

Career Guidance Challenges

Anthony Barnes, Editor

The implications for career guidance of the Harris Review, the employability agenda and the expansion of student numbers in higher education were discussed by Val Butcher and Rob Ward in the previous journal. They provide the backdrop to Hazel McCafferty's study in this issue of the impact of the duty interview. She found that students made significant gains in opportunity awareness and transition skills but very low gains in self-awareness. The importance of studies such as this is that they focus on the dilemmas and difficulties faced by practitioners in their day-to-day work. With embryonic developments in e-guidance and curriculum-based interventions, we need to continue the debate about guidance methods in higher education.

The pros and cons of the Government's Connexions policy continue to arouse fierce passions within the career guidance community in England. In his regular column, Bill Law is fascinated by the possibility of local action by helping professionals to make something more of Connexions than central policy-makers currently aspire to. He argues that the gap between policy and practice is there to be exploited. When Wales and Scotland each went their own different way from England, it was always going to be interesting to see five or ten years down the line which country had the better career development strategy. It does not seem to be much of a national priority in Connexions at the moment, but if Bill's right, there's everything still to play for.

Gerard Wulleman's paper on the reform of guidance in Flemish education is another interesting example of the public policy trend to more holistic approaches to support for personal, social and career development. Few doubt that it is a good idea providing it does not dilute the career guidance strand within it or weaken the necessary linkages with the world of employment and work.

The paper on the need for career advice in medical training is a reminder of a related issue - the need to overcome the fragmentation of the career guidance field in England. Why is it that career guidance work in different sectors is so disconnected? What happens in schools bears little or no relation to what happens in colleges, universities, employment and community settings. This is a challenge for career guidance professionals.

In this issue, David Andrews, Bill Law and I report on a survey of careers co-ordinators in schools. We look at how they move into the role, their experience of the role and their subsequent career progression. Careers teaching still suffers from the lack of a clear route in initial teacher

training and patchy provision in in-service training. We hope this report and the planned briefing, like the briefing on career advice in medical training, will have an impact on future policy in this area.

Cover photos (top to bottom)

Speakers and facilitators at the NICEC Cutting Edge II conference in Coventry, April 2003:

Norton Grubb, Jenny Bimrose and Bill Law;

Tim Oates and Wendy Hirsh;

*Jenny Bimrose, Malcolm Maguire and Richard Sweet;
Linden West*