



Navigational tools for learners, really?:  
what is available, what are the  
challenges and what should be done?

An environmental scan  
of the Careers Guidance field  
in South Africa

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## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
CAO	Central Applications Office
CRIC	Careers Research and Information Centre
DOE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labour
ESDS	Employment and Skills Development Services
ESSA	Employment Service for South Africa
FET	Further Education and Training
HESA	Higher Education in South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
JIPSA	Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition
NICEC	National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLRD	National Learner's Records Database
NSA	National Skills Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFO	Organising Framework for Occupations
PACE	Public and Continuing Education
SAACDHE	The Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADTU	South Africa Democratic Teachers' Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

## **PART ONE**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This paper reports on an rapid ‘bird’s-eye view’ environmental scan of the navigational tools available to learners, workers and work-seekers and to those who help them construct work and study paths for sustainable and meaningful livelihoods. It identifies the challenges that remain and sets out the next steps that should be considered. An important question is: what, if any, is SAQA’s role within its policy commitment to accessibility, portability and flexibility of learning paths?

Framing the careers development question as one of navigational tools means starting from the perspective of the learner, worker or work-seeker and asking questions about accessibility and flexibility. This standpoint is intrinsically holistic, for, from the individual’s perspective, sustaining oneself and one’s family through study and work is an interconnected life path. In this brief survey, I interviewed more than 50 people from education, labour, community outreach, former career centre networks, industry, careers organisations, and consultants on these issues. I also reviewed international policy studies on Careers Guidance systems including those concerned with developing countries. I explored two models of national Careers Guidance helpline services. Lastly, I attended a pre-conference symposium in Washington DC on strategic leadership in Careers Guidance policy formation, where I interviewed Professor Tony Watts of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) in the UK, considered an international leader in Careers Guidance policy thinking; Lester Oakes, who created and runs a cutting-edge guidance system in New Zealand; and Dr John McCarthy, Director of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, based in France.

This paper is in two parts. Part One presents the Executive Summary and Recommendations and elaborates on one particular recommendation – a helpline. Part Two summarises the interviews, provides a scan of the major areas in which Careers Guidance is provided in some form, and concludes with a summary and reflection.

I am grateful to Prof. Tony Watts for referring me to a host of relevant international studies, for discussing these issues with me, and for comments during the writing of this report. I have been encouraged by the generosity of spirit from all those interviewed as they immediately granted me often hours of their time with little or no advance warning. Their passion for improving Careers Guidance in South Africa made this study a joy.

## **1.2. Executive Summary**

This paper reports on an investigation into navigational tools available to learners, workers, work-seekers and to those helping them construct work and study paths for sustainable and meaningful livelihoods. It identifies the challenges that remain; the next steps to be considered; and what role, if any, SAQA should play in this regard.

More than 50 people from education, labour, community outreach, career centre networks, industry and careers organisations, as well as consultants, were interviewed; policy papers were reviewed; and three international guidance policy experts were consulted.

The landscape of Careers Guidance comprises many players, diverse and devolved information sources and services, and a policy and personnel infrastructure that suggests the situation of Careers Guidance has improved over the last few years. However, information exists in ‘thundershower’ initiatives for pockets of people. Changes in education and training make mastering information more complicated. Tertiary students enjoy good Careers Guidance services in their student counselling centres, and the Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education (SAACDHE) provides leadership in this arena. The Public and Continuing Education (PACE) careers centre is a small private company playing a significant leadership role in the broader field. The Department of Labour (DoL) is paying increasing attention to Careers Guidance needs. But beyond Life Orientation teachers and community outreach services, there is practically no infrastructure for careers development assistance to most people.

The key voids in information and guidance provision are: lack of coordination; no comprehensive, national, independent, good-quality, publicly available information; no national strategic policy leadership in the field; no models for systemic Careers Guidance delivery; paltry funding to outreach organisations; and no public recognition that support and accessibility are intertwined. Needed are strategic leadership and coordination; comprehensive, national, independent accessible information for all linked to support services; and harnessing new technology to provide innovative services that increase accessibility dramatically. The learner needs to be at the centre of a radical rethink of careers services in a lifelong learning framework to ensure learners have access to navigational tools throughout a lifetime of work and study transitions.

A cellphone/telephone helpline is recommended and elaborated as a strategic and concrete point of entry to address many of these imperatives. The need for navigational tools is vast and a critical issue of access, redress and the efficiency of the education and labour market systems. SAQA, linked to both the Department of Education (DoE) and the DoL, is ideally placed to lead a partner initiative to set up a helpline for careers information and advice.

## **1.3. Recommendations**

### *1.3.1. Institute a cellphone/telephone helpline multi-channel service*

The imperative to provide quality, relevant and accessible information on work and study paths as the core of a system of navigational tools is inescapable, as is the guidance support to accompany it. And it has to be affordable. A careers development

telephone/cellphone helpline, ideally integrated as a multi-channel service, will dramatically increase accessibility of navigational tools and services to a diverse population where they are. This concrete service would also be a means to foster the other broader recommendations below. The need for navigational tools is vast and a critical issue of access, redress and the efficiency of the education and labour market systems. The rationale for this recommendation is elaborated upon after the Recommendations in Part One.

*1.3.2. SAQA, which is mandated to address access across all education and training organisations to enhance lifelong learning possibilities for learners, is ideally placed to lead a partner initiative to set up a helpline and should take the initiative as soon as possible.*

SAQA is perfectly placed to lead a partner initiative to establish a helpline for the following reasons: it is the only education and training organisation that has a national mandate to work across all education and training sectors to enhance lifelong learning possibilities; it is passionate about and committed to improving learners' chances; it has a proven track record of innovative response to goals of access; its daily work is in partnership mode – so it could well convene a process engaging all interested parties. And SAQA has a proven track record of raising funds for education projects. The project needs to be done as soon as possible because a helpline with a centralised independent comprehensive information database is the single most significant means to dramatically expand access for learners and to enhance the work of all the other vibrant players in the Careers Guidance field.

