



*Career guidance  
challenges and opportunities*

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# *acronyms and abbreviations*

<b>CEDEFOP</b>	Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
<b>CRIC</b>	Careers Research and Information Centre
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>NICEC</b>	National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PACE</b>	Public and Continuing Education
<b>SAVGEA</b>	South African Vocational Guidance and Educational Association

## What is Career Development?

Do you have a career? This was one of the questions 300 or so “career guidance practitioners” were asked during the visit of Professor Tony Watts in October 2008. He spoke of the traditional notion of “career” as being an elitist concept held by only a few, which refers to progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organisation or profession. The notion was that people “chose” their careers, which then unfolded in an orderly way. But the reality was that some people had a career while most people only had a job; and many did not have even that.

Professor Watts explained that for some time now that concept of career has been fragmenting. The pace of change, driven by technology and economic globalisation, means that organisations are constantly exposed to change. They are less willing to make long-term commitments to individuals; where they do, it is in exchange for flexibility about roles and tasks the individual will perform. Increasingly, therefore, security lies not in employment but in employability. Individuals who want to maintain their employability have to be willing to regularly learn new skills. So careers are now increasingly being seen not as being “chosen” but as being constructed through the series of decisions about learning and work that people make throughout their lives. Career development in this sense need not be confined to the few: it can, and must, be made accessible to all. Elaborating this point, Professor Watts pointed out that career development is not only a private good, of value to individuals; it is also a public good of value to the country as a whole. This is true in at least three respects.

First, it is important for effective *learning*. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, and are given realistic information about the opportunities to which the learning can lead, then they are likely to be more successful learners, and the huge sums of public money invested in education and training systems are likely to yield much higher returns.

Second, it is important for an effective *labour market*. If people find jobs and career paths that utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and therefore more productive, enhancing national prosperity.

Third, career development has an important contribution to make to *social equity*, supporting equal opportunities and promoting social inclusion. It can raise the aspirations of disadvantaged groups and give them access to opportunities that might otherwise be denied to them.

Career development is crucial to the success of *lifelong learning* policies. Governments regularly state that such policies need to be

significantly driven by individuals. The reason is simple: schooling can be designed as a system, but lifelong learning cannot. It needs to embrace many forms of learning, in many different settings. It is the individual who must provide the sense of impetus, of coherence and of continuity.

This places career development centre-stage. It means that if, as many governments believe, lifelong learning is crucial to a country's economic competitiveness and social wellbeing, then the country's future depends significantly on the quality of the decisions and transitions made by individuals.

## This publication

This publication includes the products of an intensive few months in which SAQA has facilitated explorations and discussions about the state of career guidance in the country. SAQA's overarching question in this exploration is: what navigational tools are there to help learners in all age-groups explore education and career opportunities? A relevant question we have been asked in response to this initiative is: why is SAQA doing this?

SAQA was established under the 1995 SAQA Act to develop and promote the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF was seen by the new democratic government as a key driver of a culture of lifelong learning in the country. The NQF was an aspiration driven by a broad range of constituencies from trade unions, business and civil society. Among all constituencies was the desire that both qualifications in general, and the specific learning achievements of learners (children and adults) in particular, should be recognised in more transparent ways, so that there could be greater mobility and flexibility as people progressed in their learning lives and along career pathways.

Over the last 13 years SAQA has helped construct a complex platform with scaffolding for the education and training system. The following figures are an example of SAQA's achievements:

By July 2007, 7.5 million learner achievements were registered on the National Learners' Record Database (NLRD). 787 new qualifications and 10 988 unit standards had been registered. In addition there were 23 999 providers accredited for 6 683 qualifications. There were 31 accredited Education and Training Quality Bodies. And during the 2007/08 financial year, 29 848 foreign qualifications were evaluated for persons seeking work and study permits.

From this brief sketch, it's clear that great effort has been expended in constructing the South African NQF, which is now seen as one of the most developed in the world; there are 70 worldwide.



Professor Shirley Walters.

The system has now reached sufficient maturity for SAQA to ask the next question: how easily can learners navigate this complex system? One of the critical cross-field outcomes for all qualifications is “exploring education and career opportunities” across the lifespan. SAQA, which was established to give leadership on these matters, therefore felt that it was time to ask whether it should be doing something more to make it easier for learners to find their way through the education and training systems as they make life choices.

To try to answer this question, we contracted Patricia Flederman to undertake an environmental scan. The results of her work are contained in her report in this publication. A draft report was presented to a consultative meeting in early September 2008 of carefully chosen people across the careers guidance field, from rural and urban areas and from various provinces. A number of important insights were gleaned from this meeting, including strong support for SAQA to explore setting up a national helpline, along the lines of Learndirect in the United Kingdom or the Careers Service helpline in New Zealand. It was envisioned that such a helpline would work closely with all the career guidance initiatives across the country.

In October 2008, Professor Tony Watts from England, a world authority on careers guidance, was invited to present the SAQA Chairperson’s Lecture and to offer seminars in Johannesburg and Cape Town on “Career Development in the Workplace” and on “Careers Guidance: Opportunities and Challenges”. The seminars were part of a national initiative on research into work and learning supported by SAQA, the University of Western Cape and the Insurance SETA. The papers delivered by Professor Watts are included here.

Throughout the various meetings, over 300 careers guidance practitioners from schools, workplaces, higher education, communities, the Departments of Labour and Education and the private sector were involved in discussions. There was strong support and endorsement for a high-priority national initiative to complement what is being done by the government, the private sector and civil society. SAQA has undertaken to explore ways of taking the national initiative forward with the various players in the field, and will seek major sponsorship to develop the ideas further.

Key needs have been identified which SAQA will support:

- development of career pathways for careers counsellors at all levels and sectors
- establishment of a national guidance reference group that can potentially become a “Guidance Council” to give strategic leadership
- setting up a national helpline which can build on international, national and local examples, and which can complement the

fragmented but inspired pockets of work that are operating around the country

- using the SAQA website to keep interested people informed about developments around this initiative

### *Looking back, looking forward – a personal reflection*

Thirty-two years ago I was employed by the University of Western Cape to find out what career guidance existed for black people in the Western Cape. There I was, a “white”, middle-class woman, interviewing people about career guidance in the townships when Soweto erupted. I still remember very clearly how forthrightly people spoke to me and I was left under no illusion that something concrete had to be done, urgently. So, together with Patricia Flederman, Edwin de Broize and many others, I set about establishing the first community-based, non-racial careers centre. This became the Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC), which opened its doors in September 1977, a month before many of the Black Consciousness Movement organisations were banned. It continued for the next 28 years to serve teachers, students and the broader community.

Today, after the environmental scan by Patricia Flederman, and the recent consultations, I am again convinced of the urgent need for something concrete to be done to give individuals and communities across the country, in both rural and urban areas, the help they need to follow their dreams, and to join in building the social and economic fabric of the society. But this time there needs to be a national initiative, which sets up a partnership between organisations within the democratic government and the private sector.

SAQA, as a statutory body with the mandate to work across the education and training systems, is well placed to give leadership to work collaboratively with others in taking “a great leap forward” in the area of career development. In this way SAQA can help to realise the widely held aspiration of “a better life for all”.

We at SAQA look forward to feedback on the ideas contained in this publication, and to working with others in the field to realise the vision spelt out by Professor Watts and Patricia Flederman. We wish to record our deep appreciation to them both for their commitment and dedication throughout this project. We are also very grateful to the INSETA for supporting the visit of Professor Watts and to UWC for hosting the Cape Town part of his visit.

Shirley Walters  
SAQA Chairperson  
30 October 2008

# *the role of career guidance in the development of the national qualifications framework in south africa*

Professor Tony Watts

National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, Cambridge, UK

## **Introduction**

This is my third visit to South Africa. The first was in 1978, under the apartheid regime. I was asked to give some lectures at the University of Cape Town, under the auspices of the British Council. I insisted that before giving the lectures, I should have the chance to travel and to learn what I could about the country. Through various contacts, an itinerary was arranged which included a visit to one of the Bantustans (Ciskei), an urban township (Soweto) and a shanty town (Crossroads), as well as to universities, schools and services within the white areas. It was without doubt one of the most intense experiences of my life, both in learning terms and emotionally. I subsequently published a paper entitled *Career Guidance under Apartheid* (Watts, 1980), in which I tried to describe the gulf between the opportunities available to white people and to black people, and the way in which this was reflected in the structure and nature of career guidance services. I mentioned as one of the most hopeful signs the founding in Cape Town of a non-profit organisation called the Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC) which aimed to be non-racial but politically aware in its approach and to focus particularly on the needs of poorer communities. I noted that it might provide a model for parallel initiatives in other parts of South Africa. The director of CRIC was the SAQA Chairperson who has invited me to give this lecture today: Shirley Walters.

My second visit was in 1994, soon after the downfall of apartheid and the formation of a new African National Congress government. It was a time of great excitement and promise, but also recognition of the scale of the tasks that faced the new government in trying to develop a more equitable and just society. By then, a substantial number of non-profit community-based organisations like CRIC had been established around the country, and had formed themselves into a South African Vocational Guidance and Educational Association (SAVGEA). My visit was designed to help SAVGEA to help to develop a strategy for career guidance in the new South Africa. It seemed to me that the key policy issue was whether its experience and creativity could be harnessed to support the transformation of the more formally-based services that had been inherited from the apartheid regime.

It is a great privilege for me now to be invited a third time, to give this lecture and to have some other meetings this week designed to

stimulate dialogue relating to the development of career guidance within South Africa. It is particularly significant that my visit is being hosted by SAQA. It has always seemed to me that the roles of national qualifications frameworks and of career guidance are complementary and indeed symbiotic – each needs the other. I will start with some brief reflections on this, relating them to the transformations that are taking place globally in the nature of work and career. I will then discuss the relationships between career guidance and public policy, drawing on some international reviews in which I have been engaged, and will explore some of the issues arising from them that are relevant to our discussions here. Finally, I will make some comments on possible strategies here in South Africa to which SAQA might contribute, and will conclude with some brief comments about international collaboration.

## **National qualifications frameworks and career guidance**

In my view, most developed countries are in the midst of a paradigm shift in the nature of work and career. I have called it a “careerquake” (Watts, 1996; 2000); Audrey Collin and I have talked about it as “the death and transfiguration of career” (Collin & Watts, 1996). In the industrial era, the dominant concept of “career” was progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organisation or profession. We talked about people “choosing” their career, as though they then entered it and simply allowed it to unfold in an orderly way. It was a bureaucratic concept. It was also an elitist concept: some had careers; many only had jobs; many did not even have that.

Now, however, that concept is fragmenting. The pace of change, driven by technology and globalisation, means that organisations are constantly exposed to change. They are therefore less willing to make long-term commitments to individuals; where they do, it tends to be in exchange for task and role flexibility. Either way, therefore, security lies not in employment but in employability. Individuals who want to maintain their employability have to be willing to regularly learn new skills.

This transforms the concept of “career”. In place of the traditional definition, it needs now to be redefined as the individual’s lifelong



From left: SAQA staff Yuven Gounden, DD: Communications, Eddie Brown, DD: Standards Setting and Development and Christo Basson, Director: Quality Assurance and Development.

progression in learning and in work. “Learning” embraces not only formal education and training, but also informal learning, in the workplace and elsewhere. “Work” includes not only paid employment and self-employment, but also the many other forms of socially valuable work, in households and in the community. “Progression” covers not only vertical but also lateral movement: it is concerned with experience as well as positions; with broadening as well as advancing.

Careers in this sense are no longer “chosen”: they are *constructed*, through the series of choices we all make throughout our lives. Moreover, and crucially, career development defined in this way need not be confined to the few: it could be accessible to all. The task of policy-makers, working with career guidance practitioners, is to help make it so. Only if this is addressed is it possible to reconcile labour-market flexibility with a just society, in Rawls’s (1972) challenging definition of the term: one we would choose to live in if we did not know what position within it we ourselves would occupy.

If career in this broad sense is to be available to all, a number of major policy strategies are needed. These include more flexible financial-support structures, stronger incentives to learning, and a more flexible and responsive learning system. But they also include the two strategies with which we are particularly concerned here: a national qualifications framework, and lifelong access to career guidance. The qualifications framework is needed to provide a clear, comprehensible and widely-recognised climbing-frame for lifelong career development. It needs to include accreditation of informal as well as formal learning, to make such learning transparent and portable, to link it to the labour market, and to make it possible to accumulate credits flexibly but progressively over a lifetime. Career guidance is then needed to activate individuals to utilise the climbing-frame, to navigate their way within it, and to ensure that their navigational decisions are well-informed and well-thought-through. In other words, the qualifications framework provides the structure; career guidance provides the processes to ensure that the structure is used by citizens, and used well.

All of this, of course, needs to be reframed when set in the context of developing countries, where substantial numbers of people are concerned with economic survival and subsistence. But one of the attractions of a national qualifications framework for a country like

South Africa is its capacity for treating informal learning as equivalent to formal learning, as a means of helping to redress the inequalities of the past (Young, 2005; Parker & Walters, 2008). Parallel to this, career guidance needs to be extended to include attention to the informal economy, in the form of enterprise education and community capacity-building (Watts & Fretwell, 2004), linking career to the concept of achieving a sustainable livelihood.

