

## John Killeen Commemorative Lecture 2005 'Known knowns and known unknowns': What can evaluation tell us about labour market impact?

Jim Hillage

It is with some trepidation that I accepted the invitation to give this lecture. I did not know John Killeen, but I do know of, and have always been impressed by, his work; and we sought his advice on the recent Institute for Employment Studies (IES) study on the impact of advice and guidance, but by then he was unfortunately too ill to help.

My trepidation increased when, in preparing for this lecture, I realised:

- a) how little I knew about careers information, advice and guidance, although as a jobbing researcher and evaluator I have been involved with a number of studies in the area over the years, and
- b) how much John had contributed to our understanding in this area.

By then, however, I had already chosen as my text the now famous quote by Donald Rumsfeld, US Defense Secretary:

*'Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know.'*

This quote, rather unfairly I think, won the Plain English Campaign's 'Foot in Mouth' Award in 2003. Unfair because I think it is actually clear and certainly less ridiculous than Chris Patten, ex-Conservative Cabinet Minister and Governor of Hong Kong, who was runner up with:

*'The Conservative Party has committed political suicide and is now living to regret it.'*

Now I am not suggesting that there is any similarity between John Killeen and Donald Rumsfeld. However, I like to think he would have agreed that with the idea that a researcher's job is to understand what we know and concentrate on the things we don't know and identify the things we did not realise that we needed to know. After all John finished one of his last published works with the statement:

*'More research required is a common conclusion, but it is important that this does not keep starting at square one - of this we have had enough.'*  
(Hughes et al., 2002)

So I set myself the task of reviewing what was known and not known about the labour market impact of information, advice and guidance (IAG). With the Government's upcoming review of adult guidance and the recent publication of the baseline report on IES's study on measuring the impact of advice and guidance it seemed an appropriate, if not original, brief as there have been a few reviews over the years. However, I will present my interpretation of what we know or don't know not just in terms of the evidence, including some of the more recently published studies and other relevant research, but also in terms of the research techniques which underlie it.

I thought I would start with a model.

At the heart of any evaluation is a model which seeks to map the link between the intervention, in this case careers information, advice and guidance, and what happens as a result, in both the short-term and the long-term.

In any evaluation the model is determined by the nature of the intervention and the reasons for making it – its aims and objectives, *i.e.* what you are trying to achieve and how it is to be measured.

It still surprises me in this age of evaluation how difficult policy-makers can find it to answer this question clearly (and even more the practitioners who are tasked with implementing the policy). This probably reflects the multiplicity of policy goals that the designers hope to achieve. It does not help that, when they are expressed, the goals are generally set at a high level, e.g. to improve productivity or social inclusion, while the objectives are not clearly linked to either the intervention or the goals and/or are subject to change as the policy framework develops. While unspecific outcomes certainly make the job of the evaluator more difficult, I'm not sure they help the people on the ground trying to deliver the policy either. A clear 'line of sight' between strategy, policy and practice serves to explain why certain actions are being undertaken or certain groups are being targeted and, therefore, improves the likelihood of effective implementation.

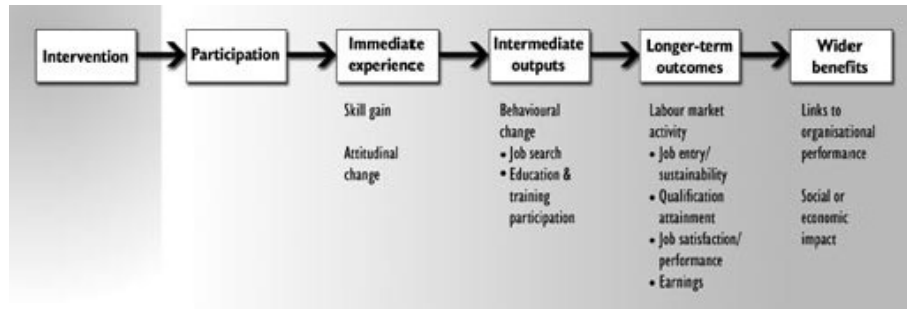
Clarity in establishing the connections between participants' intended involvement in policy interventions and their subsequent labour market or other actions helps the researcher too in establishing what they are trying to measure and how.