*1.3.3. One of the first steps in leading on a national initiative of this kind is to set up a partners' forum.*

There is enormous enthusiasm in the Careers Guidance field for a helpline, for an independent and comprehensive information source, and for leadership in the field. A partners forum to engage stakeholders, undertake strategic planning and fundraising is a logical next step. The core focus of the forum would be to set up a cellphone/telephone helpline and the accompanying centralised information source. A forum with the following characteristics would have the most chance of success: a clear rationale that connects the helpline to lifelong learning, access, scarce skills and 'employability' strategies; a shared understanding of terminology such as 'career guidance' for dialogue and debate; clear tasks and roles; and members who have a strong commitment and are willing to champion this goal. A small office might be needed from the start to provide efficiency and continuity and as a fundraising base. Key concrete issues to be addressed are: the investments required; the complementary nature of the initiative to other guidance services; technological integration issues; extent and borders of the service; its availability; staffing needs; targeted users; impartiality of information and advice; the place of in-depth guidance; centralised versus local information; and marketing strategies. These are expanded upon in the section, Elaboration on recommendations for a helpline, following these Recommendations.

*1.3.4. Develop a national strategic policy leadership role.*

National strategic policy leadership in the careers development field with stakeholder inclusion is key to foregrounding Careers Guidance, and providing coordination and strategic direction to ensure quality, coherence and access to Careers Guidance for all.

Guidance will always be one aspect of more general policies, especially in education, the labour market and democracy building. Leadership is needed to articulate the issues in policy terms, to forge linkages and to support development of the field. A cross-sectoral body is needed with a clear agenda to ensure that lifelong guidance is recognised as a necessary and integral part of education, training, employment and social inclusion policies, and to initiate and oversee the establishment of the helpline recommended in this report. The initiative to establish a cellphone/telephone helpline can be a first step in contributing to national Careers Guidance leadership.

*1.3.5. Provide quality-assured, comprehensive, independent information on work and study paths and make it publicly available and accessible.*

A means must be found to provide comprehensive, coherent, impartial, accurate, up-to-date, searchable information about work and study paths linked to self-assessment. It should be freely available and accessible to the hard-to-reach. It must be both nationally and locally relevant. The question of accessibility includes issues of language, style, medium, and content that is relevant to a wide diversity of learners. Starting from the perspective of the learner implies information with support mechanisms for selecting, interpreting and using the information. A telephone/cellphone helpline depends on an information source of this kind and can serve as a stimulus for this to be developed.

*1.3.6. Raise awareness of Careers Guidance.*

The profile of Careers Guidance needs to be foregrounded. While there are many ways to further this goal, marketing a concrete service is an effective means to raise awareness of the need to plan ahead and to find the information and support to make desirable study and work decisions. At the same time, marketing a national cellphone/telephone helpline is essential to its being effectively used. Given this dual purpose of a social marketing campaign as an end in itself and an essential part of the development of a helpline, branding and marketing should be part of the planning stage in setting up a helpline service.

*1.3.7. Develop a model for Careers Guidance relevant to South Africa.*

A radical rethink of Careers Guidance is needed. Exploration would further a better understanding of the diversity of learners in relation to their particular support needs in lifecycle transitions for work and study. A starting point is to more clearly identify the diversity of learners and the specific and targeted navigational tools that are relevant. The resulting matrix would help in decisions about how to prioritise programmes and funding for particular kinds of careers development services. This segmentation of the market is a tool to help ensure that resources for Careers Guidance are targeted in terms of policy priorities. It would be very useful for planning a helpline. This is part of the need to locate careers development within a sociological framework. Questions of access, including issues of language, culture, socio-economic and demographic constraints are at the core of this discussion.

Responding to the specific recommendations to SAQA from interviewees could contribute key elements to development of the helpline and information database.

*1.3.8. The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) should be accessible and searchable for Careers Guidance purposes.*

In responding to the question of what SAQA could possibly be doing, if anything, in the area of Careers Guidance, most interviewees referred to the NLRD and the need to make this 'wonderful treasure trove' searchable and accessible. The NLRD's qualifications information is already accessible and searchable, but extra search functions are needed to serve career guidance purposes more specifically. Broader accessibility to the NLRD, especially as new qualifications are added, could help ensure information quality and accuracy in the public domain. Interfaces would be needed to link to other information systems.

#### *1.3.9. Encourage DoE and DoL coordination on Careers Guidance.*

Careers Guidance is quintessentially cross-sectoral, and stakeholders and partners are needed to join in policy and service provision to create a seamless service for the individual. The perceived lack of coordination between DoE and DoL is considered by many as a deep obstacle to coordination of Careers Guidance in South Africa. SAQA is seen to be well placed to bring together DoE and DoL on these issues.

#### *1.3.10. Develop a marketing campaign to ensure helpers of learners and learners themselves understand the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).*

It was generally reported that most teachers don't understand the NQF and the career fields, and that even those who do find it hard to keep up with changes as SAQA is at the cutting edge of new qualifications. Many training providers find it too hard to register and are providing training without reference to NQF career paths or unit standards. Interviewees believe, however, that employers are working with the NQF, and this further widens the gap between school and work. As guardian of the NQF, SAQA should ensure that the NQF is understood and used as a viable tool of access and redress. This requires support provision to the learners, in addition to provision of a flexible framework.

#### *1.3.11. SAQA should show how alignment of the NQF and the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) can be accomplished.*

While the OFO developed in DoL and the NQF may seem to be different ways to organise information on the learning/work continuum, many felt the two are potentially complementary. SAQA should help to articulate and communicate the link between the two and help to establish a common language for learning paths and categories of jobs.

#### *3.12. Help develop a career path for guidance practitioners.*

Accreditation of guidance teaching/service providers to create a career path beginning at entry level and moving up to Master's level is needed to open up a professional path for guidance practitioners. Accreditation should be for pre-service as well as in-service training and should include elective components, given the diversity of learners and their diverse situations.

### **1.4. Elaboration on Recommendation One: Institute a cellphone/telephone helpline multi-channel service**

#### **1.4.1 Cellphone and telephone helplines: an introduction**

The imperative to provide quality, relevant and accessible information on work and study paths to all as the core of a system of navigational tools is inescapable. And it has to be

affordable. The reality in all countries is that face-to-face professional counselling for every citizen making study and work transitions is not affordable. Secondly, if inclusion is a goal then the service needs to make sure it reaches the hard-to-reach. In the UK and New Zealand this has meant the evolution of a Careers Guidance telephone helpline, alongside carefully targeted marketing. These countries provide relevant models for consideration in South Africa.

One proposal emerging from this survey is to develop a Careers Guidance development telephone/cellphone helpline, ideally integrated with a multi-channel service in order to dramatically increase accessibility of navigational tools and services to a diverse population. All those I consulted on the timeliness and worthiness of this option thought it to be an excellent one. A service accessible via free telephones/cellphones provides the opportunity for right-now-and-anywhere access and a flexible portal to information and support throughout people's changing circumstances.