### *Career guidance and public policy*

I want now to focus more directly on the nature of career guidance and its relationship with public policy. For this part of my lecture, I will draw upon a number of international reviews which have been carried out in the last seven years. First, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), based in Paris, conducted a Career Guidance Policy Review which involved 14 countries (OECD, 2004). Next, the World Bank decided to use an adapted form of the OECD process to conduct a parallel review in seven middle-income countries, including South Africa (Watts & Fretwell, 2004). Then the European Commission, as part of its policy work on lifelong learning, decided to use the OECD questionnaire to collect information on all the EU member-states (Sultana, 2004). Subsequently, the European Training Foundation has used an adapted version of the same methodology to conduct reviews in the West Balkans (Sweet, in press) and in the Middle East and North Africa (Sultana & Watts, 2007). Finally, there have been two annexures to the series which have focused primarily on particular services: a study for the European Commission of career guidance in Europe’s public employment services (Sultana & Watts, 2006); and single-country reviews which I was personally commissioned to carry out of the all-age services in Scotland and New Zealand against the benchmarks provided by the OECD review (Watts, 2005; 2007).

In total, these reviews have now covered 55 countries, and represent the most extensive database we have ever had on national career guidance systems and policies across the world. In addition, the reviews have been used as data sources for two handbooks for policy-makers: one published jointly by OECD and the European Commission (2004); the other – addressed particularly to low- and middle-income countries – by the International Labour Organisation (2006).





Samuel Isaacs, Prof. Shirley Walters and Prof. Tony Watts.

The definition of career guidance adopted for the reviews was very similar. It covers services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. These may include services in schools, in universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in companies, in the voluntary/community sector and in the private sector. The services may be on an individual or group basis; they may be face-to-face or at a distance (including helplines and web-based services). They include career information (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education and career management programmes, taster programmes, work search programmes and transition services. So the canvas is very broad. This definition, partly because of its OECD endorsement, has now been widely adopted both nationally and internationally.

The reviews have been based on viewing this range of services as a coherent system. In reality, of course, they are not. Rather, they are a collection of disparate sub-systems, most of which are a minor part of some wider system, with its own rationale and driving forces, some of which can limit or distort the nature of what is offered. But in the reviews these different parts have been brought together, and viewed as parts of a whole. From the lifelong perspective of the individual, it is important that they should be as seamless as possible.

The nature of what is offered is of necessity strongly influenced by the political structure of the country, by its level of economic development, and by socio-cultural factors. The dynamics are, for example, very different in countries that are strongly centralised from those where important powers are devolved to regions, states or provinces; in post-industrial economies from less developed economies; in countries where Western cultural values predominate from those with different value systems. While the pressures of globalisation produce pressures towards homogenisation, it is very important that careful account is taken of such factors in designing appropriate services.

The reviews focus particularly on the interface between career guidance and public policy. Since in all countries most services are publicly funded and free to the user, they are effectively dependent on public policy. The fundamental underlying argument is that they represent a public good as well as a private good.

The public-policy goals which policy-makers expect career guidance services to address fall into three main categories. The first are learning goals, including improving the efficiency of the

education and training system and managing its interface with the labour market. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, the huge sums of money invested in education and training systems are likely to yield much higher returns. The second are labour market goals, including improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change. If people find jobs that utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and therefore more productive. The third are social equity goals, including supporting equal opportunities and promoting social inclusion. Career guidance services can raise the aspirations of disadvantaged groups and support them in getting access to opportunities that might otherwise have been denied to them.

The precise nature of these three sets of goals, and the balance between and within these categories, varies across countries. A challenge for all countries is to maintain an appropriate balance between them in the provision of services.

These goals are long-standing. But they are currently being radically reframed in the light of policies relating to lifelong learning, linked to active labour market policies and the concept of sustained employability. As I have already suggested, career guidance is crucial to the success of lifelong learning policies. Governments regularly state that such policies need to be significantly driven by individuals. The reason is simple: schooling can be designed as a system, but lifelong learning cannot. It needs to embrace many forms of learning, in many different settings. It is the individual who must provide the sense of impetus, of coherence and of continuity.

This places career guidance centre-stage. It means that if, as many governments believe, lifelong learning is crucial to their country's economic competitiveness and social wellbeing, then their country's future is significantly dependent on the quality of the decisions and transitions made by individuals.

This is reflected in OECD work on human capital (OECD, 2002), which suggests that the career management skills which are now a growing focus of career guidance policies and practices may play an important role in economic growth. It points out that less than half of earnings variation in OECD countries can be accounted for by educational qualifications and readily measurable skills. It argues that a significant part of the remainder may be explained by people's ability to build, and to manage, their skills. Included in this are career-planning, job-search and other career-management skills. Seen in this perspective, it seems that career guidance services have the potential to contribute significantly to national policies for the development of human capital. The fact that such an authoritative and influential organisation as OECD views it in these terms is very significant.

## Issues

So what are some of the key issues raised by these reviews? At least five seem particularly pertinent to our discussions here.

The first is that many countries are increasingly recognising the need to expand access to career guidance services so that they are available not just to selected groups like school-leavers and the unemployed, but to everyone throughout their lives. This is arguably the key point to emerge from the reviews, with huge implications. It requires not just expansion but transformation. If the expanded access that is required were to be achieved solely through public services and such traditional methods as face-to-face interviews linked to psychometric testing, there would inevitably be a massive increase in costs. But it is not just this: a new paradigm requires different approaches. For these and other reasons, efforts are being made to diversify the methods and sources of provision and to seek innovative and more streamlined forms of service delivery. As part of this, there is a move towards self-help approaches, including approaches designed to help individuals to develop the skills of managing their own careers.

Second, the reviews demonstrate that no country has yet developed an adequate lifelong career guidance system. But all countries have examples of good practice, and across the range of countries these indicate what such a system might look like – recognising that in terms of its detail it will take different forms in different countries. My own view is that the strongest model is the one represented by New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, each of which has a national all-age career guidance service. The OECD review commented on the organisational and resource-use advantages of providing a range of services to be provided throughout a person's lifespan within a single organisational framework dedicated wholly and specifically to career guidance provision. In effect, an all-age service of this kind provides a strong professional spine for a lifelong guidance system. So long as it recognises that it cannot provide all the career guidance that is needed, and devotes significant attention to supporting embedded career guidance support in schools, tertiary education, workplaces, and elsewhere, it provides – in my opinion – the most robust base for a lifelong career guidance system.

Third, even where there is such an all-age service, but even more where there is not, there is a need for strong coordination and leadership mechanisms in order to articulate a vision and develop a strategy for delivering lifelong access to guidance. Such mechanisms are required within government, where responsibility for guidance services is often fragmented across a number of ministries and branches. Coordinating mechanisms are also needed more broadly at national level, to bring together the relevant stakeholder groups and the various guidance professional bodies (which in some countries are very fragmented). Parallel

mechanisms are then required at regional and/or local levels, closer to the point of delivery. The European Commission has been encouraging member-states to establish national lifelong guidance forums, and a substantial number of European countries are now doing so, building on the experience of countries like Denmark and the UK which have had such forums in the past. A manual is to be published shortly by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) (2008) which draws from the experience to date and outlines some of the issues that need to be addressed in establishing and sustaining these mechanisms.

Fourth, an important focus for such collaborative action is the development of strategic instruments which can be operationally useful across the whole range of the career guidance field and hold it together. One is competence frameworks for career guidance practitioners, of the kind developed in Canada and more recently in Australia. Another is organisational quality standards of the kind developed in the UK, covering how individuals are helped and how services are managed: these can be voluntary in nature, but can also be made mandatory for organisations in receipt of public funding. A third type of instrument, developed in Canada and subsequently also in Australia, drawing from earlier work in the US, is the Blueprint: a list of the competencies that career education and guidance programmes aim to develop among clients at different stages of their lives, with accompanying performance indicators. Together, these three instruments can help to harmonise a lifelong guidance system, particularly if they can be linked to common branding and marketing of services.

Fifth, the issue of marketing is crucial. In the EU, a Resolution of the Council of Education Ministers on guidance was passed in



Samuel Isaacs of SAQA and Mike Abel of INSETA.



From left: Bonnie Mincher of the Financial Planning Institute of Southern Africa, Penny Macrory of ICON and Tatiana Sosznianin of Wits University.

2004 which stated: "Services need to be available at times and in forms which will encourage all citizens to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market." It added: "Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them." This is a very important statement. If it is to be followed through, careful attention needs to be paid to how to market the services, including how to brand them. In the UK, the Learndirect helpline, established in 1998, has taken around one million calls each year, while its website currently attracts 8-9 million web sessions a year. Usage is stimulated by a marketing campaign, including prime-time advertising on television, which is in effect a form of publicly-funded social marketing, encouraging people to consider change in their lives and advancing their careers. My review of the New Zealand all-age service indicated that the level of take-up of the New Zealand helpline has been under a quarter of that for Learndirect. This seems to be clearly related to the level of brand recognition among the general public, which has been around 30% for Career Services, in contrast to figures of over 80% for Learndirect. Such differences in turn seem linked to the size of marketing budgets: the Learndirect marketing budget as a percentage of total turnover (its budget has been consistently set at one-third of total advice turnover) is nearly five times larger than that in New Zealand (Watts, 2007; Watts & Dent, in press). So the lesson is clear: if we are serious about these services as a public-policy tool as well as a service for citizens, we have to market them.

### **Implications for South Africa**

So what are the implications of all this for South Africa in general and for SAQA in particular? For this part of my address I am heavily indebted to two documents: the excellent country report on South Africa produced for the World Bank study by Lara Kay and David Fretwell (2003); and a paper recently produced for SAQA by Patricia Flederman (2008)<sup>1</sup>, with whom I have had close communication over the last two or three months.

What these reports show is that the legacy of apartheid was a career guidance system almost exclusively focused on white communities and heavily dominated by psychologists operating within a directive "test and tell" tradition. Elements of this system remain, but

significant moves have been made towards a more inclusive system operating on more broadly-based "learning" principles. In particular, the growth of "life orientation" programmes within schools, and the current plans for strengthening career guidance services within the Department of Labour's employment services, are encouraging signs. Most of the non-profit community-based organisations have folded, including CRIC, but Kay and Fretwell (2003) note that many of their policies and programmes have been incorporated into government policies. The innovative potential of the non-government sector is being maintained by organisations like PACE, and a number of imaginative websites have been developed. So there is much to build upon.

On the basis of these reports, four key proposals might be made, in all of which SAQA could have a role to play.

### **Proposals**

The first is that there is a need to improve the quality of the career information that is available. High-quality information is an essential element of an effective career guidance system. Much of the current information is recruitment information supplied by opportunity providers. This certainly has a part to play, but it needs to be complemented by information that is impartial and comprehensive, and which links learning opportunities to the labour market. Flederman's (2008) report mentions the need to make the "wonderful treasure trove" represented by SAQA's National Learners' Records Database more accessible and searchable for career guidance purposes. If exploration of such possibilities could be linked to a wider review of current career information sources, and how they might be integrated or at least more effectively coordinated, this could stimulate a significant advance.

The second is the need to significantly expand the extent of the individual guidance services that are available. If information is absolutely *necessary*, it is also absolutely not *sufficient*. If individuals are to be able to find the information they need, to understand this information and relate it to their personal needs, and then to convert it into personal action, many will need some form of personal support. Some such help, however, can be provided in groups, and some can be provided at a distance. I have already mentioned that the Learndirect helpline in the UK takes

1 The report is included in this publication.

around a million calls each year: in a population of 60 million, this represents a massive penetration level. One of Flederman's (2008) most important recommendations is that a national career helpline might be established in South Africa. She points out that cellphone technology is very advanced here, and that nearly three-quarters of families now have cellphones. This could be the focal point for a wider strategy, as well as constituting a concrete initiative which could jump-start it. It could also provide the basis for a national all-age service. SAQA could help to initiate the discussions with relevant government departments and stakeholders that might be interested in supporting such a development.

It is important that any helpline should be able not only to provide direct services but also to refer callers to quality-assured web-based and face-to-face services where they can secure further help. An important aspect of such quality assurance is the professional standards of career guidance practitioners. The reports by Kay and

## *International collaboration*

Finally, a brief word about international collaboration. If South Africa can make significant advances along the lines I have suggested, this could be inspirational for many other countries. I referred earlier to the international reviews that have taken place in many countries over the last few years. These were significantly facilitated by a series of international symposia on career development and public policy, the first of which was held in Canada in 1999, and the fifth of which is to be held in New Zealand in 2009. These are high-quality events, which participants attend not as individuals but as members of country teams including both policy-makers and professional leaders. An International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy has been established to maintain continuity between these biennial symposia. In addition, a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has been established by the European Commission on the same broad principles; and a start has been made in setting up a



Fretwell (2003) and Flederman (2008) both emphasise the need to develop qualification and progression routes for career guidance professionals and paraprofessionals that do not require a background in psychology. These need to be built into the SAQA framework.

Finally, to promote these and other developments, there is arguably a need for a forum or other body to provide strategic leadership to the development of career guidance in South Africa. Flederman (2008) mentions that a provincial forum of this kind has already been developed in the Eastern Cape. SAQA could initiate discussions with potential partners to explore the need for a national body and to determine what form it might take.

Developing Countries Network linked to the International Centre, to address the distinctive needs of developing countries. South Africa could play a significant role in building the Developing Countries Network. If it could also field a strong team for the 2009 international symposium, this could help to build international links through which this creative and pivotally placed country could both continue to learn from others and seek to inspire others.

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# plenary discussion – johannesburg



In foreground: David Adler, Prof. John Cooke, Shirley Steenekamp and Shakeel Ori of the Durban University of Technology.

**Frances Kazan** of Talk Radio 702 and Cape Talk appealed for assistance in establishing a career hotline, suggesting that it was a useful service.

**David Adler** suggested that Prof. Watts's definition implies that we are living in a functional society (school, parenting, etc.), but this was not so. He stated further that the state had an important role to play.

**Samuel Isaacs** suggested that the “disconnects” between advice and service delivery must be fixed in order to have an effective service. This will ensure a streamlined process and an effective service.

**Dr Ronel Blom** stated that there was great underpinning work that needed to be done. Careful thought was needed. This should work synergistically with strategy.

