

Careers Education in Schools in England

A paper for the NICEC comparative study of careers education in schools in the UK and the Republic of Ireland

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Introduction

This paper was written as a pre-conference paper for a NICEC consultation to compare approaches in the five 'home' countries to careers education in schools. The main focus of the project was a consultation conference held in January 2002, where the principal aim was to examine careers education policy and practice in each of the five countries from the perspective of professionals working in the field. The paper sets out the current position in England. Similar papers were written for Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Definition

The term *careers education* describes those activities planned within the curriculum to enable pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to plan and manage their individual progression through learning and work, including the ability to make effective use of the careers information, careers advice and careers guidance available.

It is widely recognised that while much career learning will be gained through careers education lessons, often organised as part of a broader programme of personal development, some of the knowledge, understanding and skills will be developed through related processes such as recording achievement and action planning, and through extended activities such as work experience.

Brief historical overview

It was not until the 1960s when careers education lessons first appeared within the school curriculum in secondary schools. In the first half of the 20th century the provision of careers guidance by officers from the former Juvenile Employment Bureau, and later the Youth Employment Service, was dominated by talent-matching approaches. The scope for careers education within the curriculum was limited to helping pupils who had been guided to career decisions to develop the transition skills of making applications and presenting themselves at interview, and some understanding of the world of work, including pay slips and the role of trades unions.

It was only when practice in England became influenced by the developmental theories of vocational guidance, again from the USA, that a rationale for a more substantial contribution of careers education emerged. Peter Daws and his colleagues, working at the University of Leeds Vocational Guidance Research Unit, were influenced by the work of

Donald Super and did much to introduce his ideas into the secondary school curriculum in England. The culmination of these developments was the publication of what is now, a quarter of a century further on, commonly viewed as a seminal work in this field (Law and Watts, 1977), which identified four elements of careers education: self awareness; opportunity awareness; decision learning; transition learning. This has become known as the 'DOTS analysis' of careers work and still has a strong influence on the content of careers programmes in schools today.

The 1970s saw considerable growth of careers education. Careers lessons appeared on secondary school timetables, teachers were appointed to the position of head of careers and the Schools Council initiated a major careers education curriculum development project. The Careers Library Classification Index was developed and in 1973 the Youth Employment Service was replaced by the Careers Service. Careers services were established within each local education authority (LEA) and this set the foundations for the now familiar partnership approach to careers education and guidance for young people. Careers officers from the careers service went into schools to provide careers interviews, while careers teachers in schools had responsibility for planning and teaching programmes of careers education in the curriculum.

These developments continued into the 1980s, and were supported through the Government's major curriculum initiative of that decade, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). Not only did TVEI provide the policy imperative and funding to support the development of careers education and guidance, it also promoted related aspects of schools' work, notably work experience and recording achievement. It drew heavily on earlier work in careers education and in pre-vocational education. Partnership working also continued to be

fostered, with the publication of a very clear statement by Government endorsing such approaches (DES, ED, Welsh Office, 1987). By the end of the decade schools were beginning to see careers education as part of a wider curriculum provision of personal and social education (PSE), and were starting to timetable careers education lessons as a component of PSE programmes. This was, in part, a recognition of the links between these two areas of the curriculum, but also a pragmatic response to fitting careers education around the demands of the National Curriculum.

The beginning of the next decade, the 1990s, was not good for careers education. The Government had introduced a national curriculum and in the original consultation document there was no mention of careers education. Subsequently it was identified as one of five cross-curricular themes, to be accommodated within the schemes of work for other subjects or within the limited time available beyond a heavily prescribed national curriculum. By the middle of the decade, however, the situation had begun to improve. Firstly, there was some relaxation of the prescription in the national curriculum subjects, which created some space for careers education. Secondly, the Government, influenced by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and arguments focused on the economic benefits of guidance, introduced legislation to make careers education, for the first time in England, part of the statutory curriculum, although outside the National Curriculum. This meant that careers education was a compulsory element of the school curriculum, but there was no prescribed programme of study. Around the same time, market approaches were introduced to careers guidance and the former LEA careers services were privatised and brought under the direct control of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

This brings us up to date, to the beginning of the 21st century. In September 2000, a further revision of the National Curriculum was implemented in schools. Careers education was still categorised as a statutory requirement outside the National Curriculum with no programme of study. The Government had introduced a new, non-statutory framework for personal, social and health education (PSHE), which included elements of careers education, and would be requiring schools to introduce a new, statutory subject – citizenship – with effect from September 2002.

