstrates its key role and international leadership in the international guidance community:

- Each person - regardless of gender, education, race, religion, age or occupational status - should have free and easy access to educational and vocational guidance so that their individual capabilities and skills can be identified and developed to enable them to undertake adequate education, vocational training and employment, to adapt to changing individual and social life situations and to participate fully in the social and economic life of their community.
- Special target groups, i.e. persons with disabilities and social disadvantages, should be provided with career counselling that uses appropriate methods and counselling that take into account their particular needs and communication requirement.
- Educational and vocational guidance providers should meet recognised quality standards of counsellor training and service delivery.
- Educational and vocational guidance services provided must guarantee impartiality and confidentiality and should proceed with the voluntary and active participation of their clients.
- Everyone who needs and wants educational and vocational guidance and counselling should have access to it based on need and from a competent and

professionally recognised counsellor, whose profession is founded on the respect for human dignity and for different ways of living within communities.

- All educational and vocational guidance counsellors should have specified competencies and participate in continuing professional development programmes to enhance their skills and keep their professional knowledge up-to-date.
- As the training and performance of counsellors has to be supervised, the effectiveness of guidance services should be monitored through regular evaluation and relevant research studies.
- All counsellors and agencies providing educational and vocational guidance and counselling should be committed to recognised quality standards and endorse and follow a code of ethics in accordance with the 1995 IAEVG Ethical Standards.

The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance urges governments or other agencies responsible for promoting human resource development to ensure the establishment and maintenance of adequate educational and vocational guidance services in accordance with the above policies. "

Many countries and governments are more and more recognising that good vocational counselling not only aids the personal and career development of every individual, but also contributes to the social and economic development of the society as a whole. I am convinced that also this Ibero - American Conference in La Plata will contribute to a better understanding of guidance practitioners and responsible agencies for the needs of vocational guidance in your country and in all countries of the region and that the policy makers will give more attention to the importance of guidance for the social and economic benefit of their society. Then all guidance practitioners can contribute to the IAEVG 's main goal : "Maximising the world's potential through guidance".

Notes

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