**Joe Samuels** indicated that a link should be built between work and learning. However, one needs to guard against information overload and this can cause confusion. Individuals need to have a sense of what is out there and mistakes should not be repeated. The system of lifelong learning must be functional.

**Tony Watts** complemented the discussion by saying that coherent information must support serious strategy. However, a system must commence with an awareness of the challenges.

**Lydia Luwaga Lwasamija** said that SAQA's mandate is to advise the Minister and to conduct research. SAQA should, ideally, drive the process and leverage political and financial assistance. She stressed that SAQA was the body that could add value by overseeing the implementation of a career guidance service.

**Mosidi Maboye** said that the Departments of Labour and Education as well as broader civil society need to get involved. This initiative is not the sole concern of one body – it should be a joint initiative among all concerned. However, both departments had decisive roles to play.

**MacDonald Sebogodi** suggested that government, business and individuals must get involved in the process. He stressed that the beneficiaries are not restricted to government, and therefore the other bodies must play a role.

**Elize van Zyl** stated that SAQA cannot perform this task alone. It is clear that SAQA should drive the process, but other relevant role-players must support SAQA in its endeavours to get the initiative off the ground.

**Jenny Motto** suggested that the forum requires coordination and proper information and that individuals need to be educated in its needs. The service must add value to people's lives and should be relevant to the needs of both the individual and society.

**Tony Watts** emphasised that the process commences at primary school level because early intervention is crucial. Career education should be a focal point in a learner's life in the formative years. SAQA should play a catalytic role and bring together the relevant stakeholders. It is crucial that career guidance initiatives should commence as early as possible.

**Samuel Isaacs** said that SAQA would advise the Minister on lifelong learning and career development. The emphasis will be on how career guidance can add to the development of learners and how it will benefit society.



Joe Samuels.

**Bonny Feldman** stressed that a helpline was important to address the imbalance and unemployment rate. It is important that people receive guidance on a ongoing basis and that professionals are on hand to assist people with queries.

**Ms M Maboye** stated that a helpline was important, but the information must first be accessible, current and updated regularly. This will ensure that a helpline is an effective tool.

**Schalk Walters** said that the helpline must be linked to a broader marketing strategy. He quoted the example of the SABC's EduSpectrum. He emphasised how marketing initiatives create awareness and how the message is spread. Marketing and communication are essential in the development of an effective helpline service.

**David Adler** stated that the SMS service was also important and referred to the service run by UCT. This was also important in raising morale and developing communities of interest.

**Maria Williams** said that a Helpline should be supported by a marketing strategy, as phone access was common to all. She echoed the previous speakers' sentiments about the need for a streamlined Helpline service that was efficient and effective.

**Tony Watts** stressed that the helpline should be used strategically using SMS, websites and other new media; using a telephone line alone would be short-sighted. Young people have access to such related services and are familiar with them. The service must also be cheap and easily accessible.

**John Arnesen** raised the point of the NQF brand. All role-players should embrace the brand and promote it. The organisations involved are secondary to the NQF brand and marketing strategy.

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# plenary discussion – cape town

Professor Tony Watts presented his paper again in Cape Town on 3 October.



**Nikki, UWC Career Development Unit:** I went to a school in Athlone. CRIC was there but my school didn't inform me.

**Tony Watts:** White schools did have career guidance teachers. Some had good programmes. However, life orientation today is quite broad. It includes HIV/Aids, physical education, etc.

**Anne Short, UCT Career Development Unit:** The concept of career guidance is contested. All the bright girls in my school were sent to UCT to do Business Economics. It takes all choice away. It's not so easy to develop a clear strategy.

**Louise Chetty, student counsellor, College of Cape Town:** Students use Mixit and Facebook. Why don't we devise a website and create energy around careers guidance? When they download music there should be information on career guidance. This must be a free telephone call if it is to work.

**Tony Watts:** There is no doubt about it; you need to have a strong marketing campaign if you want to be successful.

**Mr Ferreira, Western Cape Education Department:** There is an unemployment level of approximately 40%. Where will they find work? SETAs don't create opportunities or skills development.

**Tony Watts:** Is a career guidance help line for one group only? Only people who have jobs need it/only people who don't have jobs need it. It works both ways. There are jobs, but not enough. There need to be stepping-stones to jobs. There could be community projects to develop skills that might later lead to a job. This is a fundamental question which you need to give quite a bit of thought. It's got to be credible if it will work. What you say to an unemployed person may be quite different from what you say to an employed person.

**Lenette Muller:** I worked in Scotland for a while and was amazed at the career guidance services they offered there. I think we should use Skype and websites such as the Career Planet website.

**Tony Watts:** In the UK, you can make a call and use the website simultaneously. It's about integrating the whole system.

**Karen Chisholm, Career Planet:** We have started a company called Career Planet. We offer a website. We take schools on trips here in the Western Cape. We set up displays in shopping centres.

**Tony Watts:** "My career is my business", in both senses. Work is a modern form of social contract. We agree to devote our energies to wider social purposes; in return, we get money to spend as we choose.

# career development in the workplace

Professor Tony Watts, National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, Cambridge, UK

## Introduction

When in the UK a few years ago a national sample of adults was asked which sources of information, advice and guidance about learning or work opportunities they had used in the previous year, the most commonly-mentioned source (mentioned by nearly two-fifths) was their employer (MORI, 2002).

In this paper I will draw heavily, with permission, from the work of my National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) colleagues Wendy Hirsh and Charles Jackson, and especially from their report on *Managing careers in large organisations* (Hirsh & Jackson, 2004). Many of the points made are relevant to smaller organisations too.

## Why career development matters

Career development matters to organisations:

- Careers are how higher-level and business-specific skills and knowledge are acquired.
- Careers are how skills and knowledge are deployed and spread in organisations, as employees move from one job to another in response to where they are needed – which is critical to organisational flexibility.
- Career movement is also how culture and values – the “glue” of the organisation – are transmitted, and how personal networks are extended and strengthened: these networks are often key to rapid and effective action.
- Career development is a major tool for attracting, motivating and retaining good-quality employees. Research in the UK has demonstrated that providing career opportunities is one of 11 key practices that influence organisational performance (Purcell et al., 2003); and that there is a link between the extent to which high flyers experience career support and their intention to stay with their employer (Winter & Jackson, 1999).

It also matters to individuals:

- Your career is your own life story; how you make sense of your working life and how you achieve some sense of direction and progression in work and inside yourself.
- Your career is how you manage your working life to earn income, and also how you balance your work with your other interests and responsibilities.
- Career development is about being fully aware of your work opportunities, and making conscious and proactive choices about the kind of work you do.
- Career development is how you develop your skills and CV, and so improve your chances of future employability.

So, careers matter. Organisations should see them as a central

aspect of the employment relationship, not an optional extra – not just “being nice to staff”.

## What is a career development strategy?

HR people are sometimes asked to come up with a career development strategy. This might contain:

- An explanation of what the organisation means by “career”.
- A definition of the career development “deal”. What is the organisation offering and to which employees? What does the employee bring to their side of the deal?
- Some principles and values about the manner in which career activities are undertaken.
- A simple explanation of the processes managers and employees are expected to use in managing careers.
- Clarity about who does what, i.e. the specific roles of line managers, senior managers, HR professionals and so on.

Inside an organisation, careers are not just about upward progression – although this is important. They are also about being able to move around the organisation to find work that you enjoy, and where you will make your best possible contribution to the business. The jobs we have done condition the jobs we can do in future, which is why the CV is so important.

The employer’s side of the career deal might include messages like:

- We want you to progress your career for as long as you stay with us.



Prof. John Cooke of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Ken Mockler of SAQA.



Schalk Walters (left) and Jody Kgalane of the Directorate of Standards Setting and Development.

- We will try and get to know you well so we can understand how to make the best possible use of your abilities.
- We will help you understand as much as possible about the business, its broad career paths and skill needs, and the changing labour market, so that you can identify realistic future career options.
- We will develop you by giving you a range of challenging work experiences.
- We will make sideways career moves genuinely accessible.
- We will work with you as an active partner in your career. We will seek to increase the contribution you make to the business over time, taking full account of your aspirations and preferences.

At the other end of the spectrum is a career deal that is far more driven by the organisation. We might call this the “corporate career development” deal. It tends to be confined to select employee groups. So those identified as potential senior managers tend to have careers that are far more actively planned by the organisation, where job moves are engineered on behalf of the employee.

Processes used in relation to corporately-managed careers tend to be for very senior people, those seen as having the potential to reach senior levels, and some entry groups (especially graduate trainees). The term “talent management” is used to describe a combination of succession planning and high-potential development activities: they often include special assessment processes (e.g. assessment or development centres, 360-degree feedback). Linked to this, the term “talent pipeline” is used to convey the need for “talented” people at different career stages and often includes graduate recruitment as its start-point.

Corporately-led career management does not have to be for senior managers only. Many early career training schemes combine formal training with actively managed work experience. Some organisations also run mid-career development schemes, which pick up employees who need extra development in order to make a career transition – often into management. This can be a way of increasing the representation of under-represented groups, an issue of particular significance in the South African context.

Between these two models is the notion of a “career partnership”. In this model, the individual and organisation take equal responsibility for careers and negotiate explicitly to meet both sets of needs. A partnership career deal differs from supported self-development in three ways:

1. The employee’s career plan is built by considering the ideas and preferences of both the individual and the organisation, and is explicitly discussed and agreed as sensible by both parties.

2. The organisation shares the responsibility for implementing the career plan, especially with regard to supporting access to work experience and job moves.
3. The organisation has an “agent” (who may be one person or a well-organised group of people) to do the negotiating, agreeing and supporting on its behalf.

In practice, most large organisations have a segmented deal – self-development (supported to a greater or lesser extent) for all employees, plus corporately-managed careers for key groups.

## Career development processes

In terms of career development processes, organisations commonly tend to rely on:

- Career planning discussions that are supposed to take place as part of a formal appraisal (or sometimes development review) with the line manager.
- Internal, open job-vacancy systems that allow employees to see and apply for vacant posts.
- A range of planning mechanisms and development schemes for employees regarded as being of particular value – succession planning and high potential or graduate development programmes are the most common of these.

This set of processes is a partial solution to the problem of how to manage careers, but it has some important weaknesses:

- Open job markets only help career development if employees already have a realistic career plan and know the kind of job they are looking for.
- Relying on the immediate line manager to give career information and advice in an appraisal interview has two weaknesses: first, the appraisal process; and second, the line manager. Telling employees to discuss their career once a year at the end of a long negotiation about pay rarely works. In a UK study of effective career discussions, only six per cent occurred in appraisals (Hirsh, Jackson & Kidd, 2001).
- The same study also showed that over-reliance on the line manager is a problem. Line managers often have a limited view of career options. If they have someone good working for them, they tend to want to hold on to them. Conversely, employees often do not wish to rock the boat with their own manager by raising the possibility of a career move.

Complementing these processes is a growing range of developments in large organisations that seek to plug the gaps in support for more self-managed careers. This includes developing better ways of explaining broad career options and career paths: organisations are starting to put this information on their Intranet systems.

They are also increasingly supplementing this with information on the support they offer in terms of career processes. These might include, for example:

- Frameworks for manager-subordinate career discussions and the personal development plans that flow from them. Nationwide, for example, has adopted a simple, user-friendly structure for career plans and the dialogue that surrounds them (see below).
- Self-help career planning tools which help employees to reflect on their skills and aspirations and shape their career plans, perhaps in advance of a discussion with someone.
- Sources of personal advice other than the line manager. These might include advice given remotely (via telephone) or electronically (e.g. by e-mail). They might also include expert career counsellors in the HR function and HR call centres. Or career coaches can be developed and embedded in the business, as in the case of Lloyds TSB (see below).

## Two case studies

### Nationwide

Nationwide, a building society with about 15 000 employees (many of them working in local branches), is an example of an organisation that is upfront about wanting all its employees to develop their careers and offers explicit support for those who wish to do so. A range of clear and visible mechanisms support this career strategy:

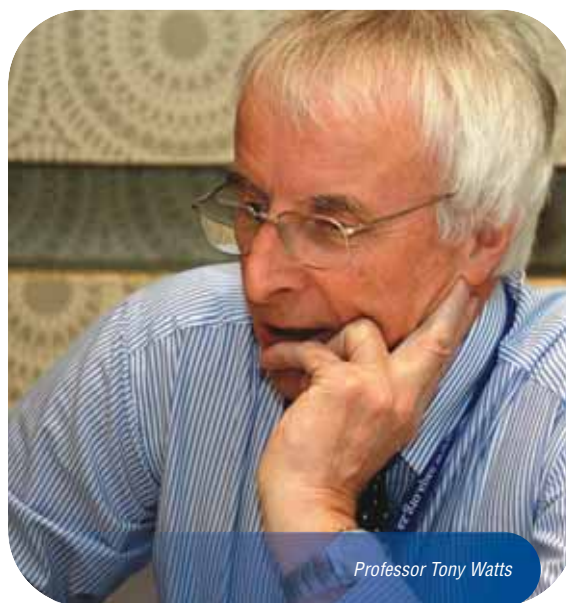
- Individuals are encouraged to discuss their career with their line manager, using a simple “Career Planner” framework. Importantly, this discussion builds on, but is separate to, the annual performance review.
- The organisation’s Intranet offers a range of career facilities including self-help career planning tools, information on career options and specific job vacancies.
- Individuals can contact a central Career and Leadership Development Team, who offer independent career advice through telephone and e-mail. Career workshops are also on offer.

All these supporting mechanisms have been developed by a small central team working in consultation with employees and in-house IT support. Nationwide tracks how well it is seen as delivering on its career promise, and how this indicator moves against employee satisfaction, commitment and retention. Of Nationwide staff, three-quarters say they have the opportunity for personal development and growth, compared with under a third in the companies against which they benchmark. The staff turnover is less than average for the financial sector, and this is estimated to save over £8 million a year.

