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UK Career Orientation

The UK Career Orientation (or Career Advice) has evolved considerably over the past few years, especially since the 1980s. Youth policies in UK have taken shape since 1870 through the introduction of compulsory elementary education. Government in UK got involved in Career Guidance as early as 1910 though the Education (Choice of Employment) Act passed during that year. This allowed local authorities to engage one career guidance officer to give advice to young people on getting work. The Education and Training Act of 1948 formally recognized that a national policy was needed for youth that were transiting from compulsory education to the world of work.

Until about the 1970s career counseling took the form of matching individual needs to the demands of specific jobs. However rising unemployment and the riots of 1981 prompted the then Conservative government to form the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in 1983. YTS replaced the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) that existed since 1978 and was run by the Manpower Service Commission, a non-department public body that operated under the government's Department for Employment.

With changes in the fabric of British society during the past four decades (1960s to 2000), different governments in UK have attempted to implement changes to education policy and subsequently career orientation (or career guidance as popularly known in UK). YTS was renamed Youth Training in 1989 and was managed by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). In 2001 TECs were abolished and the challenge of career advice along with other education policy issues was the remit of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) overseen by the Department of Education. From March 2010, LSC was disbanded and divided into two entities: Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). SFA focuses on the development of vocational skills agenda on a national level and also manages the European Social Fund (ESF) and the many EU projects under this umbrella. YPLA is geared towards managing the 16-19 apprenticeships providing guidance and funding for these much needed skills for youth from compulsory education to the world of work.



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Government funded schemes geared towards various stages of career development from transition of compulsory education to world of work to redevelopment of skills among unemployed and redundant adults include: Next Step, Learn Direct, Connexions and Lifelong Skills and Improvement Services (LSIS). All these services are accessible by anyone at any stage of their career. These schemes provide Information, Advice or Guidance (IAG) about careers and can be useful point of contact at any stage in one's career.

Career Orientation in Compulsory Education

In state schools, career education and guidance (CEG) is usually delivered either by a qualified career teacher or external providers that are specialist career practitioners. Independent or Private Schools that are not required to follow the National Curriculum of Compulsory Education are exempt from such stringent conditions and may engage a number of tools in providing career planning or CEG to their students. The Department of Education has attempted to guide the youth on careers and the world of work through many publications and attempts by different governments to revamp the competitiveness and enhance the skills base within UK. Among these initiatives and new paths include: '14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005a), the White Paper 'Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b) and 'Youth Matters' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005c).

The National Curriculum (NC) requires that a number of subjects are included during the teaching and learning at schools that will aim to develop vocational skills or at least engage the youth about the prospects available after compulsory education. From 2015, this compulsory education will be from age five to eighteen. Vocational Education subjects are introduced at Key Stage 3 or 4 depending upon the school and its capacity in terms of staff and their specialism. At post-16 more vocational subjects may be available and students can take these either at the sixth form in schools or colleges of further education. Qualifications gained at age 16 include single subject GCSEs and although 5 GCSEs or more with A star to C grade is a benchmark of achievement currently there is no requirement to 'graduate'.

A systematic literature review of recent literature published from 1988 to 2003 focused on the impact of CEG on career transitions from **Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4** (Moon et al, 2004). Overall, the evidence suggests that provision of CEG varies from school to school, depending on a range of factors that can be seen as indicators of quality, including school policy and management, content and organisation of CEG programmes, qualifications of teaching staff designated to deliver CEG, standards of students' work, and library resources. The research implies that these factors affect the transition of



young people. Where provision is good, the impact on young people in transition appears to be positive. The review concluded that students have differing CEG needs at each Key Stage and that it was important that CEG should be promoted from Year 7 onwards. Variable standards regarding staff training were noted, together with the lack of suitably qualified teachers. The potential existed for parents' contributions to be more fully utilised and access to careers library resources required improvement. Overall, a coherent strategy across the key stages is lacking (Bimrose, J 2009).

This lack of coherent strategy, especially among the state (or maintained) schools can be directly attributed to the way education policies of successive governments have been implemented in the UK. For example, although the schools receive state funding the spending of budgets and money received is at the entire discretion of the head teacher who advises the Governors. In most cases, this would be dependent upon the expertise of the head teachers and their personal agenda in terms of achieving grades and a position on national league tables. In recent years, schools have been preoccupied in gaining results that enhance their position on national league tables to the detriment of education delivery and unfortunately, CEG has taken a rather second stage within the overall scheme of NC.