Telephone helplines are not new in South Africa: there are HIV/AIDS, crisis, and abuse helplines, to name a few. There are also helplines related to youth and guidance: the Central Application Office (CAO) in KwaZulu-Natal (which serves five higher educational institutions) has a telephone service backed up with letter-answering and mailing of Careers Guidance materials and aims to reach disadvantaged rural communities. Umsobomvu has a call centre for youth interested in starting a business. PACE plans to set up a call centre as a first-stop follow-up option for those receiving rejection letters from educational institutions.

For the following key reasons this is a timely moment to introduce the idea of a Careers Guidance cellphone/telephone service: service delivery is undergoing a transformation in South Africa today as a result of new technology; a vibrant series of Careers Guidance initiatives is emerging; the broader stakeholder and policy environment provides opportunities for articulation of Careers Guidance policy issues; and there is potential for such a service to help address central challenges to accessibility and quality of lifelong Careers Guidance services in South Africa.

#### 1.4.2 Cellphone technology

The central rationale for a telephone/cellphone Careers Guidance helpline is access for all. In South Africa where more families have cellphones than telephones – and given the relative ease and low cost of installing the technology in rural areas – a helpline would need to depend on both telephone and cellphone free calls. A cellphone/telephone helpline (ideally integrated as a multi-channel set of services) is not an alternative to face-to-face and print-based materials, but a value-added complement. Cellphone technology is very advanced in South Africa – in fact the most advanced in Africa, which itself uses wireless technology more widely than the US or Europe, according to a report by CNN (CNN 2008). The infrastructure of satellite receivers and cellphone towers is easy to install and much easier and cheaper than extending a traditional telephone service. And car batteries can charge a cellphone in places where there is no electricity.

The following figures show the rate of growth of cellphone ownership and the growth relative to telephone and Internet in South Africa:

	2007	2001
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Households with working cellphones	72.9%	32.3%
Telephones	18.6%	24.4%
Computers	15.7%	8.6%

(Source: Market Tree Consultancies)

Texting services are being used to remind people to take their ARV medicine. The careers in science organisation, HIP2B<sup>2</sup> founded by Mark Shuttleworth and the First African in Space Campaign, also uses texting to communicate careers and other information in the sciences field as part of their multi-media service designed to make science technology, entrepreneurship and maths accessible to all learners. A cellphone accessible service is complemented by a magazine, a website and newsletter, a weekly live half-hour show on SABC2 and events such as a mobile travelling show. The mobile Internet site is described on their website as a site "jammed with entertainment, science, wacky words, brainteasers and cool careers."

- Instructions: "Simply SMS 'mobi hip2b<sup>2</sup>' to 32978 to receive a link to your phone or alternatively, type 'mobi.hip2b<sup>2</sup>' into your cellphone browser."
- Cost: "A once-off cost of R1 applies and thereafter you pay less than 4 cents per page.' Every Thursday 'you can look forward to snack-sized bits of information on new inventions, interesting careers, strange words and downloadable games and music" (HIP2B<sup>2</sup> 2008).

#### 1.4.3 Internet infrastructure and web-based access

Internet access points for all are being developed rapidly in many centres in South Africa. This Internet-enabled public access infrastructure daily expands the accessibility of the continually increasing numbers of careers information and guidance web-based services. For example, the Smart Cape initiative in the Western Cape so far provides 114 points of public Internet access. There are 100 000 registered users in the 97 Cape Town public library access points. Smart Cape includes computer literacy training and local content creation. This model is being introduced in the eThekweni and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipalities, and the City of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality are also interested. And E-Innovation in the Department of the Premier of the Western Cape is in the process of developing a strategy and proposal for extending the network of Internet-enabled public access points to areas where they are currently not available.

Web-based services specifically for job seekers, many of whom will not have their own computers, are coming on line as a result of this infrastructure. For example, a new service was recently introduced through the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works called Umsebenzi, which provides computer portals to connect job seekers with employers. The site will also include Careers Guidance elements such as writing a CV, choosing a career and job hunting. This site is similar to the DoL's Employment Services South Africa (ESSA) site for linking job seekers and employers, and similar to many other websites with the same kinds of Careers Guidance elements. It will specialise in linking youth with learnerships and other on-the-job learning opportunities in the sponsoring department and also in the departments of Local Government and Housing and others (Umsebenzi 2008). It reminds us of an important dimension to

Internet-based information services – they must include locally relevant information – and so this regional initiative is significant.

The Thusong Service Centre describes itself as "a one-stop centre for services and information" set up to empower poor and disadvantaged communities through access to information and resources from government, NGOs, parastatals, business and so on. The government's goal is to ensure every citizen has access where they live to integrated service delivery by 2014. One of the six areas of information is Education and Skills Development Services. The centres also offer phone, fax, scanning, copying, printing, desktop publishing and postal services. The 100th centre opened in June this year (Thusong 2008).

Also, technology for multi-channel services is available and integrated services are being established, through DoL for example, with access at multiple sites for those who don't have computers. Local expertise is being developed to set up these kinds of multi-channel integrated systems. This technological infrastructure gives the basic concept of a Careers Guidance telephone/cellphone helpline a larger sphere for potential development. The concept proposed would have a telephone/cellphone helpline as the core of the service, but linked to other channels such as web-based options, e-mail and regular mail; it would be a hub that could refer callers to the widest possible range of Careers Guidance information, counselling and support.

#### **1.4.4 Broader stakeholder and policy environment**

With the dual problem of huge numbers of unemployed workseekers and a scarcity of skills in many sectors, the search for ways to bring people into the labour market is a priority for government and the business/industry sector. It is not only a matter of linkage, but of reducing attrition and mismatch and of ensuring progressive skill development throughout the individual's career. This has led to policies designed to bring unemployed people into the market through matching, new opportunities for training, and pressure on employers for demonstrable results in this area. This proposal would most likely be an attractive one in terms of funding, in spite of the huge investment required for the technology, information, staffing and quality assurance requirements.

#### **1.4.5 Potential to contribute to addressing key challenges**

The proposed service has the potential both to address many key challenges in the field of Careers Guidance provision and to advance the field of Careers Guidance in South Africa, thereby securing availability of navigational tools to a far wider range and number of learners than could ever be imagined.