### Lloyds TSB

Lloyds TSB (a bank with about 80 000 employees) offers:

- A career management website which includes information



Professor Tony Watts

about different business units and the types of jobs they have. Employees can assess themselves against the competencies for different job roles, and access a Job Shop which advertises internal vacancies.

- A self-help career planning package via an HR Call Centre.
- Call centre staff who have been trained to give career information, and to know when to refer an individual for more expert help.
- More personal and in-depth support which is then provided by a group of career coaches, who offer confidential one-to-one career advice to individuals referred to them by the call centre. They do this in addition to their “day job”, taking a few cases each month, contacting the individual by telephone initially, and then usually meeting them once or twice for career discussions. There are currently about 115 career coaches, trained to a level recognised by the UK’s Institute of Career Guidance. Career coaches work in all parts of the Group and are not just HR people. Demand from people wanting to train as career coaches is high.

## Conclusion

It is risky to assume that formal HR processes are all that matter. Informal information and advice and informal networking are also very important. Research in the UK (e.g. Hirsh, Jackson & Kidd, 2001) has showed them to be both highly prevalent and critical in enabling individuals to manage their own careers. But two provisos are important:

- We need to ensure that particular ethnic and other groups are not put at a disadvantage because of their exclusion from certain networks.
- We also need to provide better training for all people in the organisation to improve the quality of informal career support.

Finally, Hirsh and Jackson (2004) suggest 10 top tips for improving career development:

- Start with an audit of the processes you already use for managing careers, an analysis of business needs for career development, and a survey of your employees' key career issues.
- Work with senior managers to commit the organisation to a realistic and positive message for all staff about career development – what employees have to do and what you offer them.
- Provide a simple explanation of the types of work in the organisation and the broad career paths available.
- Give one, fairly senior, person at the corporate centre a clear responsibility for developing and implementing a career development strategy, which includes career support for all staff.
- Be clear and realistic about the line manager's role in career development and train all managers for it. Ensure they all understand the processes they are being asked to use.
- Ensure that there is at least one additional source of career advice on request for all employees and that those providing it have had in-depth training.
- Ensure there are opportunities – through normal job filling or internal secondments – for employees who are seeking to make lateral moves into work they have not done before, but which they can learn quickly.
- Ensure that some groups of employees (e.g. women returners, part-timers, particular ethnic groups) are not disadvantaged in access to support and to opportunities.
- Aim to start by implementing a few things well rather than attempting too many interventions at once.
- Stick with it. Clarify an approach that fits your business, communicate it relentlessly and allow it to adjust and evolve. But don't allow less than five years to get it to work.

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*Navigational tools for learners, really?  
What is available, what are the challenges  
and what should be done?*

*An environmental scan of the Careers  
Guidance field in South Africa*

Patricia Flederman  
Consultant

November 2008

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Bibliography and References

# *acronyms and abbreviations*

<b>ASGISA</b>	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
<b>CAO</b>	Central Applications Office
<b>CRIC</b>	Careers Research and Information Centre
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Labour
<b>ESDS</b>	Employment and Skills Development Services
<b>ESSA</b>	Employment Service for South Africa
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>HESA</b>	Higher Education South Africa
<b>HSRC</b>	Human Sciences Research Council
<b>JIPSA</b>	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
<b>NICEC</b>	National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NLRD</b>	National Learners' Records Database
<b>NSA</b>	National Skills Authority
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OFO</b>	Organising Framework for Occupations
<b>PACE</b>	Public and Continuing Education
<b>SAACDHE</b>	The Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SADTU</b>	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
<b>SAQA</b>	South African Qualifications Authority
<b>SETA</b>	Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>WCED</b>	Western Cape Education Department



# part one

## 1.1. Introduction

This paper reports on a rapid “bird’s-eye view” environmental scan of the navigational tools available to learners, workers and work-seekers and to those who help them construct work and study paths for sustainable and meaningful livelihoods. It identifies the challenges that remain and sets out the next steps that should be considered. An important question is: what, if any, is SAQA’s role within its policy commitment to accessibility, portability and flexibility of learning paths?

Framing the careers development question as one of the navigational tools means starting from the perspective of the learner, worker or work-seeker and asking questions about accessibility and flexibility. This standpoint is intrinsically holistic, for, from the individual’s perspective, sustaining oneself and one’s family through study and work is an interconnected life path. In this brief survey, I interviewed more than 50 people from education, labour, community outreach, former career centre networks, industry, careers organisations, and consultants on these issues. I also reviewed international policy studies on Careers Guidance systems including those concerned with developing countries. I explored two models of national Careers Guidance helpline services. Lastly, I attended a pre-conference symposium in Washington DC on strategic leadership in Careers Guidance policy formation, where I interviewed Professor Tony Watts of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) in the UK, considered an international leader in Careers Guidance policy thinking; Lester Oakes, who created and runs a cutting-edge guidance system in New Zealand; and Dr John McCarthy, Director of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, based in France.

This paper is in two parts. Part One presents the Executive Summary and Recommendations and elaborates on one particular recommendation – a helpline. Part Two summarises the interviews, provides a scan of the major areas in which Careers Guidance is provided in some form, and concludes with a summary and reflection.

I am grateful to Prof. Tony Watts for referring me to a host of relevant international studies, for discussing these issues with me, and for comments during the writing of this report. I have been encouraged by the generosity of spirit from all those interviewed as they immediately granted me often hours of their time with little or no advance warning. Their passion for improving Careers Guidance in South Africa made this study a joy.

## 1.2. Executive Summary

This paper reports on an investigation into navigational tools available to learners, workers, work-seekers and to those helping them construct work and study paths for sustainable and meaningful livelihoods. It identifies the challenges that remain; the next steps to be considered; and what role, if any, SAQA should play in this regard. More than 50 people from education, labour, community outreach, career centre networks, industry and careers organisations, as well as consultants, were interviewed; policy papers were reviewed; and three international guidance policy experts were consulted.

The landscape of Careers Guidance comprises many players, diverse and devolved information sources and services, and a policy and personnel infrastructure that suggests the situation of Careers Guidance has improved over the last few years. However, information exists in “thundershower” initiatives for pockets of people. Changes in education and training make mastering information more complicated. Tertiary students enjoy good Careers Guidance services in their student counselling centres, and the Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education (SAACDHE) provides leadership in this arena. The Public and Continuing Education (PACE) careers centre is a small private company playing a significant leadership role in the broader field. The Department of Labour (DoL) is paying increasing attention to Careers Guidance needs. But beyond Life Orientation teachers and community outreach services, there is practically no infrastructure for careers development assistance to most people.

The key voids in information and guidance provision are: lack of coordination; no comprehensive, national, independent, good-quality, publicly available information; no national strategic policy leadership in the field; no models for systemic Careers Guidance delivery; paltry funding to outreach organisations; and no public recognition that support and accessibility are intertwined. There is a need for strategic leadership and coordination; comprehensive, national, independent accessible information for all linked to support services; and harnessing new technology to provide innovative services that increase accessibility dramatically. The learner needs to be at the centre of a radical rethink of careers services in a lifelong learning framework to ensure learners have access to navigational tools throughout a lifetime of work and study transitions.

A cellphone/telephone helpline is recommended and elaborated on as a strategic and concrete point of entry to address many of these imperatives. The need for navigational tools is vast and a critical issue of access, redress and the efficiency of the education and labour market systems. SAQA, linked to both the Department of Education (DoE) and the DoL, is ideally placed to lead a partner initiative to set up a helpline for careers information and advice.

## 1.3. Recommendations

### 1.3.1. Institute a cellphone/telephone helpline multi-channel service

The imperative to provide quality, relevant and accessible information on work and study paths as the core of a system of navigational tools is inescapable, as is the guidance support to accompany it. And it has to be affordable. A careers development telephone/cellphone helpline, ideally integrated as a multi-channel service, will dramatically increase accessibility of navigational tools and services to a diverse population where they are. This concrete service would also be a means to foster the other broader recommendations below. The need for navigational tools is vast and a critical issue of access, redress and the efficiency of the education and labour market systems. The rationale for this recommendation is elaborated upon after the Recommendations in Part One.

### 1.3.2. SAQA, which is mandated to address access across all education and training organisations to enhance lifelong learning possibilities for learners, is ideally placed to lead a partner initiative to set up a helpline and should take the initiative as soon as possible

SAQA is perfectly placed to lead a partner initiative to establish a helpline for the following reasons: it is the only education and training organisation that has a national mandate to work across all education and training sectors to enhance lifelong learning possibilities; it is passionate about and committed to improving learners' chances; it has a proven track record of innovative response to goals of access; its daily work is in partnership mode – so it could well convene a process engaging all interested parties. And SAQA has a proven track record of raising funds for education projects. The project needs to be done as soon as possible because a helpline with a centralised independent comprehensive information database is the single most significant means to dramatically expand access for learners and to enhance the work of all the other vibrant players in the Careers Guidance field.

### 1.3.3. One of the first steps in leading on a national initiative of this kind is to set up a partners' forum

There is enormous enthusiasm in the Careers Guidance field for a helpline, for an independent and comprehensive information source, and for leadership in the field. A partners' forum to engage stakeholders, undertake strategic planning and fundraising is a logical next step. The core focus of the forum would be to set up a cellphone/telephone helpline and the accompanying centralised information source. A forum with the following characteristics would have the most chance of success: a clear rationale that connects the helpline to lifelong learning, access, scarce skills and "employability" strategies; a shared understanding of terminology

such as "career guidance" for dialogue and debate; clear tasks and roles; and members who have a strong commitment and are willing to champion this goal. A small office might be needed from the start to provide efficiency and continuity and as a fundraising base. Key concrete issues to be addressed are: the investments required; the complementary nature of the initiative to other guidance services; technological integration issues; extent and borders of the service; its availability; staffing needs; targeted users; impartiality of information and advice; the place of in-depth guidance; centralised versus local information; and marketing strategies. These are expanded upon in the section, Elaboration on recommendations for a helpline, following these Recommendations.

### 1.3.4. Develop a national strategic policy leadership role

National strategic policy leadership in the careers development field with stakeholder inclusion is key to foregrounding Careers Guidance, and providing coordination and strategic direction to ensure quality, coherence and access to Careers Guidance for all. Guidance will always be one aspect of more general policies, especially in education, the labour market and democracy building. Leadership is needed to articulate the issues in policy terms, to forge linkages and to support development of the field. A cross-sectoral body is needed with a clear agenda to ensure that lifelong guidance is recognised as a necessary and integral part of education, training, employment and social inclusion policies, and to initiate and oversee the establishment of the helpline recommended in this report. The initiative to establish a cellphone/telephone helpline can be a first step in contributing to national Careers Guidance leadership.

### 1.3.5. Provide quality-assured, comprehensive, independent information on work and study paths and make it publicly available and accessible

A means must be found to provide comprehensive, coherent, impartial, accurate, up-to-date, searchable information about work and study paths linked to self-assessment. It should be freely available and accessible to the hard-to-reach. It must be both nationally and locally relevant. The question of accessibility includes issues of language, style, medium, and content that is relevant to a wide diversity of learners. Starting from the perspective of the learner implies information with support mechanisms for selecting, interpreting and using the information. A telephone/cellphone helpline depends on an information source of this kind and can serve as a stimulus for this to be developed.

### 1.3.6. Raise awareness of Careers Guidance

The profile of Careers Guidance needs to be foregrounded. While there are many ways to further this goal, marketing a concrete service is an effective means to raise awareness of the need to plan ahead and to find the information and support to make desirable study and work decisions. At the same time, marketing a national

cellphone/telephone helpline is essential to its being effectively used. Given this dual purpose of a social marketing campaign as an end in itself and an essential part of the development of a helpline, branding and marketing should be part of the planning stage in setting up a helpline service.

**1.3.7. Develop a model for Careers Guidance relevant to South Africa**

A radical rethink of Careers Guidance is needed. Exploration would further a better understanding of the diversity of learners in relation to their particular support needs in lifecycle transitions for work and study. A starting point is to more clearly identify the diversity of learners and the specific and targeted navigational tools that are relevant. The resulting matrix would help in decisions about how to prioritise programmes and funding for particular kinds of careers development services. This segmentation of the market is a tool to help ensure that resources for Careers Guidance are targeted in terms of policy priorities. It would be very useful for planning a helpline. This is part of the need to locate careers development within a sociological framework. Questions of access, including issues of language, culture, socio-economic and demographic constraints are at the core of this discussion.

Responding to the specific recommendations to SAQA from interviewees could contribute key elements to development of the helpline and information database.

**1.3.8. The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) should be accessible and searchable for Careers Guidance purposes**

In responding to the question of what SAQA could possibly be doing, if anything, in the area of Careers Guidance, most interviewees referred to the NLRD and the need to make this "wonderful treasure trove" searchable and accessible. The NLRD's qualifications information is already accessible and searchable, but extra search functions are needed to serve career guidance purposes more specifically. Broader accessibility to the NLRD, especially as new qualifications are added, could help ensure information quality and accuracy in the public domain. Interfaces would be needed to link to other information systems.

**1.3.9. Encourage DoE and DoL coordination on Careers Guidance**

Careers Guidance is quintessentially cross-sectoral, and stakeholders and partners are needed to join in policy and service provision to create a seamless service for the individual. The perceived lack of coordination between DoE and DoL is considered by many as a deep obstacle to coordination of Careers Guidance in South Africa. SAQA is seen to be well placed to bring together DoE and DoL on these issues.