In conducting an evaluation at IES we increasingly seek to establish a clear evaluation framework at the outset, defining the indicators we will use to measure the success or otherwise of the policy and how we propose to measure them. These frameworks tend to follow a traditional chain of impact, from the intervention itself (*i.e.* the inputs) through to wider outcomes as a result (*i.e.* the outputs). This is not rocket science and similar sorts of models can be traced back to Kirkpatrick (and probably before), who in 1959 developed an approach to measuring the effectiveness of training based on assessments at four levels: individuals' reactions, the learning they gained, consequent behaviour change and finally the effect on the organisation.

Such models have also been used in the evaluation of IAG activities, for instance IES's evaluation of the University for Industry (Tamkin *et al.* 2003). Similar models underpinned John Killeen's *Gateways to Learning* evaluation (Killeen, 1996) and featured in the Centre for Guidance Studies' invaluable review of the economic benefits of guidance (Hughes, 2002).

An abstraction of the model is set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Simple model of labour market impact



Source: IES

It provides a simple theoretical underpinning to any investigation. I realise that there are other bases for constructing a model, e.g. assessing the value added to an individual's human capital (e.g. Mayston, 2002) which might form an alternative basis of analysis, although it is not clear whether the theories that apply to IAG have been empirically tested.

I refer to the model for three reasons:

- Firstly, it helps to marshal the evidence across the chain of impact and to identify the known knowns and, therefore, the unknowns
- Secondly, it illustrates the problems faced by those tasked with assessing the impact of information, advice and guidance
- Thirdly, it may help to identify possible ways forward.

So as a researcher we are interested to see who takes part in a given intervention, their immediate reactions, what skills they gain or attitudinal change place as a result leading to changes in behaviour such as looking for a job or taking up a training course. In the literature, the precise components and titles of each of the links in the chain – the individual boxes – vary and although this serves as a general model, more specific indicators would apply to the evaluation of specific interventions.

There are obvious problems with evaluations across the chain at this level, e.g.:

- the time lag between intervention and behavioural change and subsequent labour market activity. A person may as a result of a careers intervention decide to change their job but it may not happen immediately, although you would hope to be able to see some intermediate changes, e.g. in their job search behaviour, let alone

get another job which might improve their economic position

- there are also other factors which might intervene and affect progress along the chain such as changes in the education and training infrastructure; changes in labour market activity or changes in an individual's personal circumstances.

All of these points need to be accounted for to establish a causal chain. The longer the time-span between cause and effect the more difficult it is to disentangle the influence of the intervening factors from the original intervention. But as a general model, I think there are a range of other problems too.

The intervention is too heterogeneous, the general participation is too diverse and the links across the chain are not as clear cut or as distinct as we would like. Also some steps are bigger than others.

For example, as a result of an IAG intervention an individual may be more interested in taking a course – but then any subsequent steps depend on the nature of the course, the skills they gain and their value in the labour market. The training may be a bigger intervention than the original information, advice or guidance.

However assessing the impact of training and, for example, the attainment of qualifications is a separate task. If we can link the IAG to the qualification, then other research can take us further down the line.

Guidance might have a positive effect in say increasing the chances of someone obtaining an NVQ level 2. However, while we know that obtaining qualifications has a largely positive effect on employment and earnings there is much less evidence that this general rule applies at NVQ level 2. The guidance may have been successful in helping the client reach their goal but the wider impact is limited by the value of the training itself.

### What is the intervention?

The model starts with the intervention itself, but could in some evaluations start with 'the market', *i.e.* the population at which the intervention is aimed and their knowledge and understanding of the intervention and its value. It could be argued that marketing a particular policy is part of the overall intervention itself. Thus raising an individual's awareness about the opportunities for and value of IAG could cause them to reflect on their skills and career and move them into a different state of mind and career intentions than before.

It is therefore critical in any investigative research or evaluation to have a clear idea of the size, scope and nature of the intervention under examination.

