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International governmental agencies and career guidance

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Abstract
The international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), like many national and international organizations concerned with economic development believes that career guidance has an important role in promoting the development of a country's human resources. (Mapping the future: Young People and career guidance OECD, 1996). Generally the economic development agencies always recommend that career guidance services should be strengthened. Too frequently, however, they do not recognize the difficulties facing counselor in the schools and do not give clear and specific recommendations, yet they appear to believe that the education or other authorities who are responsible to guidance will quickly agree and provide more resources for guidance.

In addition to economic development agencies, social and educational development agencies also make important recommendations concerning the provision of guidance services. UNESCO, for example, has published two recent reports (Policies and Guidelines for Educational and Vocational Guidelines for Equal Access and Opportunity for Girls and Women in Technical and Vocational Education.) It is interesting to compare the OECD and UNESCO recommendations and note that the relative strengths of each set of recommendations, and to imagine how they might be combined in advocating changes in policies and programs.

Guidance Services are “At-Risk” in several Countries
There is a need for organizations like OECD and UNESCO to concern themselves with career guidance and counseling because of the need to develop these services in many countries, but also to question the management of the services in others. A number of countries around the world are "reorganizing" their guidance services in ways that appear to reflect administrative and political philosophies more than the needs of students and citizens for guidance and counseling. Following are examples of administrative changes being made to guidance services in six countries.

Country 1
The ministry decided that vocational guidance and counseling were no longer the right of every person, but rather a service to be purchased by the individual\ from private providers.

Country 2
The government decided to privatize the national occupational and educational information
resource center and reorganize local career guidance centers with the results that: managers with training in vocational guidance have been replaced with untrained administrators.

- Counselors are now called "advisors" and thus are not required to adhere to the accepted professional standards of guidance counselors.
- Grants for vocational guidance services will be discontinued and users (including schools and individuals) will have to pay for guidance and counseling from commercial providers.

Country 3
The ministry of education has dropped its requirement that guidance be a part of basic education, and left it up to the municipal school authorities to decide whether to provide the service, and if so how much. National coordination of guidance services has been discontinued and replaced by an optional model of services that local authorities may accept or reject. All citizens receiving unemployment insurance or social welfare are required to receive employment counseling but counselors in employment and municipal welfare offices have had little or no training in career and employment counseling.

Country 4
The employment service which hitherto had provided career and employment counseling to all citizens who were in or contemplating entering the labor market, decided to restrict its counseling service to only those people in receipt of unemployment insurance. At the same time, however, it provided grants to community-based agencies to provide career and employment counseling to adults who were "at-risk" in integrating into the labor market. For the most part the counselors in these agencies had little or no training in career and employment counseling.

Country 5
Financial support for education generally has been lessened and guidance services in the schools were reduced more than any other educational service. Most notable has been the decline of guidance consultants in the municipal school authorities, leaving many school counselors without specialist supervision and leadership.

Country 6
A survey of counselors revealed that many thought that the administrative head (such as school principal) of their organizations did not understand counseling and guidance, and were more critical than supportive. The foregoing examples indicate why guidance is at risk in several countries, and why
strong advocacy on behalf of guidance is needed.

**OECD and UNESCO Recommendations for Guidance Services**

The conclusions and recommendations of the two agencies may be compared under a number of headings, as follows.

**Need for guidance service:**

OECD notes the need for guidance services goes largely unrecognized in policy-making circles, and UNESCO describes the factors that should be considered in a guidance needs analysis.

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| The typical division of responsibility between the education and the labour authorities currently risks duplication and conflicting agendas. There is every likelihood that this institutionalized division will continue to exist in many countries - and in many ways it is desirable in the interest of responding to the needs of different clients especially young adults who require several different access points. In order to get the best from a pluralist system attention should be paid to greatly improved liaison between all guidance and counseling agencies aimed at increased understanding efficiency and clarity of purpose, and recognizing the different interests involved. | In addition to the jurisdictional considerations referred to in the above section on Policy, UNESCO has recommended a joint institution as follows. Ministries of education and labour, together or separately, should establish an agency institution or office with responsibility to develop and maintain:  
- Training and continuing education programs for counselors  
- Development and provision of methods and materials for guidance.  
- Conduct research and development to create new more comprehensive and better ways of conducting educational and vocational guidance.  
- Develop appropriate methods of evaluation of counseling and guidance. |

Career guidance is of interest to the ministries responsible for education, labour market and sometimes, social affairs. It is important that they be encouraged to formulate a joint plan of action in support of career guidance and perhaps a jointly sponsored support structure such as UNESCO has proposed.