A cellphone/telephone helpline-integrated service would build on and support the current strengths in the Careers Guidance field by providing a coherent, comprehensive, independent, accurate and reliable national and local information source that pushes the limits of what accessible services can become. It would provide a complementary and value-added resource to existing careers development services in South Africa.

As a quality-assured, independent, comprehensive, learner-centred information source, it could provide a standard for reliable information that establishes a best-practice standard. Its potential development would require a stakeholder group from the start. Given the large investment, policy-level articulation would be necessary and contribute to policy development in the field.

The lifelong learning framework entails the widest possible diverse target group, requiring the development of constructs to understand 'the learner', identify particular needs and develop targeted services. This would contribute to the development of theory and practice for careers development in a lifelong learning context relevant to South Africa as a developing country.

Experience from other models shows that a three-tiered system of provision and staffing is logical: a basic information initial level, referral to a second tier for advice, and referral to a third tier for in-depth guidance. This needs three levels of job positions and related qualifications and a career path for career practitioners. This staffing concept could be relevant to many other guidance services where the traditional Master's level training makes services unaffordable as mass outreach and unfeasible due to the relatively small numbers of such professionals.

#### **1.4.6 Two international helpline and multi-channel models**

In this section two models are briefly described: Learndirect, the UK model; and a service of the Careers Service in New Zealand. The New Zealand model provides the most potential for a telephone helpline system in South Africa. This section also addresses some critical issues that a body overseeing such an initiative should take into account, based on reviews of current helplines.

There are references in the Bibliography to papers describing and evaluating the UK Learndirect and the New Zealand models for guidance helplines and related services. A thumbnail sketch is given below.

- ***Learndirect***

The UK Learndirect telephone helpline is the largest Careers Guidance telephone helpline in the world. Started in 1998, by March 2008 it had responded to 4 million calls. It has shown the potential of a telephone helpline delivering information and advice on a vast scale.

It is staffed by three levels of advisers: Information Advisers, dealing with information questions; Learning Advisers, who provide information and advice; and Lifelong Learning Advisers, who respond to queries needing advice and guidance. The service is linked to a careers website with each page having a Call Me button that results in a call from a Learndirect lifelong learning adviser to the learner. This allows for iterative contact between client and service. The service is free, although there is an option of a fee-based package.

Among the lessons from the Learndirect experience are that significant resources must be invested; branding and marketing are essential; many levels of help are possible by telephone; face-to-face counselling should always be a referral option; information should be both centralised and locally up-to-date and specific; and first-line call centre responders are more effective overall when, unlike traditional call centre staff, they are unscripted. However, these first-line responders need to be well trained as call centre responders and also trained in giving career information.

- ***New Zealand's Careers Service***

The New Zealand Careers Service, partly based on the Learndirect model, is an all-age integrated part of a comprehensive Careers Guidance service. It is an integrated multi-channel service that includes web-based, voice-based (telephone), cellphone-based (for texting), and face-to-face services. The client selects the medium: phone call, e-mail, website, blog, mail, face-to-face. The mix of services provides opportunities for sustained contact. For example, following a telephone conversation, materials may be e-mailed and texting used to give reminders on agreed follow-up or alerts to new information. Web-based research may lead to webchat, e-mails or referrals to face-to-face counselling, local services and opportunities. As with Learndirect, there are three levels of service with three staffing levels.

The Careers Service has used a segmentation model to identify segments of the population with particular kinds of career service needs, using characteristics such as age, gender, youth, minority status, disability, those returning to the workforce, or unemployed post-45, and rationalised resources and programmes to targeted groups. This disaggregated approach translates into reaching and providing relevant, realistic and effective tools to those whose needs could never be met through traditional elitist careers choice models or generic services. Recognising that every career service will reflect an implicit and explicit value system, the service is posited on a New Zealand value of 'work-in-life': work conceived as one dimension integrated into valued aspects of life. Also, given the individualist assumptions underpinning Western-based conceptions of careers decision-making, a family guidance system approach is offered to those identifying with Maori and Pacific Island cultural frames of reference in which decisions are made within families.

Trained call centre staff who have Careers Guidance add-on training were found to be better at handling the first level of callers than those who come to the job with a primarily guidance-based training (Watts 2007). Also important is that the reasons most callers valued this first-line call service were both the information received and the personal contact through which the caller felt more motivated and encouraged (Career Services 2008).

#### **1.4.7 Key elements in establishing a Careers Guidance helpline initiative**

Clearly, the development of a helpline must begin with a comprehensive strategic policy and planning stage; this can most effectively be accomplished within the context of a body that is providing leadership for a comprehensive Careers Guidance provision.

Expanded affordable access, bringing careers information, advice and guidance to where people are, is the driver of a helpline concept. The key prerequisites are a database of learning opportunities; a set of occupational information; a website; at least one site with good telecommunications possibilities and enough space for peak numbers of advisers; and a system to allow advisers to keep caller records – ideally as an integrated call recording system. Lessons on the strategic management of helplines show that quality assurance of information, referrals, telephone help and face-to-face guidance should be a seamless whole and that marketing is an essential component. Some of the key issues that must be addressed upfront by such a leadership body are suggested below and are lessons from studies on other helplines (Watts & Dent 2002).

Key issues to be addressed are the investments required, the complementary nature of the initiative, the technological integration issues, extent of the service, availability,

staffing, users, impartiality, the place of in-depth guidance, centralised versus local information, and marketing.

An effective helpline needs a substantial investment. Assessments about what investments are needed in training, support and communications infrastructure for an integrated helpline and web-based service must inform policy. Investment for an access-for-all service entails a balance between a free service, a comprehensive service and a service targeted in terms of inclusion and redress. Questions about what expanded access means, whom it affects, and what new client and programme needs emerge create policy options. Many of the related issues must be addressed from an overall policy and planning perspective.

A helpline would be one service in an existing marketplace of private and government initiatives threaded through many kinds of services. The question of how it complements, enhances and stimulates existing careers services is critical. This includes the question of how to support non-formal and informal guidance activities. The goal would be the optimum mix of public- and private-sector services with special attention to ensure that free services do not put quality private-sector provision out of business. It must also be designed with the possibility of expansion for the huge latent population not yet accessing Careers Guidance services. Framing the place of the helpline in the realm of service provision, existing and emerging, would be a key starting point. This would include consideration of how to plan for national and local information, sites of service and referrals.