The intervention can be defined by the user, *i.e.* by asking them what service they have received or defined by the provider. However, user-definition can be a problem, especially if it is important, as it usually is, that we have some confidence that participants receive the same sort of intervention. This is particularly problematic in the case of information, advice and guidance, where the words can mean different things to different people. They may have a specific meaning to those engaged in providing or

researching IAG services but also a general meaning to the world at large, which can lead to ambiguity at least.

The recent MORI study for the Guidance Council (Taylor *et al.*, 2005) used a fairly general definition when asking about respondents' involvement with 'information, advice and guidance in the areas of education, training and work' and it is clear from the results that respondents included a wide variety of sources and types of support. So when the survey found a drop in use of IAG from 52 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent on 2005 we are not sure whether this reflects a decline in use or a change in understanding of the term between the samples.

In the evaluation of the Employer Training Pilots (ETP) we have conducted at IES, we wanted to assess the extent to which participants had accessed the information, advice and guidance provision, and the effect that it had. While a very few had actually accessed the formal provision, e.g. at the end of their course, when we asked learners, around half said they had received some form of (face-to-face) IAG – mainly from either their employer or their training provider.

In the IES impact study we found that participants could not easily distinguish between advice and guidance, although could see them as distinct from information and we, therefore, bracketed advice and guidance together.

This suggests to me that any research requires fairly careful questioning to identify the nature of the intervention and I agree with Malcolm Maguire when he argues that 'the development of common accepted terminology for the range of IAG activities would assist in enabling evaluation or measurement of initiatives'. (Maguire, 2004).

The problem with provider-based definitions is linking the provision to the user, especially in these days of protection of personal data.

In the IES impact study we were not able to link administrative data on the nature of the intervention (*i.e.* I or A/G) to the personal data used for sampling. As a result, the survey had to determine the level of intervention for each individual by relying on their personal recall.

This highlights the need for better and more consistent administrative records and its potential importance as a source data in research.

Ideally we do not want to rely on the participant to define the intervention but combine what they say with the provider's specification. The combination is important and can raise interesting conflicts between what the provider says people have received and what the participants think they have received, reflecting the lack of uniformity of provision (as well as problems of participant recall). It is interesting when researching in

workplaces to compare what the HR Department says is the policy or practice on a particular issue and the views of the line managers or employees on the ground. The differences can often highlight the gap between the HR rhetoric and the workplace reality.

But the problem of defining the intervention is not just one of language or administrative records.

The nature of the intervention varies in so many ways, for example by:

- **Context** – IAG is provided at work; in educational settings; in the community. It is also often provided in a variety of circumstances, e.g. as part of programme of support to the unemployed or linked to some form of learning provision. This gives us a problem of isolating the IAG intervention.
- **Nature of the provider** – ranging through employers (where IAG is generally delivered by a line manager), training providers, specialist IAG providers, Job Centres, friends and colleagues, etc.
- **The type and intensity of the provision** - IAG covers a wide range of support, from simple signposting or the provision of information, through specific help with CV preparation or identifying learning or employment opportunities through to a series of investigatory and guidance sessions combining a range of activities.
- **Quality of the provision** – and the knowledge and skills of the provider.
- **Form of provided** – face-to-face, telephone, computer, written materials, etc.
- **Frequency of provision** – e.g. one-off or time-limited provision or a series of interventions.

The list is almost endless and compounded if IAG is viewed as a process rather than a discrete activity, *i.e.* a series of interventions and personal reflection over a period of time. That said, most significant labour market interventions (e.g. training or job search assistance) could be seen more as a process than a single activity. However the more the intervention is boundless and multi-faceted, the more difficult it is to define and the more difficult the impact is to measure.

Therefore, from a research point of view, the greater the homogeneity of the intervention (and the larger the consensus between provider and participant about what actually happened) the better. The wider the range of provision being investigated the greater the difficulties for the researcher as the intervention then becomes a range of variables rather than a single variable in any explicit or implicit equation.

In the ETP evaluation we faced a number of problems in trying to identify the effect of the IAG element as

provision varied dramatically across the pilots. Some provided support to learners either face-to-face or in the form of written materials at the start of training. In other areas there was a 'call-down' service with learners given a phone number to call if they wanted support (and few did). Some only provided information or advice and not guidance because they thought it would put employers off. Others attempted to give all learners access to an IAG provider at the end of their training, although in some areas this was more of an 'exit' interview than a 'next steps' interview.