**Content:** Both international organizations see the need for a curriculum approach to guidance. Significantly, neither specifically described the content of individual career counseling.
Guidance services seldom conduct a formal needs analysis for guidance, yet if they were to do so as UNESCO suggests, then more effective advocacy could be undertaken along the lines outlined by OECD.

**Guidance Policy:** In many jurisdictions, guidance and counseling is made available as a private confidential service to students or clients who volunteer themselves for assistance, or who are referred by other staff members (e.g., teachers) because of learning or behavioural problems. Both international organizations argue that the service should be provided to everyone.

OECD noted that "There is much good guidance practice in all countries, but incoherent or incomplete systems seem to be the norm. Large numbers of young people and adults who could benefit from career guidance have to go without, or receive an inadequate service."
Guidance is a developmental process and can best be achieved within a learning context such as a guidance course. Much of the time of counselors is consumed in individual counseling dealing with crisis situations. Governments do not value such counseling as much as career guidance. Some institutions attempt to separate the roles by employing social workers as well as guidance counselors.

**Jurisdictions:** The foregoing would suggest that there may be a need for counselors to define and describe the typical content of individual career counseling interviews. It is possible that they are largely devoted to providing educational and occupational information, on the other hand they may largely address personal and social issues of the student. What should administrators believe is happening in what they may consider to be time consuming conversations between student and counselor?

**Materials:** Career guidance is more than a conversation between a student and a counselor. There are interests, aptitudes and talents to be explored and defined, there is educational and occupational information to be learned, there are personal student career planning portfolios to be prepared, there are job search skills also to be learned, and there are...
electronic education and career information systems to be used. Therefore the requirements for materials in the guidance service must not be ignored.

The budgets of career guidance services must include ample funds to provide a complete career information center.

**Delivery:** In looking at the delivery of career services, OECD gave particular attention to populations at risk, whereas UNESCO was concerned that all students receive at least a basic service and that career guidance services for girls and women in technical and vocational education, in particular, be strengthened.
The delivery of guidance services is the testing ground of good intentions. It is important that the organization of local services receive the professional, financial, material, and technical support to ensure the accomplishment of the professed policy objectives.

**Standards:** When standards for guidance are discussed the issues of counselor ethics, and qualifications are typically given prominence. Considering the problems described above that put guidance itself "at risk" there are many other factors that must be addressed under this heading. OECD has taken up the professional issue along with the need to conduct audits or inventories of services. UNESCO, on the other hand, has listed a dozen features or hallmarks of a quality guidance service.
Counselors, counselor educators and associations of counselors need to establish comprehensive standards for guidance services and programs, and to advocate with educational, social and economic development authorities that these standards be put into practice.

**Training of Counselors:** Both international organizations have affirmed the need for well-trained counselors. UNESCO has suggested some of the subjects that the training should include.

Some counselor training institutions provide training based upon the approaches of counseling psychology while others provide training based in occupational psychology. The design of the training programs must take into account the scientific analysis of the needs of clients, and of the "corporate" skills required by counselors in dealing with administrations that do not adequately appreciate the nature of guidance programs and services.

**Evaluation**

Guidance services are seldom evaluated in a formal way. Much research has been devoted
to the evaluation of particular guidance techniques, processes and programs, but very little
attention has been given to the evaluation of the full guidance service. It is perhaps not
surprising that an economic development agency sees the importance of the evaluation
of guidance services. To the support that it gets from the administration.

There is a need for the development of appropriate means of evaluation guidance services
as a means of improving the service, but also of defending it and of advocating
improvements to the administrations that, as we have seen, are not always supportive.

Conclusion
Guidance counselors are pleased to see national and international social and economic
development agencies express the importance of educational and vocational guidance
for the personal social and economic benefits that it provides. The future of many nations
depends on young people and adults learning about themselves, their potential and how to
achieve educational, vocational and economic goals - which are typically intertwined. The
comparison between the recommendations of an economic development agency (OECD)
and an educational and social development agency (UNESCO) lays the basis for develop-
ing a comprehensive approach that meets the needs of students and of administrators.
National governments listen to economic development agencies as they search for means of
improving the economy and increasing employment. It is important for national associations
of educational and vocational counselors to make sure that the economic development
agencies gain a sufficient understanding of guidance services to be able to advocate
specific, workable and reasonable suggestions for the further development of guidance
services. Finally, counselors associations may be the catalyst to bring a common and
complete approach by educational, social and economic development agencies to the
proper development of career guidance services for students and workers in the estab-
lishment of a career development culture and lifelong learning.