In 2000 the Government announced that, in England, the careers service was to be replaced by a new support service for young people, Connexions. The Connexions service will subsume all the responsibilities of the careers service for work with young people and integrate them with the work of other support agencies, such as social services, health, education welfare service, etc. It will be for all 13-19 year-olds, with particular priority given to individuals at risk of not making a successful transition into learning and work in adult life. The new service is being phased in from April 2001. Under Connexions the provision of guidance will be differentiated to meet individuals' needs: access for all pupils

to a good quality programme of careers education will be even more important than ever.

The rest of this paper sets out the current situation with regard to careers education in schools in England, and the support for this area of the curriculum.

Statutory requirements

Maintained secondary schools in England have a statutory duty to provide a planned programme of careers education within the curriculum during the period covered by Years 9, 10 and 11, the final three years of compulsory schooling, (i.e. for pupils aged 13-16). They are also encouraged to start earlier (e.g. Years 7 and 8) and to continue post-16. This requirement was introduced in the Education Act 1997 and came into effect from September 1998. The Act includes reserve powers to extend by regulation the age range for the statutory requirement. There is no prescribed programme of study for careers education, although there are broad, suggested learning outcomes (see later section on curriculum guidelines).

To set the requirements for careers education within a wider context, all maintained schools in England are required to teach the National Curriculum 5-16. This comprises:

- English
- mathematics
- science
- modern foreign languages (secondary schools only)
- design and technology
- history }
- geography }
- art } (optional 14-16)
- music }
- physical education
- information technology
- citizenship (from September 2002)

In addition, all maintained schools are required to teach religious education and maintained secondary schools are required to teach sex education and careers education. Further, all schools are encouraged to teach PSHE.

Approximately 7% of pupils in England are educated in independent/private schools. Although these schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum, most do in practice.

The Government department with responsibility for the school curriculum is the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Careers education policy is the responsibility of the Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU): this makes it separate from policy responsibility for the rest of the school curriculum, which resides with the Curriculum Division. Very recently there have been changes in the

position of responsibility for Key Stage 4 (i.e. the curriculum for 14-16 year-olds) within the DfES, as part of the development of a coherent 14-19 phase of learning, and this may reduce some of the separation of careers education from other elements of the curriculum post-14.

Curriculum practice

How the curriculum is organised, and how much time is allocated to each subject area, are matters for schools themselves.

In many secondary schools separate careers lessons have disappeared from the timetable, although several special schools still adopt this approach. Most schools organise their careers education up to age 16 through a combination of:

- discrete careers education (organised within a wider programme of PSHE and citizenship);
- careers education integrated within other subject areas (common locations are English, humanities and ICT);
- extended provision, e.g. work experience, collapsed timetable days.

With regard to the discrete, or separate, provision there are three main models, beyond the ‘separate careers lessons’ approach.

- (a) **Carousel of modules**
Careers education lessons are organised as one module of several weeks, within a carousel arrangement that includes other elements of PSHE and citizenship.
- (b) **Tutorial programme**
Careers education lessons are planned within a programme of PSHE and citizenship, taught by form tutors in tutorial time.
- (c) **Integrated course**
Careers education lessons are planned within a coherent programme of PSHE and citizenship, taught by a team of PSHE/careers/citizenship teachers.

Because of this range of approaches it is difficult to quantify how much careers education is taught in schools. A recent survey conducted by the NFER (Morris *et al*, 2001) indicated the following *per annum* averages:

Year 9	9.5 hours
Year 10	14.5 hours
Year 11	13.5 hours

(These figures do not include the 25-50 hours of curriculum time devoted to work experience in Key Stage 4 in over 90% of schools.)

Almost all schools with sixth-forms, i.e. with provision for post-16 (post-compulsory) education, continue to provide careers education in Years 12 and 13, as part of an enrichment

programme beyond the students’ main courses of study. A major focus of sixth form careers education is preparation for higher education, and several studies have found that preparation for other options, including employment at 18, is not good.

Some primary schools include work in the curriculum on learning about the world of work and preparing for transition, but would not label this careers education. The term that is commonly used to describe such work is career-related learning.

Curriculum guidelines

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has responsibility for providing guidance to schools on the curriculum. It also oversees arrangements for assessment and accreditation.

For each of the national curriculum subjects there is a prescribed programme of study, and for PSHE there is a non-statutory framework. The arrangements for RE are different in that schools are required to follow the Agreed Syllabus for their LEA area. Sex education and careers education are the only areas of the statutory curriculum where schools determine the content themselves. QCA has published suggested learning outcomes for careers education (QCA, 1999).