I draw two lessons here:

- do not assume that a programme will be universally applied, especially when there are different providers supplying a notionally similar service;
- tracing the impact of IAG as a general process or what a range of individuals receive is far more difficult than tracing the impact of a specific IAG measure targeted at a specific group of people.

Again John provided us with indications of the way through this problem by focusing sharply on one particular intervention and collecting a wide range of data around it. However, I am not sure he would agree with this, it also highlights to me the importance of qualitative research in this respect.

### Who takes part?

Having established the intervention we are obviously interested in who takes part, particularly compared with who does not and ultimately the effect the intervention has on them.

In passing it is interesting to note that according to the recent MORI survey (Taylor *et al.* 2005), IAG users are more likely to be: young, relatively well-qualified, have recently taken part in training or learning and more likely to have higher aspirations in terms of their future career. They already have a reasonable stock of human capital and are either looking to acquire more or looking for ways to exploit better what they have. This would seem to bear out the 'wise search' hypothesis that John Killeen articulated in the Gateways evaluation (Killeen, 1996), *i.e.* that people who use guidance provided under any voluntary programme may be demonstrating the superiority of the general search strategy. There is less evidence that guidance (or at least information, advice and guidance in the MORI survey) is used by John's other 'deficit' group, *i.e.* people who need a remedial activity to help cope with their adverse labour market circumstances.

This begs a question for me about whether guidance is reaching the people who need it most and what interventions work best for the 'hard-to reach'.

### Outcomes

Moving on to the outcomes of guidance, the key question in measuring impact, clearly articulated by John Killeen and Michael White in their study of the impact of guidance on employed adults, is what would have happened in the absence of the intervention – *i.e.* the counterfactual position (Killeen and White, 2002). The now established way of measuring this is through a comparison between the participants and a control group. The trick is to ensure that the controls mirror the participants.

The problem is that establishing a control group from the general population builds in an immediate problem of selection bias. Voluntary participation in IAG is often triggered by either the desire or need to change and, in that respect, participants are qualitatively different to the rest of the population.

The gold standard is to establish 'an experimental design' and randomly assign individuals to the participant group or the control. The control group provides the counterfactual data on what happens in the absence of the intervention and any subsequent differences in outcomes between the two groups can, therefore, be ascribed to the intervention. Such evaluations are common in the US for active labour market policies, but very rare in the UK, primarily due to practical and ethical considerations and the speed of the policy development/implementation process.

There are ways round this problem, e.g. by operating policies in certain institutions or areas of the country and not others, rather than organising assignment at the level of the individual.

For instance the Employer Training Pilots were established in their second phase in a number of LSC areas which were specifically chosen for their similarities to two control areas we had selected. Data were collected before the pilots started in the pilot areas and the control areas and then one year later to see whether there was any relative difference in the established effect measures (e.g. the provision of qualification-based training to employees without Level 2 qualifications).

These sort of methods could be adopted to test any new policy developments on IAG but they do involve designing the policy with the evaluation in mind. All too often even now evaluators are pulled in after a policy has been designed or even started and therefore have to start after the event or a policy is applied in a such a way that it is impossible to establish effective controls or baselines.

In the IES impact study, we had no such luxury of an experimental design. The design does attempt to control for selection effects, by comparing information users with advice and guidance users.

There may still be differences between the two groups, although we have tried to control for that by matching individuals in the two groups through a propensity score matching process and pair off individuals in both groups with similar characteristics (e.g. age, gender, employment and learning experience, etc.). However there may still remain unobserved differences between the two groups which may prove important in explaining any differential outcomes.

One problem we had was that the baseline data collection took place after the intervention, in order to allocate respondents to either the information or the advice and guidance group. In the matching process we decided not to control for various attitudinal measures which could have been affected by the intervention itself. This has led to some criticism that we have not matched like with like and the 'treatment' group of advice and guidance recipients could be qualitatively different than the control, e.g. they were generally more positive and this could explain some of the initial findings.

However, if further funding is forthcoming for the planned subsequent waves we can re-analyse the data to assess the impact of and try to control for this issue. It is important to remember that we have only drawn a baseline so far, and the initial findings are not based on tracking participants over time.