**1.3.10. Develop a marketing campaign to ensure helpers of learners and learners themselves understand the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**

It was generally reported that most teachers don't understand the NQF and the career fields, and that even those who do find it hard to keep up with changes as SAQA is at the cutting edge of new qualifications. Many training providers find it too hard to register and are providing training without reference to NQF career paths or unit standards. Interviewees believe, however, that employers are working with the NQF, and this further widens the gap between school and work. As guardian of the NQF, SAQA should ensure that the NQF is understood and used as a viable tool of access and redress. This requires support provision to the learners, in addition to provision of a flexible framework.

**1.3.11. SAQA should show how alignment of the NQF and the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) can be accomplished**

While the OFO developed in DoL and the NQF may seem to be different ways to organise information on the learning/work continuum, many felt the two are potentially complementary. SAQA should help to articulate and communicate the link between the two and help to establish a common language for learning paths and categories of jobs.

**1.3.12. Help develop a career path for guidance practitioners**

Accreditation of guidance teaching/service providers to create a career path beginning at entry level and moving up to Master's level is needed to open up a professional path for guidance practitioners. Accreditation should be for pre-service as well as in-service training and should include elective components, given the diversity of learners and their diverse situations.

**1.4. Elaboration on Recommendation One:  
Institute a cellphone/telephone helpline multi-channel service**

**1.4.1. Cellphone and telephone helplines: an introduction**

The imperative to provide quality, relevant and accessible information on work and study paths to all as the core of a system of navigational tools is inescapable. And it has to be affordable. The reality in all countries is that face-to-face professional counselling for every citizen making study and work transitions is not affordable. Secondly, if inclusion is a goal then the service needs to make sure it reaches the hard-to-reach. In the UK and New Zealand this has meant the evolution of a Careers Guidance telephone

helpline, alongside carefully targeted marketing. These countries provide relevant models for consideration in South Africa.

One proposal emerging from this survey is to develop a Careers Guidance development telephone/cellphone helpline, ideally integrated with a multi-channel service in order to dramatically increase accessibility of navigational tools and services to a diverse population. All those I consulted on the timeliness and worthiness of this option thought it to be an excellent one. A service accessible via free telephones/cellphones provides the opportunity for right-now-and-anywhere access and a flexible portal to information and support throughout people's changing circumstances.

Telephone helplines are not new in South Africa: there are HIV/AIDS, crisis, and abuse helplines, to name a few. There are also helplines related to youth and guidance: the Central Application Office (CAO) in KwaZulu-Natal (which serves five higher educational institutions) has a telephone service backed up with letter-answering and mailing of Careers Guidance materials and aims to reach disadvantaged rural communities. Umsobombvu has a call centre for youth interested in starting a business. PACE plans to set up a call centre as a first-stop follow-up option for those receiving rejection letters from educational institutions.

For the following key reasons this is a timely moment to introduce the idea of a Careers Guidance cellphone/telephone service: service delivery is undergoing a transformation in South Africa today as a result of new technology; a vibrant series of Careers Guidance initiatives is emerging; the broader stakeholder and policy environment provides opportunities for articulation of Careers Guidance policy issues; and there is potential for such a service to help address central challenges to accessibility and quality of lifelong Careers Guidance services in South Africa.

#### 1.4.2. Cellphone technology

The central rationale for a telephone/cellphone Careers Guidance helpline is access for all. In South Africa where more families have cellphones than telephones – and given the relative ease and low cost of installing the technology in rural areas – a helpline would need to depend on both telephone and cellphone free calls. A cellphone/telephone helpline (ideally integrated as a multi-channel set of services) is not an alternative to face-to-face and print-based materials, but a value-added complement.

Cellphone technology is very advanced in South Africa – in fact the most advanced in Africa, which itself uses wireless technology more widely than the US or Europe, according to a report by CNN (CNN 2008). The infrastructure of satellite receivers and cellphone towers is easy to install and much easier and cheaper than extending a traditional telephone service. And car batteries can charge a cellphone in places where there is no electricity.

The following figures show the rate of growth of cellphone ownership and the growth relative to telephone and Internet in South Africa:

	2007	2001
Households with working cellphones	72.9%	32.3%
Telephones	18.6%	24.4%
Computers	15.7%	8.6%

(Source: Market Tree Consultancies)

Texting services are being used to remind people to take their ARV medicine. The careers in science organisation, HIP2B<sup>2</sup> founded by Mark Shuttleworth and the First African in Space Campaign, also uses texting to communicate careers and other information in the sciences field as part of their multi-media service designed to make science technology, entrepreneurship and maths accessible to all learners. A cellphone accessible service is complemented by a magazine, a website and newsletter, a weekly live half-hour show on SABC2 and events such as a mobile travelling show. The mobile Internet site is described on their website as a site "jammed with entertainment, science, wacky words, brainteasers and cool careers."

- Instructions: "Simply SMS 'mobi hip2b2' to 32978 to receive a link to your phone or alternatively, type 'mobi.hip2b2' into your cellphone browser."
- Cost: "A once-off cost of R1 applies and thereafter you pay less than 4 cents per page. 'Every Thursday' you can look forward to snack-sized bits of information on new inventions, interesting careers, strange words and downloadable games and music" (HIP2B<sup>2</sup> 2008).

#### 1.4.3. Internet infrastructure and web-based access

Internet access points for all are being developed rapidly in many centres in South Africa. This Internet-enabled public access infrastructure daily expands the accessibility of the continually increasing numbers of careers information and guidance web-based services. For example, the Smart Cape initiative in the Western Cape so far provides 114 points of public Internet access. There are 100 000 registered users in the 97 Cape Town public library access points. Smart Cape includes computer literacy training and local content creation. This model is being introduced in the eThekweni and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipalities, and the City of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality are also interested. And E-Innovation in the Department of the Premier of the Western Cape is in the process of developing a strategy and proposal for extending the network of Internet-enabled public access points to areas where they are currently not available.

Web-based services specifically for job seekers, many of whom will not have their own computers, are coming on line as a result of this

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infrastructure. For example, a new service was recently introduced through the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works called Umsebenzi, which provides computer portals to connect job seekers with employers. The site will also include Careers Guidance elements such as writing a CV, choosing a career and jobhunting. This site is similar to the DoL's Employment Services South Africa (ESSA) site for linking job seekers and employers, and similar to many other websites with the same kinds of Careers Guidance elements. It will specialise in linking youth with learnerships and other on-the-job learning opportunities in the sponsoring department and also in the departments of Local Government and Housing and others (Umsebenzi 2008). It reminds us of an important dimension to Internet-based information services – they must include locally relevant information – and so this regional initiative is significant.

The Thusong Service Centre describes itself as “a one-stop centre for services and information” set up to empower poor and disadvantaged communities through access to information and resources from government, NGOs, parastatals, business and so on. The government's goal is to ensure every citizen has access where they live to integrated service delivery by 2014. One of the six areas of information is Education and Skills Development Services. The centres also offer phone, fax, scanning, copying, printing, desktop publishing and postal services. The 100th centre opened in June 2008 (Thusong 2008).

Also, technology for multi-channel services is available and integrated services are being established, through DoL for example, with access at multiple sites for those who don't have computers. Local expertise is being developed to set up these kinds of multi-channel integrated systems. This technological infrastructure gives the basic concept of a Careers Guidance telephone/cellphone helpline a larger sphere for potential development. The concept proposed would have a telephone/cellphone helpline as the core of the service, but linked to other channels such as web-based options, e-mail and regular mail; it would be a hub that could refer callers to the widest possible range of Careers Guidance information, counselling and support.

#### 1.4.4. Broader stakeholder and policy environment

With the dual problem of huge numbers of unemployed workseekers and a scarcity of skills in many sectors, the search for ways to bring people into the labour market is a priority for government and the business/industry sector. It is not only a matter of linkage, but of reducing attrition and mismatch and of ensuring progressive skill development throughout the individual's career. This has led to policies designed to bring unemployed people into the market through matching, new opportunities for training, and pressure on employers for demonstrable results in this area. This proposal would most likely be an attractive one in terms of funding,

in spite of the huge investment required for the technology, information, staffing and quality assurance requirements.

#### 1.4.5. Potential to contribute to addressing key challenges

The proposed service has the potential both to address many key challenges in the field of Careers Guidance provision and to advance the field of Careers Guidance in South Africa, thereby securing availability of navigational tools to a far wider range and number of learners than could ever be imagined.

A cellphone/telephone helpline-integrated service would build on and support the current strengths in the Careers Guidance field by providing a coherent, comprehensive, independent, accurate and reliable national and local information source that pushes the limits of what accessible services can become. It would provide a complementary and value-added resource to existing careers development services in South Africa.

As a quality-assured, independent, comprehensive, learner-centred information source, it could provide a standard for reliable information that establishes a best-practice standard. Its potential development would require a stakeholder group from the start. Given the large investment, policy-level articulation would be necessary and contribute to policy development in the field.

The lifelong learning framework entails the widest possible diverse target group, requiring the development of constructs to understand “the learner”, identify particular needs and develop targeted services. This would contribute to the development of theory and practice for careers development in a lifelong learning context relevant to South Africa as a developing country.

Experience from other models shows that a three-tiered system of provision and staffing is logical: a basic information initial level, referral to a second tier for advice, and referral to a third tier for in-depth guidance. This needs three levels of job positions and related qualifications and a career path for career practitioners. This staffing concept could be relevant to many other guidance services where the traditional Master's level training makes services unaffordable as mass outreach and unfeasible due to the relatively small numbers of such professionals.

#### 1.4.6. Two international helpline and multi-channel models

In this section two models are briefly described: Learndirect, the UK model; and a service of the Careers Service in New Zealand. The New Zealand model provides the most potential for a telephone helpline system in South Africa. This section also addresses some critical issues that a body overseeing such an initiative should take into account, based on reviews of current helplines.

There are references in the Bibliography to papers describing and evaluating the UK Learndirect and the New Zealand models for guidance helplines and related services. A thumbnail sketch is given below.

### **Learndirect**

The UK Learndirect telephone helpline is the largest Careers Guidance telephone helpline in the world. Started in 1998, by March 2008 it had responded to four million calls. It has shown the potential of a telephone helpline delivering information and advice on a vast scale.

It is staffed by three levels of advisers: Information Advisers, dealing with information questions; Learning Advisers, who provide information and advice; and Lifelong Learning Advisers, who respond to queries needing advice and guidance. The service is linked to a careers website with each page having a Call Me button that results in a call from a Learndirect lifelong learning adviser to the learner. This allows for iterative contact between client and service. The service is free, although there is an option of a fee-based package.

Among the lessons from the Learndirect experience are that significant resources must be invested; branding and marketing are essential; many levels of help are possible by telephone; face-to-face counselling should always be a referral option; information should be both centralised and locally up-to-date and specific; and first-line call centre responders are more effective overall when, unlike traditional call centre staff, they are unscripted. However, these first-line responders need to be well trained as call centre responders and also trained in giving career information.

### **New Zealand's Careers Service**

The New Zealand Careers Service, partly based on the Learndirect model, is an all-age integrated part of a comprehensive Careers Guidance service. It is an integrated multi-channel service that includes web-based, voice-based (telephone), cellphone-based (for texting), and face-to-face services. The client selects the medium: phone call, e-mail, website, blog, mail, face-to-face. The mix of services provides opportunities for sustained contact. For example, following a telephone conversation, materials may be e-mailed and texting used to give reminders on agreed follow-up or alerts to new information. Web-based research may lead to webchat, e-mails or referrals to face-to-face counselling, local services and opportunities. As with Learndirect, there are three levels of service with three staffing levels.

The Careers Service has used a segmentation model to identify segments of the population with particular kinds of career service needs, using characteristics such as age, gender, youth, minority status, disability, those returning to the workforce, or unemployed

post-45, and rationalised resources and programmes to targeted groups. This disaggregated approach translates into reaching and providing relevant, realistic and effective tools to those whose needs could never be met through traditional elitist careers choice models or generic services. Recognising that every career service will reflect an implicit and explicit value system, the service is posited on a New Zealand value of "work-in-life": work conceived as one dimension integrated into valued aspects of life. Also, given the individualist assumptions underpinning Western-based conceptions of careers decision-making, a family guidance system approach is offered to those identifying with Maori and Pacific Island cultural frames of reference in which decisions are made within families.

Trained call centre staff who have Careers Guidance add-on training were found to be better at handling the first level of callers than those who come to the job with a primarily guidance-based training (Watts 2007). Also important is that the reasons most callers valued this first-line call service were both the information received and the personal contact through which the caller felt more motivated and encouraged (Career Services 2008).

### **1.4.7. Key elements in establishing a Careers Guidance helpline initiative**

Clearly, the development of a helpline must begin with a comprehensive strategic policy and planning stage; this can most effectively be accomplished within the context of a body that is providing leadership for a comprehensive Careers Guidance provision.

Expanded affordable access, bringing careers information, advice and guidance to where people are, is the driver of a helpline concept. The key prerequisites are a database of learning opportunities; a set of occupational information; a website; at least one site with good telecommunications possibilities and enough space for peak numbers of advisers; and a system to allow advisers to keep caller records – ideally as an integrated call recording system. Lessons on the strategic management of helplines show that quality assurance of information, referrals, telephone help and face-to-face guidance should be a seamless whole and that marketing is an essential component. Some of the key issues that must be addressed upfront by such a leadership body are suggested below and are lessons from studies on other helplines (Watts & Dent 2002).

Key issues to be addressed are the investments required, the complementary nature of the initiative, the technological integration issues, extent of the service, availability, staffing, users, impartiality, the place of in-depth guidance, centralised versus local information, and marketing.

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An effective helpline needs a substantial investment. Assessments about what investments are needed in training, support and communications infrastructure for an integrated helpline and web-based service must inform policy. Investment for an access-for-all service entails a balance between a free service, a comprehensive service and a service targeted in terms of inclusion and redress. Questions about what expanded access means, whom it affects, and what new client and programme needs emerge create policy options. Many of the related issues must be addressed from an overall policy and planning perspective.