Another approach to planning would be to ensure it is integrated both internally and within the broader service provision. Given the technologically cutting edge developments in South Africa with multi-channel services in the pipeline and the burgeoning number of Internet services for careers information and job-seekers, the synergy of a helpline with other forms of technically mediated services is an essential element of planning such a helpline. This issue of integration also relates to the range of services within the helpline project and related web-based, texting-linked, e-mail and other services.

Once the extent of the service is defined, clear boundaries must be established and communicated to avoid wastage and client disappointment. Hours of service must be determined by cost efficiency, client accessibility needs and staffing feasibility, including quality control capacity.

Regarding staffing, a helpline is the key means of providing an affordable and reachable service to all, including the hard-to-reach. Defining levels of service (initial information giving, advice and in-depth guidance may represent three staffing levels, for example) through the helpline – and the associated education and training needs and accreditation and career paths – is a set of strategic planning issues that needs to be addressed from the start and managed through the life of the service. Typically, first-line responders would have the equivalent of one-year post-Grade 12 training; the second-line staff a Bachelor's degree with a Diploma in guidance, and the third tier a Masters' degree in a guidance-related topic. In New Zealand a career path is encouraged and movement up the tier is possible while studying for the next level. Call centre training for the first level is essential.

The place of in-depth guidance as a referral step in a helpline system – who provides it, what qualifications are needed, who receives it and who pays for it – is both a systems management issue and a contested professional issue, given the inherited professionally guarded territory of the educational psychologist in South Africa. A negotiated resolution will impact upon the whole field of Careers Guidance and provide opportunities for other services to improve the cost-benefit ratio. Guidance services should support a developmental process and iterative contact should be a key design imperative.

Some of the challenges in managing a helpline are to manage the tension between productivity and professionalism in the light of serving all within a limited budget, and having to triage services appropriately. The training and professional development curriculum is one forum where this tension must be addressed.

The question of users relates back to policy decisions and budgeting priorities. Inclusion means targeting the hard-to-reach and this moulds the crafting of services, marketing, principles guiding a triage function and decisions about what is free and for whom. Decisions are needed on whether a guidance referral network is to be primarily horizontal (for example, serving youth), or vertical and offering help with transitions in education, training and work through a lifetime.

Impartiality relates to the centrality of the individual as a Careers Guidance principle – the right of the individual to make her or his own informed decisions and therefore the right to independent, impartial information. However, in most countries, Careers Guidance policy is likely to be supported as part of scarce skills development and the desire to encourage movement into specific skills areas. Also, most information on work and study in South Africa today is produced by vested interests. The plus side of this is that the costs are distributed and there is the incentive to keep the information accurate, up-to-date and client-friendly. The tension between the need for impartial information and guidance on the one hand and the environment that supports Careers Guidance – between the national policy agenda and the vested interests that produce information on the other – needs to be managed.

Another key information management area is to set up an information system and network that is centralised as well as locally relevant. Centralisation allows an economy of scale that reduces costs and ensures nationally relevant comprehensive quality information. However, from the users' perspective, the information must include specific, up-to-date local information. Learndirect achieved this by having a central data source but with regionally-based call centre sites so that call centre staff are familiar with local information on queries such as directions to get to an institution, or whom to ask for in a bursary office.

The difference in client uptake between Learndirect and the New Zealand Careers Service has been attributed to Learndirect's larger investment in marketing (Watts 2007). Given that marketing the service is also a process of awareness-raising, social marketing would be the approach to take. Social marketing has a twofold agenda. On the one hand it brands and markets the service, but on the other is an end in itself: it raises public awareness on the value of investing in learning, the concept of constructing a life path and planning, and information-gathering and the possibility of support in doing so. In this sense marketing supports the service and the service, as a concrete entity, provides an opportunity for awareness-raising. Successful awareness-raising requires

that the concrete service is experienced as helpful and valuable, both in terms of accurate, up-to-date relevant information and also in terms of the quality of advice, guidance and referrals.

Initiating and managing a helpline effectively requires leadership, not just at the start, but also on an ongoing basis. This requirement gives further impetus to the need for strategic leadership in the field to foster the development and maintenance of quality information, staffing quality and the network of other resources and services. The architecture of a helpline must be drawn with the latent potential clientele not yet accessing guidance services in mind. Foresight, planning and oversight are needed.

## **PART TWO**

### **2.1 Careers Guidance: definitions, models and rationale**

#### **2.1.1 Definitions**

The term 'Careers Guidance' is still widely used today but its use is waning in favour of the term 'career development', which sounds less paternalistic and more accurately defines the process – an inherently developmental one. I have used these terms interchangeably in this paper because so many current studies still use 'careers guidance'.

Tony Watts and Ronald Sultana, in their review of common themes in three large studies comprising 37 countries<sup>1</sup>, define Careers Guidance as

[...] services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. These may include services in schools, in universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in companies, in the voluntary/community sector and in the private sector. The services may be on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education and career management programmes, taster programmes, work search programmes, and transition services (Watts & Saltana 2004).

In the same paper Watts and Sultana defined career development as “a lifelong process of managing transitions and progression in learning and work”.

This definition is expanded by an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review of lifelong guidance systems as:

- transparency and ease of access over a lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients
- particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan
- flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups
- processes to stimulate regular review and planning
- access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it
- programmes to develop career-management skills

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<sup>1</sup> These three studies, which also used almost identical definitions of Careers Guidance, were by the OECD, the World Bank review of career guidance policies in seven middle-income countries (including South Africa) and a set of reports on all EU countries commissioned by the EU.

- opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them
- assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises
- access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information
- involvement of relevant stakeholders (OECD 2004).

These broad service-description definitions create space to include a wide range of models and approaches, some of which are broadly discussed below.

### **2.1.2 The model of Careers Guidance/Career Development**

Many interviewed felt we need to start afresh to develop a locally relevant model of Careers Guidance. Accredited Careers Guidance has until recently been constrained by the predominance of psychometric testing approaches, which are both inappropriate for South Africa and outmoded given international shifts among academics and practitioners. In addition, there are shifts internationally and in South Africa from traditional careers choice models, which are considered elitist, not representative of what happens in real people's lives, and too limited in the kind of help needed making work and study transitions throughout life. Considering that careers choice is most relevant to professional level positions underlines the elitist nature of this model in South Africa. Of those working (not counting agriculture), 30.1% are in elementary (labourer) or domestic jobs and only 6.4% are in the professions. (Stats SA 2008). A new language is needed. For example, the term 'career' needs to be challenged and language such as 'creating a sustainable livelihood' introduced.