We don't yet know whether there will be a further wave of the study, although there are some indications that there might be. In longitudinal studies, as this is designed to be, it is important to minimise sample attrition which can be significant and I am pleased to say that we have just had indications that the DfES is going to fund us to send a re-contact card to the survey participants.

### What do we know?

#### Do participants like what they get?

Lots of surveys report high levels of satisfaction among users of IAG services and users generally find the service they have received helpful or useful (Taylor *et al.* 2005., Milburn *et al.* 2003, Barnes, 2005).

In the early 1990s I was involved in a study about developing approaches and tools for measuring satisfaction with the then Careers Service. We encountered some concern among the careers community. In particular it was argued that a good guidance session could be quite challenging for the client, especially if they came out realising that their proposed career path of being a pilot or a rock musician was unrealistic – the so-called 'positive negative' – and they might register negative satisfaction, although the session may be seen in the long-term as useful. I note that most measures now talk about how useful or helpful the service was and I also note that they generally find very positive responses.



Obviously high levels of satisfaction, however measured, are better than low ones, but it is important to set any findings in some sort of comparable context. In the Employer Training Pilots evaluation we also found high levels of satisfaction among the ETP learners, a fact that has been highlighted by Government as indicating the value of the initiative. However, the satisfaction levels are no higher than that recorded (using a similar scale) by the LSC surveys of learners in FE colleges and work-based learning.

Participants in development activities of any sort generally report that it was a positive experience. A further note of caution into reading too much into such immediate measures comes from the training evaluation literature which suggests that there is relatively little correlation between learner reactions and measures of learning or subsequent measures of changed behaviour.

### Do we know what drives satisfaction?

However it can be important to see what users find most useful about a careers intervention both to contribute to practice development and identify the sources of any impact. This is an area where rigorous qualitative research, which can cope with the range of variables involved, can provide particular insights. The IER longitudinal case studies (Barnes, 2005) looks like being a really useful study in this respect.

For example, it found that all but one of the clients studied thought the guidance useful with the main ingredients being:

- **Exploring and challenging client perceptions**, together with giving direction and a new awareness of learning or employment opportunities;
- **Giving clients access to networks, information and knowledge** enabling them to be better informed;
- **Encouraging constructive change**, e.g. increasing the client's self-confidence; developing skills; developing understanding which broadened ideas; as well as motivating, inspiring and encouraging the client;
- **Providing the client with a positive experience** by: creating the opportunity for reflection and in-depth discussion; and by reassuring, confirming and/or clarifying plans and/or progress.

The key appeared to be the skills of the practitioner.

This finding is also reflected in the MORI survey (Taylor *et al.* 2005) which found that around seven in ten IAG users of found it helped them decide what to do next and increased their awareness of training and job opportunities. Users of more formal IAG services were significantly more likely to find the service helpful than those who had used more informal sources. In a regression analysis, some of the key drivers in generating

positive outcomes appeared to relate to the quality of the service offered, i.e. the knowledge and professionalism of the providers and the provision of a comprehensive and accessible service.

Another interesting point to emerge from their analysis was that participants with the lowest level of qualifications were much less likely than others to have found the service they had used helpful. Unfortunately, it is not clear why, but as this group could, at least in theory, benefit from any support IAG provided in getting them started on the learning ladder it would be interesting to know more about what works with these individuals.

### What difference does it make?

There is a growing body of evidence that participation in information, advice and guidance can generate attitudinal and motivational change. John Killeen found in a particularly interesting meta-analysis (in Hughes *et al.*, 2002) that career interventions positively influenced things like career or opportunity-related knowledge and associated skills; career maturity and information-seeking behaviour.

Other evidence suggests it can positively influence individual's propensity to take up learning or some other opportunity.

The IES impact study, for example, found that those who received advice and guidance felt more able to plan their future career and learning needs, were better informed about the opportunities available to them and more confident about taking those opportunities, than the information group. The advice and guidance group were also more likely to report that they were more motivated and confident about doing a course or some other training opportunity as a result of the help they received.