A helpline would be one service in an existing marketplace of private and government initiatives threaded through many kinds of services. The question of how it complements, enhances and stimulates existing careers services is critical. This includes the question of how to support non-formal and informal guidance activities. The goal would be the optimum mix of public- and private-sector services with special attention to ensure that free services do not put quality private-sector provision out of business. It must also be designed with the possibility of expansion for the huge latent population not yet accessing Careers Guidance services. Framing the place of the helpline in the realm of service provision, existing and emerging, would be a key starting point. This would include consideration of how to plan for national and local information, sites of service and referrals.

Another approach to planning would be to ensure it is integrated both internally and within the broader service provision. Given the technologically cutting-edge developments in South Africa with multi-channel services in the pipeline and the burgeoning number of Internet services for careers information and job-seekers, the synergy of a helpline with other forms of technically mediated services is an essential element of planning such a helpline. This issue of integration also relates to the range of services within the helpline project and related web-based, texting-linked, e-mail and other services.

Once the extent of the service is defined, clear boundaries must be established and communicated to avoid wastage and client disappointment. Hours of service must be determined by cost efficiency, client accessibility needs and staffing feasibility, including quality control capacity.

Regarding staffing, a helpline is the key means of providing an affordable and reachable service to all, including the hard-to-reach. Defining levels of service (initial information giving, advice and in-depth guidance may represent three staffing levels, for example) through the helpline – and the associated education and training needs and accreditation and career paths – is a set of strategic planning issues that needs to be addressed from the start and managed through the life of the service. Typically, first-line

responders would have the equivalent of one-year post-Grade 12 training; the second-line staff a Bachelor's degree with a Diploma in guidance, and the third tier a Masters' degree in a guidance-related topic. In New Zealand a career path is encouraged and movement up the tier is possible while studying for the next level. Call centre training for the first level is essential.

The place of in-depth guidance as a referral step in a helpline system – who provides it, what qualifications are needed, who receives it and who pays for it – is both a systems management issue and a contested professional issue, given the inherited professionally guarded territory of the educational psychologist in South Africa. A negotiated resolution will impact upon the whole field of Careers Guidance and provide opportunities for other services to improve the cost-benefit ratio. Guidance services should support a developmental process and iterative contact should be a key design imperative.

Some of the challenges in managing a helpline are to manage the tension between productivity and professionalism in the light of serving all within a limited budget, and having to triage services appropriately. The training and professional development curriculum is one forum where this tension must be addressed.

The question of users relates back to policy decisions and budgeting priorities. Inclusion means targeting the hard-to-reach and this moulds the crafting of services, marketing, principles guiding a triage function and decisions about what is free and for whom. Decisions are needed on whether a guidance referral network is to be primarily horizontal (for example, serving youth), or vertical and offering help with transitions in education, training and work through a lifetime.

Impartiality relates to the centrality of the individual as a Careers Guidance principle – the right of the individual to make her or his own informed decisions and therefore the right to independent, impartial information. However, in most countries, Careers Guidance policy is likely to be supported as part of scarce skills development and the desire to encourage movement into specific skills areas. Also, most information on work and study in South Africa today is produced by vested interests. The plus side of this is that the costs are distributed and there is the incentive to keep the information accurate, up-to-date and client-friendly. The tension between the need for impartial information and guidance on the one hand and the environment that supports Careers Guidance – between the national policy agenda and the vested interests that produce information on the other – needs to be managed.

Another key information management area is to set up an information system and network that is centralised as well as locally relevant. Centralisation allows an economy of scale that reduces costs and ensures nationally relevant comprehensive quality information. However, from the users' perspective, the information must include specific, up-to-date local information. Learndirect achieved this by having a central data source but with regionally-based call centre sites so that call centre staff are familiar with local information on queries such as directions to get to an institution, or whom to ask for in a bursary office.

The difference in client uptake between Learndirect and the New Zealand Careers Service has been attributed to Learndirect's larger investment in marketing (Watts 2007). Given that marketing the service is also a process of awareness-raising, social marketing would be the approach to take. Social marketing has a twofold agenda. On the one hand it brands and markets the service, but on the other is an end in itself: it raises public awareness on the value of investing in learning, the concept of constructing a life path and planning, and information-gathering and the possibility of support in doing so. In this sense marketing supports the service and the service, as a concrete entity, provides an opportunity for awareness-raising. Successful awareness-raising requires that the concrete service is experienced as helpful and valuable, both in terms of accurate, up-to-date relevant information and also in terms of the quality of advice, guidance and referrals.

Initiating and managing a helpline effectively requires leadership, not just at the start, but also on an ongoing basis. This requirement gives further impetus to the need for strategic leadership in the field to foster the development and maintenance of quality information, staffing quality and the network of other resources and services. The architecture of a helpline must be drawn with the latent potential clientele not yet accessing guidance services in mind. Foresight, planning and oversight are needed.





# part two

## 2.1. Careers Guidance: definitions, models and rationale

### 2.1.1. Definitions

The term “Careers Guidance” is still widely used today but its use is waning in favour of the term “career development”, which sounds less paternalistic and more accurately defines the process – an inherently developmental one. I have used these terms interchangeably in this paper because so many current studies still use “careers guidance”.

Tony Watts and Ronald Sultana, in their review of common themes in three large studies comprising 37 countries<sup>2</sup>, define Careers Guidance as

services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. These may include services in schools, in universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in companies, in the voluntary/community sector and in the private sector. The services may be on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education and career management programmes, taster programmes, work search programmes, and transition services (Watts & Saltana 2004).

In the same paper Watts and Sultana defined career development as “a lifelong process of managing transitions and progression in learning and work”. This definition is expanded by an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review of lifelong guidance systems as:

- Transparency and ease of access over a lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients.
- Particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan.
- Flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups.
- Processes to stimulate regular review and planning.
- Access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it.
- Programmes to develop career-management skills.
- Opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them.
- Assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises.
- Access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information.

- Involvement of relevant stakeholders (OECD 2004b).

These broad service-description definitions create space to include a wide range of models and approaches, some of which are broadly discussed below.

### 2.1.2. The model of Careers Guidance/ Career Development

Many interviewed felt we need to start afresh to develop a locally relevant model of Careers Guidance. Accredited Careers Guidance has until recently been constrained by the predominance of psychometric testing approaches, which are both inappropriate for South Africa and outmoded given international shifts among academics and practitioners. In addition, there are shifts internationally and in South Africa from traditional careers choice models, which are considered elitist, not representative of what happens in real people’s lives, and too limited in the kind of help needed making work and study transitions throughout life. Considering that careers choice is most relevant to professional level positions underlines the elitist nature of this model in South Africa. Of those working (not counting agriculture), 30.1% are in elementary (labourer) or domestic jobs and only 6.4% are in the professions. (Stats SA 2008). A new language is needed. For example, the term “career” needs to be challenged and language such as “creating a sustainable livelihood” introduced.

One contemporary shift in US and UK models and appearing in South Africa is from a careers choice to a constructivist one, in which people are understood as constructing their lives through a mix of happenstance, constraints, dreams, pressures and opportunities, all interpreted via narratives of past, present and future. But this still leaves the question of what kinds of service are needed for the diversity of learners and how to design affordable provision for all.

In South Africa a new model must incorporate social values of access and redress, shifting the whole conception from a psychological frame of reference to a sociological one. Many feel this is an essential paradigm shift from models developed in former colonial powers with very different contexts. At the same time, pressure to provide relevant guidance services to poor and marginal groups in First-World countries is also raising demands for new inclusive models that target the hard-to-reach.

The idea that career development for all means simply expanding accessibility to current services is unrealistic in budgetary terms and ignores the specific needs of different target groups.

Many felt that the first step in building a new model for South Africa is to start afresh with exploration to understand who “the learner” is.

2 These three studies, which also used almost identical definitions of Careers Guidance, were by the OECD, the World Bank review of career guidance policies in seven middle-income countries (including South Africa) and a set of reports on all European Union (EU) countries commissioned by the EU.

Other areas advocated by interviewees as needing special attention are to understand:

- How concepts of careers are formed when children are very young, the impact of deprived environments in this and therefore an analysis of what children or adults need to learn about before they can engage with the kinds of information available on work and study.
- The indirect role that maths plays in determining later career success through developing capacities for logic and abstract thinking, and the acculturating role school plays as one example of the world of work.

### **2.1.3. Rationale for the value of Careers Guidance**

The various sectors responsible for delivering Careers Guidance in South Africa employ different rationales for the value of Careers Guidance and therefore the kind of service developed. Community and outreach organisations are concerned with helping individuals where they are, and they have developed personal support-intensive services, for example. One influential rationale in South Africa today is an economic one, in which Careers Guidance is part of programmes to match individuals to scarce skills to enhance growth. Social policies of redress, accessibility and inclusion are furthered by Careers Guidance initiatives that help reduce obstacles to entry into work and study opportunities. Other rationales for Careers Guidance are the increase in efficiency of education and training by increasing numbers entering study and work, reducing mismatch and therefore wastage, contributing to motivation and therefore success, and reducing attrition.

All these rationales constitute reasons for investments in Careers Guidance, although they can often imply different service emphases. Impetus for investments in Careers Guidance can come from all these rationales.

## ***2.2. The South African context and Careers Guidance***

All interviewed agreed that there is an urgent need for access for all to relevant information and support. Much information on work and study is produced but for various reasons is not currently accessible to most people. In addressing this, a number of contextual factors are particularly relevant.

### **2.2.1. The legacy of apartheid**

The impact of race, wealth and demographics from the time of apartheid constitutes particular patterns today with regard to opportunities and constraints. This is part of the Careers Guidance landscape that must be addressed in terms of understanding the diversity of clients and their diversity of needs.

Ironically, from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, the absence of information and guidance services for other than white people stimulated an innovative NGO Careers Guidance sector and network focused on outreach and social and political change. Primarily due to lack of funding, these NGOs eventually closed but they demonstrated the vitality, relevance and innovative possibilities of NGO-provided Careers Guidance outreach. Some satellite careers centres in KwaZulu-Natal have survived and innovative practices introduced by these centres have been adopted by government and private initiatives today (Kay & Fretwell 2003).

### **2.2.2. Economic context**

The South African economy is described by many analysts in terms used to describe developing countries: poverty, high unemployment, a large informal sector, an oversupply of unskilled work-seekers, an undersupply of skilled people, and state institutions without the capacity to deliver adequate services to all. While this dominant perspective is a contested one, it has created a particular policy context for Careers Guidance due to the priority given to human capacity development in the area of scarce skills. Formal unemployment in South Africa in September 2007 was 22.7% overall and for black Africans it was 30.5%. Adding those discouraged from looking almost doubles that figure and two in three are women (Stats SA 2008).

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was launched in 2005 and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) in 2006 in response to the government's goal to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014. JIPSA addresses priority skills acquisition in an integrated manner by coordinating all organisations addressing the skills shortage. The special target group is youth and women as they are proportionally over-represented in unemployment numbers. Learnerships, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), volunteer and internship programmes and Internet-based work-seeker-employer links such as ESSA with DoL are responses to this priority. Careers Guidance in the form of information and advice is being integrated into these programmes in slender, and yet nonetheless encouraging, threads.

The human capacity and scarce skills discourse tends to make people the means to an economic end. Career development places people at the centre and provides an important counterweight in the discourse of developing human capacity.

### **2.2.3. Government policies and programmes**

The government response to unemployment and scarce skills in certain sectors of the economy now drives a policy and programme agenda within which Careers Guidance is featuring anew; this is fostering cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing

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scarce skills issues and career paths. The current policy environment is potentially conducive to foregrounding Careers Guidance, as it intrinsically links the individual, work and learning. This parallels the resurgence of Careers Guidance internationally under the banner of scarce skills development, and the predominance of youth among the unemployed.

### 2.2.4. Technological changes

Technological advances in Internet-based and satellite-based services are revolutionising the ways navigational tools can be conceptualised and delivered in the field of Careers Guidance in South Africa and internationally. In South Africa there is already a burgeoning of web-based Careers Guidance sites, call centres for specific guidance-related services (though not Careers Guidance-related) and the use of cellphone technology to communicate information to learners. Government and municipal mainstreaming of Internet and cellphone access brings huge possibilities for access to navigational tools. Systems in other countries are exploiting the new technology for comprehensive, accessible Careers Guidance services that can serve as pointers for innovations in South Africa, in addition to the increasing numbers of South African initiatives bubbling up.

## 2.3. Mediating services and navigational tools

### 2.3.1. Summary of interviewee responses on availability and gaps

Among those interviewed, there was generally a concurrence on the gaps and challenges. Responses are summarised below, followed by an overview of most of the major mediating services and the navigational tools they provide.

“Whew, there is such a huge need I don’t know where to begin” was a recurring response from interviewees. The need for help in creating bridges for learners that begin where the learners are and effectively link to opportunities is enormous and left largely to the private sector. While this means a diversity of big and small initiatives and an entrepreneurial spirit, leadership is lacking and a “thundershower” provision has resulted in some good-quality information and services reaching small pockets of people. For some pockets of people the thundershower helps the garden blossom; for those on steep barren slopes it doesn’t.

There is an enormous variety of information, some of it considered good quality, in printed, CD-based and web-based formats. It reaches those who can afford it. Printed information is not affordable to many poorer families, and schools without computers cannot take advantage of the increasing numbers of careers websites.

Much of the information is fragmented, with no central, quality-assured and comprehensive source. Most of it is not independent, being produced as it is for agendas such as recruitment to study institutions, to particular industries and specific companies.