Ministers are considering the publication of a national, non-statutory framework for careers education, as part of developments in 14-19 learning, and this suggestion has been widely welcomed by the field. There is also a proposal that schools should provide careers education from the beginning of Key Stage 3, i.e. Year 7 (age 11).

There are no requirements on schools to assess pupils’ learning in careers education, although QCA has recently approved several non-GCSE qualifications to accredit achievement in careers education.

Inspection and quality assurance

All schools are inspected, at least once every six years, by teams of private inspectors working under contract to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The inspections follow a detailed common Framework.

At present all national curriculum subjects, RE and PSHE each have a separate paragraph in the inspection report, while provision for careers education is reported on within the section on curriculum in general. This means that often in practice no more than a few sentences about the school’s provision for careers education appear in the final report.

OFSTED is about to publish new guidance for inspectors on the inspection of careers education and guidance.

Careers services have sought to promote good quality careers education and guidance in schools by developing, in

partnership with schools, local quality standards. These are often accompanied by accreditation schemes leading to quality awards.

Careers teachers and their professional development

No teachers in England train initially as careers teachers. Careers teachers are teachers of other subjects who are then appointed to the post of careers teacher, commonly called 'careers co-ordinator' today. This position of responsibility is usually combined with a continued, but slightly reduced, subject teaching commitment and sometimes also with one or more other middle management roles. The salary grading for the post varies considerably from school to school, and often does not reflect appropriately the management tasks involved, not least supporting the work of tutors who teach the careers education programme.

Any training careers co-ordinators have for their post will be acquired through in-service training (INSET). There is no requirement for a careers co-ordinator to participate in INSET or to gain a professional qualification in careers education and guidance, but training for careers work is encouraged through the Government's arrangements for INSET for careers teachers.

Up until 1995 there was no national scheme for careers teacher training. Individual LEAs, careers services and other organisations made courses available and individual teachers made decisions about whether or not to attend, the costs being covered by the organisers, the schools or the teachers' own resources. In 1995 the Government recognised the need to promote training for careers teachers and made available funds through two sources: the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) to LEAs; and, INSET budgets within careers services. The former continued for three years until 1998 while the latter remain available, and will be continued through the new Connexions arrangements. Connexions partnerships will have responsibilities for providing in-service training for careers teachers, and for providing support for curriculum development. The 47 Connexions partnerships in England are organised on a range of different models and there is some anxiety about who will manage the budgets for careers teachers' training in the future, particularly in areas where sub-contracting arrangements are in place.

The professional development provided through the careers services and Connexions partnerships takes four main forms:

- funding to attend accredited courses leading to professional qualifications awarded by higher education institutions;
- one-day courses and conferences;
- local support networks/careers associations;
- in-school INSET.

Recent figures (OFSTED, 1998) suggest that only a third of school careers co-ordinators hold a professional qualification in careers work.

An NVQ for careers education and guidance co-ordination (at level 4) has been developed but no awarding body is offering it yet.

Professional association for careers education

The professional association for careers teachers in England is the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers (NACGT). The NACGT has approximately 2000 members, throughout England and Wales. It was founded in 1969, as the National Association for Careers Teachers.

The NACGT provides regular mailings to its members, including five newsletters and five issues of its journal each year. It also publishes an annual handbook for careers co-ordinators and organises a major national conference each July. The Association lobbies Government departments and agencies on behalf of its members and over recent years has established an effective working relationship with the key organisations for the benefit of its members.

The Association is run by an Executive Council of 15 members, including five officers. All Council members work for the Association on a voluntary basis and, in recognition of the competing demands of working for the Association and earning a living, the President is paid the equivalent of a half-day per week from the Association's funds. The work of the Council is supported by a paid General Secretary (0.4). The Council meets on six Saturdays a year. The subscription for all members is currently £40 p.a.

The future

The Government is considering the production of a national, non-statutory specification for careers education and guidance, in secondary schools. This will be developed and consulted upon during the remainder of the school year 2001/02. The Government has also recently announced a national support programme for careers education. Some activities within the programme have been agreed from the outset, while others will be negotiated with CSNU within the DfES during 2002.

CSNU in England has provided funding to support the NICEC project for which this paper has been written. It is hoped that the findings of the consultation event, and any recommendations that emerge, will help the Unit to focus its support for careers education so as to promote the best of practice in schools.

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