In the ETP study we found that learners who said that they had received some form of information, advice and guidance at the end of their training were more likely to express an intention to take part in further learning than those who did not.

### What happens as a result?

We also know that IAG can translate intentions into action with participants more likely to enter employment or education and training than if they had not received the intervention.

For instance, John and others have concluded that there is 'growing and persuasive evidence that job-search interventions for unemployed people do actually work' (J. Killeen in Hughes *et al.*, 2002). Other studies have similarly found that, generally quite intensive job search can increase the flow into employment (Hughes *et al.*, 2002).

In the evaluation of the New Deal for Young People, Van Reenen (2001) was able to quantify the effect that the job assistance element had on the flow into employment and show that it was more important than other elements of the New Deal such as the job subsidy. They were able to make the finding partly because it was a well-funded study that looked at a range of factors but also because they were able to isolate the specific intervention and focus on clear effect measures.

Although, Killeen and White (2002) found that guidance participants benefited through increased entry rate into education and training, producing 'an enhanced rate of qualification', we appear to know less about the effect of guidance on attainment. The reviews I have read suggest that 'hard evidence is limited here' (Maguire, 2004). If this is right, then it seems surprising and a link in the chain on which it is worth concentrating.

In the IES impact study although the advice and guidance group felt better able to make a change to their job or learning, they were no more likely to have made progress than the information group. For example, in each case about a half had started a training course. However, when asked, the advice and guidance group were significantly more likely to attribute their participation in a course to the intervention they had received, particularly younger people and those with a recent history. This suggests two things:

- the information group were more likely to have done the course anyway, without the help they had received – they were already set on what they intended to do, or closer to doing it and the support they received, therefore, made less of an impact on their intentions;
- making a change, like taking a course or changing job, is a bigger step to take for older people and those without a recent learning experience than younger people with recent learning experience.

Hopefully in the future we will be able to examine these and other issues like qualification attainment in more detail.

### Economic effects on employment and earnings

Towards the end of the chain the evidence trail peters out. There is very little conclusive evidence on the longer-term economic effects of guidance. For example, Killeen and White (2002) found no effect on job satisfaction and 'no indication that the guidance group improved its earnings more than the comparison group, despite some exhaustive examination'.

Does this mean that there are no economic effects? I am reminded of the old researchers' adage that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Does it mean that it is impossible task to measure the effects so far down the chain? Well it is certainly difficult, but nothing is impossible.

For example we can again look to the US for inspiration as an evaluation of an intensive welfare to work programme in California in the 1990s was able to demonstrate, albeit through random assignment, that the programme produced a 12 per cent increase in employment and a 22 per cent increase in earnings between the treatment and the control group (Riccio *et al.*, 1994).

### Known knowns

So to sum up, what do we know? Beginning on the research front:

- **Measuring the impact of guidance is difficult.** Various reviews highlight a large number of studies, producing lots of associative findings, but few 'killer facts', especially further down the chain of impact. This is due to the variety of the interventions, the diversity of the participants and the complexity of the chain of impact with which available research techniques have so far been unable to cope.
- **The search must go on.** There is general consensus on the need to continue to look for impact and to understand the causalities involved in the field of information, advice and guidance. It is important for policy justification and allocation of public expenditure, with the forthcoming comprehensive spending review and the current commitment to evidence-based policy in mind. It is important for the design of policy, with the review of adult guidance in mind. If more had been known about how best to provide IAG in the workplace, what the demand was and how best to meet it, the IAG element in the Employer Training Pilots would have been more effective. It is also important for and will help focus the actions of practitioners on what works best to meet specific policy goals.

In so doing I think there is also a fairly strong consensus on the ways forward:

- **more longitudinal research and tracking studies**, and hopefully further waves of the IES impact study and the IER longitudinal case studies can contribute in this respect. The problem is that such studies take time (and money) to generate substantive findings – policymakers can't wait. But they are still worth doing as the same policy questions keep coming back.
- **more focused studies** concentrating on specific groups and specific interventions and on specific outcomes, trying to trace a series of thin lines of impact along the general chain or breaking up the chain into manageable chunks. A number of things would help here:

- o the establishment of clearer terminology and typologies about the types of intervention made
- o the development of standardised measurement criteria to clearly assess whether progress has been made so we can better aggregate findings and set them in a comparative context
- o improving administrative data for example on who has received what intervention and linking that data to other labour market actions the participant may take – the single learner record will be useful here.