An evolving technological infrastructure in South Africa is changing the potential for delivery of information and support to far broader numbers than ever envisaged, providing information options to those with Internet access. However, other technologies for information dissemination, such as telephone and cellphone, have not been adequately exploited.

Ironically, many say there is information overload without accompanying support to help the learners select and interpret what they need. Most information is not designed from the standpoint of the diverse range of learners. For the many who have little in their environment to socialise them into big-picture concepts about the formal world of work or further study, the material can be confusing and bewildering. Material that appears well-packaged and graphically interesting may be hopelessly irrelevant to many. The idiom of the medium, style and language are all accessibility issues. ‘Good-quality’ information is often an effective tool for those with many complementary careers resources in their environment, such as those in ex-Model C schools (12% of all schools). In this sense it provides further relative advantage to the privileged. And an abundance of information does not translate automatically into navigational tools.

### 2.3.2. Suggestions for addressing challenges in gaps in information

There was complete consensus that comprehensive, coherent, impartial, accurate, up-to-date, searchable information about work and study paths linked to self-assessment and decision-making support is vital and should be free and government-funded. It must be accessible and available to all who need it. Interviewees advocated that national strategic leadership should address this provision.

### 2.3.3. Gaps and challenges in Careers Guidance support services

Those interviewed agreed that while extensive support is needed, very little exists. What is available is in little pockets.

Support is needed in helping the learner access, make sense of and integrate information into plans. But as those who actually work with learners through community organisations know, the range of support actually needed by most learners to help bridge from school to further study or work is often complex, time- and resource-consuming and extends beyond the bounds of a traditional model of Careers Guidance and tools. This form of

assistance requires a personnel infrastructure, which exists least where it is most needed. Without this support, information is not accessible in any useful way to the majority of learners.

In schools, Life Orientation teachers are often untrained, overwhelmed by other aspects of the curriculum and students' personal needs, and have little knowledge of, or connection to, the world of work. Many described the changes in the education system as adding new difficulties in explaining a more complicated system of information to the learner.

However, a human capacity resource exists of current and past dedicated and visionary Careers Guidance professionals and Life Orientation teachers. Models of best practice, some deriving from the former national network of Careers Guidance outreach NGOs, are a further resource in the field.

There are many constraints on delivery capacity within the personnel infrastructure for support (schools, community organisations, workplace, DoL offices, DoE resource centres, Umsobomvu). However, training for Life Orientation teachers, a pilot training programme for DoL office site staff, and the SAQA-developed certification for the development of career practitioners all point to an increasing capacity to provide support.

Desperate for advice, poor parents pay expensive fees for psychometric testing by private-sector educational psychologists – often of little value, as these tests are discredited in terms of their applicability to a South African population. Also, many educational psychologists have little Careers Guidance training in terms of world-of-work knowledge or knowledge of community outreach.

Many printed and web-based information sources include sections to guide the learner through steps from self-assessment to making decisions and action plans, as well as guides for job interviews and CV-writing. Also, biographies and autobiographies of people's unfolding work and study journeys support a narrative approach.

In addition, the private sector is a dynamic realm of outreach services and small and big initiatives, most of which are not developmental, careers fairs being a prime example.

#### **2.3.4. Suggestions for improving support**

The most common suggestion for improving support was by increasing school-based resources. This suggestion was in the context of a lifelong learning frame: school is a site for reaching people in the largest numbers. Training Life Orientation teachers was considered one of the most significant ways to improve support, although it was acknowledged that they have very limited time to apply this knowledge.

There is an evolving infrastructure for delivery of support through Life Orientation teaching, expansion of Careers Guidance into DoL workplace programmes such as learnerships and volunteer programmes, workplace-based career and skills development initiatives, and a potential infrastructure for service delivery through Umsobomvu offices and DoL offices.

#### **2.3.5. Gaps and challenges in policy and leadership**

Careers Guidance is not a national policy priority despite the fact that it threads through many kinds of initiative, especially those related to scarce skills. This marginality means that resources for Careers Guidance have been relatively paltry. There is no coordinated or strategic leadership. Careers Guidance occurs as a largely dispersed, devolved, ad hoc set of activities with little funding and no comprehensive source of information.

Given the national gap, a small organisation like PACE is providing leadership to the field and a common platform to integrate disparate sources by coordinating its resources with key delivery infrastructure in government departments and the private sector.

#### **2.3.6. Suggestions for addressing challenges in policy and leadership development**

There was general agreement that national strategic leadership is needed to ensure a coherent, coordinated and comprehensive policy and approach. Developing a policy discourse that articulates the relevance of Careers Guidance to achieving national priorities could result in government policy and funding to this under-resourced field. Equally important is leadership to ensure the most effective and efficient ways to target available funding.

Most people identified lack of coordination between the Departments of Education and Labour as the single most significant obstacle to the development of leadership in the field and of a coherent guidance and information system. One person framed this divide as the need for both DoL and DoE to develop a discourse and own the problem of linking skills needed with the development of skills.

Some suggested that a starting point might be a national stakeholders' conference to begin to address the need for national leadership in the field. Some felt a think tank of academics with links to international innovations in Careers Guidance could help provide a better model for South Africa. And others proposed that a concrete project such as a helpline could be both an end in itself and a useful entry point to jumpstart leadership and policy development in the field.

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### 2.4. A sector review

#### 2.4.1. Department of Education

Before 1994, full-time trained guidance teachers operated in all of the ex-Model C schools, and in the other schools guidance teachers were being introduced. In the late 1990s, due to budgetary constraints, the role of guidance teacher was abandoned and virtually no guidance was offered in schools. With the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy of 2002, Careers Guidance-related outcomes are in the Life Orientation curriculum from Grade R to Grade 12. The World of Work learning outcome begins in Grade 4 and is a compulsory Learning Area until the end of Grade 9. It continues as a subject in Grades 10-12, with Life Orientation classified as one of four fundamental (mandatory) subjects along with maths and two languages. In these grades (10-12) Life Orientation consists of four focus areas, one of which is Careers and Career Choices. Students carry a Life Orientation portfolio from year to year, and, once the DoL's ESSA database system is fully realised, these portfolios will be in the DoL database and continually updated: a concrete artefact of career development in a lifelong learning frame and a practical source of information enabling careers counsellors to offer better assistance.

While the Careers Guidance curriculum within the Life Orientation curriculum is impressive in its scope, one of the chief limitations to effective Careers Guidance in schools is that only two hours a week are allocated to Life Orientation, and Careers Guidance is only one-fourth of the subject in Grades 10-12. This means an average of half an hour a week for Careers Guidance, assuming other needs don't reduce this time. For example, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2005) reports that an estimated 10% of 15-24-year-olds are HIV-positive. By 22 years old, one out of four women is HIV-positive. Figures like these are a reminder of some of the issues that might understandably crowd out Careers Guidance in a packed Life Orientation curriculum.

Given the breadth of Life Orientation, those who teach it often have other teaching subjects such as a physical education, and have no background in Careers Guidance. However, in-service training is adding to Life Orientation teachers' competence. For example, every Life Orientation teacher in the Western Cape has had accredited training through PACE, and training is ongoing to address staff turnover. Other provinces are also inviting PACE to provide modules in Careers Guidance delivery. The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) advocates that Life Orientation should be a module in teacher training courses.

Other support to Life Orientation teachers in the Western Cape Education Department (WECD) includes accredited training in Careers Guidance and careers events such as a career day breakfast at schools, a career-for-a-day event where young professionals

explain how they achieved their current positions, and a "take a girl child to work" day. This year 300 students will be on a job-shadowing programme at the Department of Health. Focus schools are used for career events that other schools attend. A Global Citizen Project through the HP Pygmalion Project provides laptops to Life Orientation teachers, linking them to schools and resources for lesson planning all over the world.

DoE purchases printed careers resources for its schools, but generally hundreds of students share one manual. Schools nominally have at least one computer but in reality, in many schools, it is generally not accessible to students and often not available to teachers either.

Life Orientation workbooks have been developed by DoE for all grades, along with classroom materials developed by various private sector groups for Life Orientation classroom activities. For example, in the Western Cape Woolworths produced a module on nutrition, and SA Breweries on an aspect of the world of work. DoE workbooks integrate all aspects of the Life Orientation curriculum – for example, decision-making about careers and personal choices, and planning.

Often Life Orientation teachers are inundated with outside offers of help. Many private Careers Guidance groups approach DoE with offers of materials, packages, outside events, and requests to address the students. Tertiary colleges and universities also approach the schools for opportunities to talk to students or offer open days at their institutions. The WCED Life Orientation office allots much time to gatekeeping these requests and ensuring only quality and complementary services have access to the schools.

#### 2.4.2. Tertiary Institutions

Most higher education institutions offer good careers counselling services; many have a high number of contacts in industry and offer effective graduate placement services (Du Toit 2005). Recent research into graduate unemployment identified graduates who are African and from non-traditional universities as being the most likely to be unemployed among graduate cohorts. It's not certain whether careers services at tertiary institutions particularly target this group (Bhorat 2008).

Many universities offer open days for high school students to give them a taste of university life. Psychometric testing services are available to students for free and for outsiders, including high school students, usually at a fee. Almost all institutions have computer terminals with career programmes such as My Mentor or the PACE programme.

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) produced a careers guide for high school students contemplating going on to further study.

The guide provides a step-by-step Careers Guidance process for the learner to use independently.

SAACDHE provides leadership to student counselling services at public higher education institutions in Southern Africa. SAACDHE's comprehensive services include developing and monitoring the delivery of Careers Guidance services at tertiary institutions through policy guidelines, a quality assurance programme, training and networking and conferences and regional programmes.

In contrast to other learners, students at tertiary institutions have the best chance of accessing navigational tools to help them in their career journey. Traditional models of Careers Guidance are best suited to the options tertiary study provides, most counselling centres are relatively well-resourced, most staff are adequately trained and the graduate placement programmes are fairly successful. According to PACE, 16 of the 21 universities use PACE resources.

### 2.4.3. Department of Labour

The Careers Guidance landscape prior to the end of apartheid consisted of whites-only Careers Guidance services and the network of NGO Careers Guidance centres that, small as they were, were the only source of information, counselling, workshops, and work experience for all. For example, the Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC), the first one founded in 1977, researched and produced the first, and for many years the only, source of accessible information on work and study for all. Education departments had to subscribe to CRIC's information system just to get lists of teacher training and nursing colleges so that high school students could know where to apply for training.

The National Skills Development Strategy and the Skills Development Act of 1998 served to align DoL in terms of skills development and employability. The 120 or so offices around the country stopped providing Careers Guidance and became Employment and Skills Development Services (ESDS). More recently, ESDS offices have found that many work-seekers have little or no understanding of the nature of work or capacity to navigate options. Initiatives are under way to integrate a Careers Guidance dimension into the services. For example, as a pilot venture, DoL formed a roving team of 36 staff, trained by PACE, who participated in an initial roll-out of Careers Guidance at two pilot sites, one urban and one rural.

Labour Centres also participate in career exhibitions and the DoL has printed 10 pamphlets on career guidance, job-matching and ESSA. In the Eastern Cape, for example, under JIPSA's coordination, DoL is partnering with DoE, youth groups and others to develop a Careers Guidance strategy for the province.

Under ESSA, the DoL provides a sixfold service in which Careers Guidance has an important role. The Registration Services is a

database of registered individuals, employers, opportunities and training providers that includes individual skill profiles recorded according to the OFO. The OFO is a career-pathing framework with a central focus on scarce and critical skills. It organises career information by industry and will be integrated with PACE's data system. The second part of the service is Careers Information and Guidance Services, which include providing career, labour market and scarce and critical skills information and guidance on accessing placement opportunities. Thirdly, Information Services are to produce information for careers fairs and advocacy on accessing employment and skills development services. Careers Guidance is seen as an essential component of skills development that ultimately leads to placement within DoL's model of employment services.

DoL's ten-year contract with Siemens to improve and integrate DoL's service and make it customer-led has had an integrated Careers Guidance thread. ESSA is one example, but is only part of a much broader plan for a multi-channel service delivery system covering cradle-to-grave DoL services accessible at any time from any location and through multiple service delivery channels. Delivery channels include cellphone, other satellite communications, information kiosks (for those without Internet access), Internet access points, walk-in centres, customer call centres (with first-line agents and second-tier professionals), and referral systems between call centres, telephone and cellphones, websites and face-to-face services. The system will also be linked to the government's Gateway provision. If a Careers Guidance helpline were to be set up, it would ideally interface where relevant with these services.

In Careers Guidance terms this presents the potential capacity for technological infrastructure for Careers Guidance delivery within a lifelong learning framework. For example, the learners' Careers Guidance portfolio from their school Life Orientation work will be in the system and whenever a learner, worker or workseeker approaches DoL for help navigating work, study and career routes, this portfolio is available and a developmental Careers Guidance process is thereby potentially furthered.

Confidentiality and privacy concerns are the flipside of this plan and, while DoL gives assurance that only appropriate DoL staff have access, this may not be enough to assure citizens that the information will not be used as a tool for other agendas. This is a broader concern as technology revolutionises Careers Guidance services across South Africa and in many other countries. Personal information and privacy safeguards need to feature in the Careers Guidance field in general.

DoL is also including a Careers Guidance dimension into a system to identify suitable candidates for the Expanded Public Works

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Programme. The Netherlands routing model will be used to match suitable clients to opportunities by routing clients to training courses that lead to employment, based on their particular capacities, and will include Careers Guidance as part of the system. Other DoL provisions such as learnerships and skills training courses also provide “work tasters” and can be linked to career development initiatives. The Embassy of the Netherlands has supported DoL in integrating Careers Guidance within learnerships.