One contemporary shift in US and UK models and appearing in South Africa is from a careers choice to a constructivist one, in which people are understood as constructing their lives through a mix of happenstance, constraints, dreams, pressures and opportunities, all interpreted via narratives of past, present and future. But this still leaves the question of what kinds of service are needed for the diversity of learners and how to design affordable provision for all.

In South Africa a new model must incorporate social values of access and redress, shifting the whole conception from a psychological frame of reference to a sociological one. Many feel this is an essential paradigm shift from models developed in former colonial powers with very different contexts. At the same time, pressure to provide relevant guidance services to poor and marginal groups in First-World countries is also raising demands for new inclusive models that reach the hard-to-reach.

The idea that career development for all means simply expanding accessibility to current services is unrealistic in budgetary terms and ignores the specific needs of different target groups.

Many felt that the first step in building a new model for South Africa is to start afresh with exploration to understand who 'the learner' is. Other areas advocated by interviewees as needing special attention are to understand:

- how concepts of careers are formed when children are very young, the impact of deprived environments in this and therefore an analysis of what children or adults need to learn about before they can engage with the kinds of information available on work and study.
- the indirect role that maths plays in determining later career success through developing capacities for logic and abstract thinking, and the acculturating role school plays as one example of the world of work.

### **2.1.3 Rationale for the value of Careers Guidance**

The various sectors responsible for delivering Careers Guidance in South Africa employ different rationales for the value of Careers Guidance and therefore the kind of service developed. Community and outreach organisations are concerned with helping individuals where they are, and they have developed personal support-intensive services, for example. One influential rationale in South Africa today is an economic one, in which Careers Guidance is part of programmes to match individuals to scarce skills to enhance growth. Social policies of redress, accessibility and inclusion are furthered by Careers Guidance initiatives that help reduce obstacles to entry into work and study opportunities. Other rationales for Careers Guidance are the increase in efficiency of education and training by increasing numbers entering study and work, reducing mismatch and therefore wastage, contributing to motivation and therefore success, and reducing attrition.

All these rationales constitute reasons for investments in Careers Guidance, although they can often imply different service emphases. Impetus for investments in Careers Guidance can come from all these rationales.

## **2.2 The South African context and Careers Guidance**

All interviewed agreed that there is an urgent need for access for all to relevant information and support. Much information on work and study is produced but for various reasons is not currently accessible to most people. In addressing this, a number of contextual factors are particularly relevant.

### **2.2.1 The legacy of apartheid**

The impact of race, wealth and demographics from the time of apartheid constitutes particular patterns today with regard to opportunities and constraints. This is part of the Careers Guidance landscape that must be addressed in terms of understanding the diversity of clients and their diversity of needs.

Ironically, from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, the absence of information and guidance services for other than white people stimulated an innovative NGO Careers Guidance sector and network focused on outreach and social and political change. Primarily due to lack of funding, these NGOs eventually closed but they demonstrated the vitality, relevance and innovative possibilities of NGO-provided Careers Guidance outreach. Some satellite careers centres in KwaZulu-Natal have survived and innovative practices introduced by these centres have been adopted by government and private initiatives today (Kay & Fretwell 2003).

### **2.2.2 Economic context**

The South African economy is described by many analysts in terms used to describe developing countries: poverty, high unemployment, a large informal sector, an

oversupply of unskilled work-seekers, an under-supply of skilled people, and state institutions without the capacity to deliver adequate services to all. While this dominant perspective is a contested one, it has created a particular policy context for Careers Guidance due to the priority given to human capacity development in the area of scarce skills. Formal unemployment in South Africa in September 2007 was 22.7% overall and for black Africans it was 30.5%. Adding those discouraged from looking almost doubles that figure and two in three are women (Stats SA 2008).

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was launched in 2005 and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) in 2006 in response to the government's goal to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014. JIPSA addresses priority skills acquisition in an integrated manner by coordinating all organisations addressing the skills shortage. The special target group is youth and women as they are proportionally over-represented in unemployment numbers. Learnerships, Sector Education and Training bodies (SETAs), volunteer and internship programmes and Internet-based work-seeker-employer links such as ESSA with DoL are responses to this priority. Careers Guidance in the form of information and advice is being integrated into these programmes in slender, and yet nonetheless encouraging, threads.

The human capacity and scarce skills discourse tends to make people the means to an economic end. Career development places people at the centre and provides an important counterweight in the discourse of developing human capacity.

### **2.2.3 Government policies and programmes**

The government response to unemployment and scarce skills in certain sectors of the economy now drives a policy and programme agenda within which Careers Guidance is featuring anew; this is fostering cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing scarce skills issues and career paths. The current policy environment is potentially conducive to foregrounding Careers Guidance, as it intrinsically links the individual, work and learning. This parallels the resurgence of Careers Guidance internationally under the banner of scarce skills development, and the predominance of youth among the unemployed.

### **2.2.4 Technological changes**

Technological advances in Internet-based and satellite-based services are revolutionising the ways navigational tools can be conceptualised and delivered in the field of Careers Guidance in South Africa and internationally. In South Africa there is already a burgeoning of web-based Careers Guidance sites, call centres for specific guidance-related services (though not Careers Guidance-related) and the use of cellphone technology to communicate information to learners. Government and municipal mainstreaming of Internet and cellphone access brings huge possibilities for access to navigational tools. Systems in other countries are exploiting the new technology for comprehensive, accessible Careers Guidance services that can serve as pointers for innovations in South Africa, in addition to the increasing numbers of South African initiatives bubbling up.

## **2.3 Mediating services and navigational tools**

### **2.3.1 Summary of interviewee responses on availability and gaps**

Among those interviewed, there was generally a concurrence on the gaps and challenges. Responses are summarised below, followed by an overview of most of the major mediating services and the navigational tools they provide.

"Whew, there is such a huge need I don't know where to begin" was a recurring response from interviewees. The need for help in creating bridges for learners that begin where the learners are and effectively link to opportunities is enormous and left largely to the private sector. While this means a diversity of big and small initiatives and an entrepreneurial spirit, leadership is lacking and a 'thundershower' provision has resulted in some good-quality information and services reaching small pockets of people. For some pockets of people the thundershower helps the garden blossom; for those on steep barren slopes it doesn't.