- **Linking in with other areas of research**, which has already established the links further down the chain. For example, there is now a considerable body of knowledge about the rate of return on earnings of obtaining specific qualifications. If clear connections between the process of guidance and qualification attainment at specific levels can be established, we can use existing knowledge to infer the wider impact.
- The process does not just require quantitative research. There is a **continuing role for well-conducted smaller scale studies and qualitative research**, e.g. to investigate what people actually get from a guidance intervention or to understand more about the process of impact and movement along the chain. Such studies are now especially relevant with the development of meta-analyses and systematic reviews which can be used to collate findings and make them more generalisable. We are currently conducting a systematic review at IES and it is a tortuous process but it has highlighted the value of tight research questions and clearly articulated methodologies if you want to aggregate research findings – putting pieces of the jigsaw together to obtain a clearer picture.
- **Better research also needs the help of policy-makers** not just in the involvement of evaluators in policy design but also the establishment of clearer intermediate outcome measures, starting with what you are trying to achieve and then designing an intervention to fit the target. Fewer, but larger, initiatives with time to make an impact would help too. When you are trying to see the wood for the trees the last thing you want is people planting more trees!

But as John reminded us in conducting further research we should build on what we know and concentrate on what we don't know. In the realms of guidance we know that:

- IAG positively affects participants' career development skills, their confidence and motivation to change and their entry into jobs or education and training – but there is still more to find out about how and what forms of intervention are most effective.

- IAG can be effective when combined with other interventions – but how does this work and why and in what circumstances?
- Where an effect can be measured, bigger interventions such as guidance have more of an effect than just information - but there is more scope for finding out about different techniques and what works best and why and in what circumstances.
- Quality of provision is important – but how to secure it and what is the effect of quality standards?

### Known unknowns

And there are many things we still know that we don't know much about, and I highlight just three:

- **What happens in the workplace** – important for policy as it focuses more workplace interventions, but also for employers. Workplace interventions are even more focused on the wise searchers, for example the well-qualified. There may be large amounts of unidentified need as well as unmet need among the less qualified and those under threat of enforced job change.
- **What works best for people most disadvantaged in the labour market** – particularly older workers at risk of enforced job change or individuals without any qualifications? How can IAG reach the hard-to-reach and where it finds them, can it help them stock up or restock their human capital in such a way as to equip them better for the future?
- **Cost and cost effectiveness** – although some forms of IAG may be more effective than others, taking costs into consideration may produce a different conclusion. Although the GAIN program in California I referred to earlier found positive employment and earnings effects, the net cost benefits (i.e. taking into account the costs of the programme and the reduction in welfare payments, etc. to participants) were only positive in two of the six areas where the programme was introduced. Examples in the UK of cost-effectiveness are particularly rare.

By definition, I don't know what the unknown unknowns are!

There is no magic bullet. No one study will provide the map in our journey towards understanding:

*'The general value of guidance, as of other programmes, can only be established by repeated studies. A single study contributes to the build-up of evidence, and may stimulate further investigations.'*

(Killeen and White, 2002)

As I have tried to show, the terrain is just too difficult to map out the single path in one attempt. The destination is slightly different with each study (though generally in

the same broad direction). It is impossible to trace general impact with a single study – but studies can and should build on each other and add stepping stones towards the goal. However, we have made progress and it is important that we regularly take stock, reflect clearly on what we know (and don't know), concentrate on the latter and move on. There are some known knowns, some stepping stones towards the goal of understanding the impact of information, advice and guidance.

John laid more than his fair share of these stones. Let's stand on them and move forward.

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### Notes

John Killeen was a senior fellow at NICEC from 1977 to 2003. The next commemorative lecture will be given in October 2006 by Jenny Kidd who collaborated with John on numerous projects. Details will be available on the CRAC/NICEC website later this year.

### For correspondence

Jim Hillage  
Institute for Employment Studies  
Mantell Building  
University of Sussex  
Brighton  
BN1 9RF  
Tel: 01273 686751