### 2.4.4. SETAs

The National Skills Development Strategy includes the mandate that SETAs make Careers Guidance available. DoL, attempting to ensure that careers information is available to all sectors of the economy, has built into the contract with all 23 SETAs that they each produce a careers guide for their industries. Each SETA interprets this differently. Most SETAs are short-staffed and have little or no access to students to understand information needs from the students’ perspective. However, they have produced 23 careers guides, each on a particular segment of the economy. Some of these guides include a career decision-making and planning process with tips for job interviews, etc, and an attempt to be graphically appealing and accessible, while others merely provide basic information about jobs in a dull format. The Insurance SETA has also produced teacher manuals. The Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority careers guide is often described as the best that the SETAs have produced.

### 2.4.5. Cross-sectoral bodies

Many interviewed felt there was no leadership or strategic coordination in the field and that there needed to be. When asked who should do this, most said it should be government-funded and a cross-sectoral initiative. It was stressed that this is a function that various stakeholders should come together to fulfil – JIPSA and SAQA were most often mentioned as the kind of cross-sectoral entities that might initiate this. JIPSA’s goal is to address priority skills acquisition in an integrated manner by coordinating all organisations addressing the skills shortage. ASGISA and JIPSA are national agendas and not government programmes, and this model was felt to be the way forward for leadership in the Careers Guidance field.

Many felt that SAQA, being a cross-sectoral organisation, a member of the National Skills Authority (NSA) and cutting across DoE, DoL, Further Education and Training (FET) and the SETAs, should play a coordinating function in bringing stakeholders together. A major obstacle to coordination in the Careers Guidance field identified by almost everyone I spoke to was the disjuncture between DoL and DoE. It was felt that SAQA could therefore play a special role in bringing together these two major stakeholders in Careers Guidance.

### 2.4.6. The private sector

#### Educational Psychologists

The three main sources of some level of Careers Guidance in the private sector are: educational psychologists, guidance services via employment-based training, and Careers Guidance/training organisations such as the National Training Directory and PACE.

Educational psychologists in private practice typically provide psychometric testing and tend to charge anything from R600 to R4 000. Reports are that the demand for these services is increasing dramatically, perhaps due to the attention given in the media to careers expos. Anecdotal accounts abound of educational psychologists’ lack of information or knowledge about the world of work, and therefore the limitations on and, at times, distortions in the kind of advice they give. Their popularity, despite the expense, is a testament to the demand. One educational psychologist is so concerned with what he regards as the completely inadequate knowledge of the world of work among these professionals that he has raised this situation in terms of unethical practice with his professional association. One young woman reported that although she was a top achiever in higher-grade maths and science and was interested in maths-related careers, the educational psychologist who gave her the battery of tests only recommended a career in commerce and never mentioned engineering or maths-related careers or study options.

Companies emphasise “employability” as a goal of the Careers Guidance services that they fund. For example, a Nokia/Lion’s Club/USAID partnership has developed the Alliance for African Youth Employment to develop “employability” for 14-24-year-olds in urbanising areas and to help them find employment. The National Business Initiative and Cisco Systems have a partnership with the DoE to develop skills to link school learning with work on the assumption that schools are not developing “employable” skills among youth.

#### Employment-based training

A SAQA requirement for all accredited corporate training programmes is the inclusion of guidance and counselling, and trainers must have completed unit standards on guidance and counselling as part of their accreditation requirements. To the extent that this is done effectively, it represents part of an infrastructure for lifelong Careers Guidance. One person from the Chamber of Mines said that, in many cases, companies have found that providing workshops for adults to think through their life and work goals before signing up for literacy classes, improves their success levels in literacy courses by 60% to 70%.

#### Careers Services

The corporate sector is funding a plethora of initiatives, most often in the form of some version of the careers fair. They also support

Careers Guidance websites by buying advertising. In both cases recruitment agendas figure fairly centrally. Careers fairs provide a link between individuals and the world of work and study, but need to be incorporated into a developmental Careers Guidance programme to have much impact. Often they are not. Also, organisers are often events managers and seldom have a Careers Guidance background to draw on in the planning of the events. Similarly, private-sector websites are often not developed by those with a background in Careers Guidance; companies are highly partial in what they present, with a clear agenda of drawing recruits to their field.

Paper resources are for sale in the market, such as the *Career Handbook* (PACE), *A-Z of Careers* (Penguin), bursary guides, job-hunting guides and contact information guides.

#### **PACE Careers Centre**

Because PACE Careers Centre is such a pivotal Careers Guidance organisation it is described here. For 16 years PACE has specialised in setting up career guidance infrastructures for institutions such as schools, libraries, higher education institutions, FET colleges and other youth advisory services; priority projects are accredited training of career guidance practitioners and resourcing of career guidance facilities. Their clients include the DoE, the Department of Defence, the Department of Public Works, universities (locally and internationally), FET Colleges, and some 3 500 schools. PACE training and resources are said to be the most widely used in South Africa, and are also used in Malawi, Botswana, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. PACE resources have been accredited by the Education, Training and Development Practices and Services SETAs, the National Curriculum Committee of the Department of Education and the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

Over the past years PACE has been working to establish a common national career guidance platform based on benchmarked standards, that allows individuals access to free career guidance and counselling. A common platform will allow individuals to access a familiar career guidance system whether they are at a school, college, university, or in a labour centre. To achieve this, PACE has trained accredited guidance practitioners nationally who can offer a standardised career guidance methodology to clients. PACE is the founding member of the South African Career Guidance Association, which looks at coordinating and standardising career guidance activities in the SADC region. PACE is also the representative for the International Association for Vocational and Educational Guidance within the SADC region.

At this stage PACE training and resources are the only ones accredited by these third parties, and are therefore widely used.

Although a small organisation, PACE provides a national strategic leadership role in the following ways:

- It is a major provider of resources for others.
- It provides capacity building for sector agencies such as DoE and more recently DoL and is developing staffing capacity of the field by training careers practitioners.
- It has sought to develop a common platform and common language in the field by creating an articulation between the various career information systems and a self-assessment tool.
- It is seeking to further best practice models through conferences, etc.

#### **2.4.7. Non-profit organisations**

Churches, community organisations such as Itec in Port Elizabeth, and DoE resource centres expanded with private funding, provide outreach services to “hard-to-reach” learners and have a wealth of experience in developing navigational tools as a response to specific needs. Their experience is essential if a Careers Guidance system is to be posited on learner’s needs.

Of the network of Careers Guidance NGOs of the 1970s to 1990s, a few smaller career centres that started as youth projects and were mentored by the Careers Information Centre (CIC) in Durban are reported to have remained (although this information has not been updated for this study): the Durban South Career Centre, the Richards Bay centre that has become part of Richards Bay Aluminium, one in Eshowe that joined the Eshowe Teachers’ Training College, and the Wentworth Careers Centre.

Anecdotal experience suggests that support to youth in finding information and study opportunities and in helping them make transitions is often a component of the many youth outreach organisations and churches. Reasons given are that the needs and the lack of alternative support are so obvious.

#### **2.4.8. Web-based services**

Advances in technology have resulted in a range of good careers sites with job descriptions that link to study options, bursaries and institutions. Many have a decision-making process that begins with a self-assessment questionnaire that directs the user to related options. Generally there are also options for developing a résumé, tips for job interviews and some link to international study opportunities. Some feature life stories on how various people’s paths unfolded. Just launched, Career Planet brings its website to people by taking computer kiosks to malls. PACE offers [www.gostudy.co.za](http://www.gostudy.co.za) and [www.pacecareers.com/careercentre](http://www.pacecareers.com/careercentre).

The HIP2B<sup>2</sup> website “cool careers” section includes a forum discussion on careers. Clicking on “Get Typing” may land you in a conversation kicked off with six paragraphs encouraging people to weigh their options and consider their hobbies. It gives a short story



## part two continued

about Jill the Engineer and Jack the Artist, contributed by a high school student member who seems to host the conversation. In response a member says: "Some careers may not seem interesting, but many people prefer to do the same jobs like their parents. To keep the business going or in the family."

Another from Durban adds: "I think fields in engineering are quite interesting. I have always been fascinated by electronics hence I would like to study electronic engineering." The response is: "What that all about, I heard of mechanical and civil engineering but never of electrical engineering!"

The host responds: "Electronic engineering deals with electronics and the working of circuits such as cellphones etc. It has a broad spectrum as you can go into telecommunication, computers, and a host of other options – Dude ... Its AI Gud!"

A "New Member" exclaims: "One of my possible career options is politics... long story!! but other people say that it would be better to get a stable position in a business. how do u decide what to study at uni???? its soooo hard!!"

A conversation ensues about people studying IT and the host member says: "A lot of people are taking IT in SA, the future looks bright for telecommunications," and clement99 says: "I am also doing IT. Does my future also look bright?"

The site links to a Facebook group and video diaries of students such as Senaly Singh, who has maths trophies, has published poetry, says how much maths is part of everyday life and that she loves maths.

These examples remind us of the potential of technology, expansion of outreach and interactivity to provide navigational tools including peer relationships and the obvious issue of the cultural, value and gender dimensions of a web-based service.

### 2.4.9. Trade unions and media

The view of key informants in the Careers Guidance field is that the trade unions have not yet approached the subject. However, this needs to be explored further. SADTU is advocating for Life Orientation training to be included in teacher training curricula. In some European countries including the UK, trade unions are playing a significant role in advocating for Careers Guidance services.

SABC addresses Careers Guidance themes in a number of ways, one through raising issues in the soap, *Gaz'Lam*, and in programmes such as the one on SABC2 by HIP2B2 on careers in the fields of science, physics, maths, biology and entrepreneurial ventures. SABC also is a major funder of Career Expos around the country. Various newspapers provide regular careers supplements.

## 2.5. Reflections, summary and conclusion

### 2.5.1. Reflections: access, equity, redress and support

Careers and gender issues are so intertwined that it was surprising no-one raised this in the interviews. It should be a best-practice criterion and a dimension of quality assurance. One guidance teacher claimed there was "no sexism in my school" and went on to tell me that science careers were not of interest to girls. (Thankfully he realised the contradiction and suggested that gender awareness be introduced in his school). The Hip2B2 website features women entrepreneurs in history and then adds: "Every night I am sure Mom is glad the dishwasher was invented". Careers, study paths and jobs have been and are major sites of contestation around gender equity and gender audits and criteria must be an explicit dimension of all Careers Guidance services. If they are not, the legacy of gender stereotyping will be transmitted through Careers Guidance services. Studies and services should be gender-disaggregated to ensure specific learner needs are understood and addressed. In other African countries there are proactive gender and Careers Guidance projects: for example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation recently funded a multi-country team to develop a curriculum on Careers Guidance specifically for girls. Linking girls' education, AIDS awareness and Careers Guidance seems an obvious and effective strategy. It is also strategic in terms of hooking into international funding agendas in which youth, AIDS and girls' education feature prominently.

While we need to build on what is working and on relatively good-quality careers information and guidance, in policy terms we should bear in mind how the current provision further advantages those at the higher end of the economic scale, the disparity between the top and bottom end of the household income ladder being 1 to 94 (Stats SA 2007). Currently available navigational tools are most effective as complementary services to a well-resourced education system that serves people socialised into formal work and study cultures before encountering the information. This is generally not the context for the almost 80% of people who are not eligible for further study after school.

A radical rethink of Careers Guidance in a developing country such as South Africa must accompany expansion of services. A review of the models and legacy from the Careers Guidance outreach NGOs of the 1980s and 1990s would be fruitful in this rethink. Added to the policy values of access, flexibility, portability, and redress must be support. Support, in the form of Careers Guidance, is a missing ingredient in initiatives to address access.

### 2.5.2. Summary

There have been significant gains in the field of Careers Guidance over the past six years. The array of career guidance initiatives includes: good information websites and printed material; a nascent use of multi-channel services; careers programmes on TV and careers material in newspapers; Careers Guidance as a formal part of the school curriculum; strands of Careers Guidance running through many DoL programmes; and community organisations and churches valiantly trying to fill the navigational tools gap. Working adults are more likely today than ever before to receive guidance at work related to training and succession planning. The plethora and popularity of careers expos, many partnering with the media, are one testament to an increasing recognition that something has to be done. There is a technological and human resource infrastructure that represents a potential for reaching more learners with navigational tools, and there is a policy environment within which Careers Guidance is beginning to come out from the shadows. More and more individuals within and outside professional and academic Careers Guidance are passionate about providing navigational tools to meet the needs of learners where they are to make work and study transitions.

However, the vast majority of learners do not receive adequate, or any, careers information and guidance. The frontline community organisations are hopelessly underfunded, Life Orientation teachers are mostly overwhelmed and there is no comprehensive and independent careers information service that is accessible to all. The information “thundershower” provision is largely of a quality that does not start where the vast majority of learners are.

Web-based services have the potential for being more developmental as users can create portfolios and return and build on their research and combine a range of services. A few organisations are starting to use cellphone technology. These multi-media developments are revolutionising access, although language, style and culture need to be addressed as access issues. They also raise ethical issues of privacy and confidentiality. However, these changes do not address the fundamental challenges of the past: quality, comprehensiveness, coherence and the strategic leadership required to ensure national provision for all. A few small initiatives such as PACE are taking on the role of leadership in the field in the absence of a national coordinated effort.

### 2.5.3. Conclusion

In spite of the differences between developing and so-called developed country realities, the problem of providing Careers Guidance that is both affordable and targets the hard-to-reach is shared. A solution being developed in a few other countries is a mixed service that optimises the potential of technology and combines a call centre, e-mail, a website with blogs and a face-to-face service, with personnel at different career bands providing the various services. The central recommendation of this paper is to establish a cellphone/telephone careers information and advice helpline that will reach a far wider range of learners than ever before and buttress and enhance the many valiant initiatives already underway. SAQA is probably the best-positioned organisation to take the lead in this initiative.

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