There is an enormous variety of information, some of it considered good quality, in printed, CD-based and web-based formats. It reaches those who can afford it. Printed information is not affordable to many poorer families, and schools without computers cannot take advantage of the increasing numbers of careers websites.

Much of the information is fragmented, with no central, quality-assured and comprehensive source. Most of it is not independent, being produced as it is for agendas such as recruitment to study institutions, to particular industries and specific companies.

An evolving technological infrastructure in South Africa is changing the potential for delivery of information and support to far broader numbers than ever envisaged, providing information options to those with Internet access. However other technologies for information dissemination, such as telephone and cellphone, have not been adequately exploited.

Ironically, many say there is information overload without accompanying support to help the learners select and interpret what they need. Most information is not being designed from the standpoint of the diverse range of learners. For the many who have little in their environment to socialise them into big-picture concepts about the formal world of work or further study, the material can be confusing and bewildering. Material that appears well-packaged and graphically interesting may be hopelessly irrelevant to many. The idiom of the medium, style and language are all accessibility issues. 'Good-quality' information is often an effective tool for those with many complementary careers resources in their environment, such as those in Model C schools (12% of all schools. In this sense it provides further relative advantage to the privileged. And an abundance of information does not translate automatically into navigational tools.

### **2.3.2 Suggestions for addressing challenges in gaps in information**

There was complete consensus that comprehensive, coherent, impartial, accurate, up-to-date, searchable information about work and study paths linked to self-assessment and decision-making support is vital and should be free and government-funded. It must be accessible and available to all who need it. Interviewees advocated that national strategic leadership should address this provision.

### **2.3.3 Gaps and challenges in Careers Guidance support services**

Those interviewed agreed that while extensive support is needed, very little exists. What is available is in little pockets.

Support is needed in helping the learner access, make sense of and integrate information into plans. But as those who actually work with learners through community organisations know, the range of support actually needed by most learners to help bridge from school to further study or work is often complex, time- and resource-

consuming and extends beyond the bounds of a traditional model of Careers Guidance and tools. This form of assistance requires a personnel infrastructure, which exists least where it is most needed. Without this support, information is not accessible in any useful way to the majority of learners.

In schools, Life Orientation teachers are often untrained, overwhelmed by other aspects of the curriculum and students' personal needs, and have little knowledge of, or connection to, the world of work. Many described the changes in the education system as adding new difficulties in explaining a more complicated system of information to the learner.

However, a human capacity resource exists of current and past dedicated and visionary Careers Guidance professionals and Life Orientation teachers. Models of best practice, some deriving from the former national network of Careers Guidance outreach NGOs, are a further resource in the field.

There are many constraints on delivery capacity within the personnel infrastructure for support (schools, community organisations, workplace, DoL offices, DoE resource centres, Umsobomvu). However, training for Life Orientation teachers, a pilot training programme for DoL office site staff, and the SAQA-developed certification for the development of career practitioners all point to an increasing capacity to provide support.

Desperate for advice, poor parents pay expensive fees for psychometric testing by private-sector educational psychologists – often of little value, as these tests are discredited in terms of their applicability to a South African population. Also, many educational psychologists have little Careers Guidance training in terms of world-of-work knowledge or knowledge of community outreach.

Many printed and web-based information sources include sections to guide the learner through steps from self-assessment to making decisions and action plans, as well as guides for job interviews and CV-writing. Also, biographies and autobiographies of people's unfolding work and study journeys support a narrative approach.

In addition, the private sector is a dynamic realm of outreach services and small and big initiatives, most of which are not developmental, careers fairs being a prime example.

#### **2.3.4 Suggestions for improving support**

The most common suggestion for improving support was by increasing school-based resources. This suggestion was in the context of a lifelong learning frame: school is a site for reaching people in the largest numbers. Training Life Orientation teachers was considered one of the most significant ways to improve support, although it was acknowledged that they have very limited time to apply this knowledge.

There is an evolving infrastructure for delivery of support through Life Orientation teaching, expansion of Careers Guidance into DoL workplace programmes such as learnerships and volunteer programmes, workplace-based career and skills development initiatives, and a potential infrastructure for service delivery through Umsobomvu offices and DoL offices.

### **2.3.5 Gaps and challenges in policy and leadership**

Careers Guidance is not a national policy priority despite the fact that it threads through many kinds of initiative, especially those related to scarce skills. This marginality means that resources for Careers Guidance have been relatively paltry.

There is no coordinated or strategic leadership. Careers Guidance occurs as a largely dispersed, devolved, ad hoc set of activities with little funding and no comprehensive source of information.

Given the national gap, a small organisation like PACE is providing leadership to the field and a common platform to integrate disparate sources by coordinating its resources with key delivery infrastructure in government departments and the private sector.

### **2.3.6 Suggestions for addressing challenges in policy and leadership development**

There was general agreement that national strategic leadership is needed to ensure a coherent, coordinated and comprehensive policy and approach. Developing a policy discourse that articulates the relevance of Careers Guidance to achieving national priorities could result in government policy and funding to this under-resourced field. Equally important is leadership to ensure the most effective and efficient ways to target available funding.

Most people identified lack of coordination between the Ministries of Education and Labour as the single most significant obstacle to the development of leadership in the field and of a coherent guidance and information system. One person framed this divide as the need for both DoL and DoE to develop a discourse and own the problem of linking skills needed with the development of skills.

Some suggested that a starting point might be a national stakeholders' conference to begin to address the need for national leadership in the field. Some felt a think tank of academics with links to international innovations in Careers Guidance could help provide a better model for South Africa. And others proposed that a concrete project such as a helpline could be both an end in itself and a useful entry point to jumpstart leadership and policy development in the field.

## **2.4. A sector review**

### **2.4.1 Department of Education**

Before 1994, full-time trained guidance teachers operated in all of the ex-Model C schools and in the other schools guidance teachers were being introduced. In the late 1990s, due to budgetary constraints, the role of guidance teacher was abandoned and virtually no guidance was offered in schools. With the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy of 2002, Careers Guidance-related outcomes are in the Life Orientation curriculum from Grade R to Grade 12. The World of Work learning outcome begins in Grade 4 and is a compulsory Learning Area until the end of Grade 9. It continues as a subject in Grades 10-12, with Life Orientation classified as one of four fundamental (mandatory) subjects along with maths and two languages. In these grades (10-12) Life Orientation consists of four focus areas, one of which is Careers and Career Choices. Students carry a Life Orientation portfolio from year to year, and, once the DoL's ESSA database system is fully realised, these portfolios will be in the DoL database and continually updated: a concrete artefact of career development in a

lifelong learning frame and a practical source of information enabling careers counsellors to offer better assistance.