However, attempts have been made by various governments to include career teaching in vocational subjects or planned times within the school timetables where children are exposed to the world of work. Since 2009, Citizenship and Financial literacy have become compulsory subjects at all state schools. Within these subjects, students are exposed to various career opportunities and in some schools, where funding and resources are used positively, the students are exposed to many options through class work, visits to external organizations and speakers invited from outside who give lectures on career prospects in their respective industries.

At many schools, teachers who have worked in industries and then entered the education field, take upon themselves to guide and expose the youth to the world of work. These may take the form of **extra-curricular activities** which teachers are prepared to conduct in their own time and unpaid but do it for the passion of guiding and leading the future generations towards career choices. Such teachers may also lead programmes such as **Young Enterprise** and **Work Experience**. Again, although Work Experience is compulsory under law, many schools attempt to circumvent this requirement by delivering Work Skills programmes over a 2-3 day period instead of the 10 days of work experience as stipulated by the law. A number of examining boards have specifically developed modules that focus on Work Skills that can be used by schools for such delivery and among these include: AQA, Edexcel, City and Guilds and OCR.

Career Orientation post 18, in Universities and beyond

CEG at this level is not only highly specialized but many universities offer help to their learners at all stages, making the individuals well-informed and able to compete with the best in the global market place. All of these providers use the four stage model in career planning to understand their candidates and also allow the candidates themselves to become familiar about their skills and capabilities. The four stage model takes the



form of: knowing yourself, exploring opportunities, deciding where to go and how will you get there. Many universities organize networking opportunities for their learners and all vocations from engineering to medicine have their own associations that will help and guide the candidates on their career ladders. In most universities this introduction to career opportunities and choices starts in the first week of induction through talks and seminars and the student handbooks. For many, especially those that may have not exposed such intense training and expectations, is a reality shock of the world of work and global competitiveness in terms of skills and plethora of vocations that abound after the academic years.

The career practitioners are monitored by the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG) using the seven Nolan principles of: selflessness, openness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and leadership. Within the world of work a number of organizations have recognized the lack of coherent policy and guidance for career development especially within the 14-19 group and therefore, they have started companies that provide CEG to everyone. And, with the advent of technology there are now a number of such organizations that help learners with career choice and planning through the internet and easy-to-use websites. Among the many such companies a number of prominent ones include, Fast Tomato, Reed and UK Career Guidance.

With the UK education being in constant flux and the development of new qualifications such as the diplomas in various vocations such as finance, law, hospitality and retail ideas have been imported from across the world. From the USA, the concept of Career Academy has transformed the landscape of a number of cities and learners where the career academy is run by schools and colleges that develop learning pathways within a range of disciplines such as finance, law and hospitality. Within these diplomas the learners are taught at their schools or colleges for two-thirds of the time and the other third is spent at an employer. These Diplomas were developed with the specific concerns and input from employers who identified skills that were needed in order for youth to become fully employed.

In Scotland and Wales, CEG takes a different format. For example in Scotland there is

- Career advice on skills and learning
- Funding via Individual Learning Account ILA
- ILA threshold £22000 or below
- Advice on Modern Apprenticeships, career progression, personal toolkit and also help with interview skills

Wales like in Scotland has a different approach to CEG:

- It has a one-stop-service
- Provides free online matching service to apprentices
- Has Individual e-portfolio
- Provides funding for learning



- It has developed the Youth Gateway with a Personal Adviser who gives job and interview skills training
- Scheme funded via ESF

In England the Education Bill of 2011 has further changed the provisions of CEG or Career Orientation. Its emphasis is on:

- Duty on schools to secure access to impartial and independent careers guidance for every pupil
- Autonomy on schools to implement careers education provision tailored to the needs of their students.
- Government funding or other expert careers guidance providers to be used by schools as they please.
- From April 2012 All Age Careers Service from the Government to include telephone, online and in community support
- Closely working with Job Centres, Local Authorities and Schools

While in the past, England has had a differentiation of IAG services by age the benefits of All-Age Careers serviced are being recognized and changes being made towards up-skilling and raising aspirations for all. In fact, David Willets, Minister for Universities and Science, wants “more solid routes to prosperity” and admires people who have mastered their crafts. He wants to create more “skillionaires” (October 2011).