While the Careers Guidance curriculum within the Life Orientation curriculum is impressive in its scope, one of the chief limitations to effective Careers Guidance in schools is that only two hours a week are allocated to Life Orientation, and Careers Guidance is only one-fourth of the subject in Grades 10-12. This means an average of half an hour a week for Careers Guidance, assuming other needs don't reduce this time. For example, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2005) reports that an estimated 10% of 15-24-year-olds are HIV-positive. By 22 years old, one out of four women is HIV-positive. Figures like these are a reminder of some of the issues that might understandably crowd out Careers Guidance in a packed Life Orientation curriculum.

Given the breadth of Life Orientation, those who teach it often have other teaching subjects such as a physical education, and have no background in Careers Guidance. However, in-service training is adding to Life Orientation teachers' competence. For example, every Life Orientation teacher in the Western Cape has had accredited training through PACE, and training is ongoing to address staff turnover. Other provinces are also inviting PACE to provide modules in Careers Guidance delivery. The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) advocates that Life Orientation should be a module in teacher training courses.

Other support to Life Orientation teachers in the Western Cape Education Department (WECD) includes accredited training in Careers Guidance and careers events such as a career day breakfast at schools, a career-for-a-day event where young professionals explain how they achieved their current positions, and a 'take a girl child to work' day. This year 300 students will be on a job-shadowing programme at the Department of Health. Focus schools are used for career events that other schools attend. A Global Citizen Project through the HP Pygmalion Project provides laptops to Life Orientation teachers, linking them to schools and resources for lesson planning all over the world.

DoE purchases printed careers resources for its schools, but generally hundreds of students share one manual. Schools nominally have at least one computer but in reality, in many schools, it is generally not accessible to students and often not available to teachers either.

Life Orientation workbooks have been developed by DoE for all grades, along with classroom materials developed by various private sector groups for Life Orientation classroom activities. For example, in the Western Cape Woolworths produced a module on nutrition, and SA Breweries on an aspect of the world of work. DoE workbooks integrate all aspects of the Life Orientation curriculum – for example, decision-making about careers and personal choices, and planning.

Often Life Orientation teachers are inundated with outside offers of help. Many private Careers Guidance groups approach DoE with offers of materials, packages, outside events, and requests to address the students. Tertiary colleges and universities also approach the schools for opportunities to talk to students or offer open days at their institutions. The WCED Life Orientation office allots much time to gatekeeping these requests and ensuring only quality and complementary services have access to the schools.

### **2.4.2 Tertiary Institutions**

Most higher education institutions offer good careers counselling services; many have a high number of contacts in industry and offer effective graduate placement services (Du Toit 2005). Recent research into graduate unemployment identified graduates who are African and from non-traditional universities as being the most likely to be unemployed among graduate cohorts. It's not certain whether careers services at tertiary institutions particularly target this group (Bhorat 2008).

Many universities offer open days for high school students to give them a taste of university life. Psychometric testing services are available to students for free and for outsiders, including high school students, usually at a fee. Almost all institutions have computer terminals with career programmes such as My Mentor or the PACE programme.

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) produced a careers guide for high school students contemplating going on to further study. The guide provides a step-by-step Careers Guidance process for the learner to use independently.

SAACDHE provides leadership to student counselling services at public higher education institutions in Southern Africa. SAACDHE's comprehensive services include developing and monitoring the delivery of Careers Guidance services at tertiary institutions through policy guidelines, a quality assurance programme, training and networking and conferences and regional programmes.

In contrast to other learners, students at tertiary institutions have the best chance of accessing navigational tools to help them in their career journey. Traditional models of Careers Guidance are best suited to the options tertiary study provides, most counselling centres are relatively well-resourced, most staff are adequately trained and the graduate placement programmes are fairly successful. According to PACE, 16 of the 21 universities use Pace resources.

### **2.4.3 Department of Labour**

The Careers Guidance landscape prior to the end of apartheid consisted of whites-only Careers Guidance services and the network of NGO Careers Guidance centres that, small as they were, were the only source of information, counselling, workshops, and work experience for all. For example, the Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC), the first one founded in 1977, researched and produced the first, and for many years the only, source of accessible information on work and study for all. Education departments had to subscribe to CRIC's information just to get lists of teacher training and nursing colleges so that high school students could know where to apply for training.

The National Skills Development Strategy and the Skills Development Act of 1998 served to align DoL in terms of skills development and employability. The 120 or so offices around the country stopped providing Careers Guidance and became Employment and Skills Development Services (ESDS). More recently, ESDS offices have found that many work-seekers have little or no understanding of the nature of work or capacity to navigate options. Initiatives are under way to integrate a Careers Guidance dimension into the services. For example, as a pilot venture, DoL formed a roving team of 36 staff, trained by PACE, who participated in an initial roll-out of Careers Guidance at two pilot sites, one urban and one rural.

Labour Centres also participate in career exhibitions and the DoL has printed 10 pamphlets on career guidance, job-matching and ESSA. In the Eastern Cape, for example, under JIPSA's coordination, DoL is partnering with DoE, youth groups and others to develop a Careers Guidance strategy for the province.

Under (ESSA, the DoL provides a six-fold service in which Careers Guidance has an important role. The Registration Services is a database of registered individuals, employers, opportunities and training providers that includes individual skill profiles recorded according to the OFO. The OFO is a career-pathing framework with a central focus on scarce and critical skills. It organises career information by industry and will be integrated with PACE's data system. The second part of the service is Careers Information and Guidance Services, which include providing career, labour market and scarce and critical skills information and guidance on accessing placement opportunities. Thirdly, Information Services are to produce information for careers fairs and advocacy on accessing employment and skills development services. Careers Guidance is seen as an essential component of skills development that ultimately leads to placement within DoL's model of employment services.

DoL's ten-year contract with Siemens to improve and integrate DoL's service and make it customer-led has had an integrated Careers Guidance thread. ESSA is one example, but is only part of a much broader plan for a multi-channel service delivery system covering cradle-to-grave DoL services accessible at any time from any location and through multiple service delivery channels. Delivery channels include cellphone, other satellite communications, information kiosks (for those without Internet access), Internet access points, walk-in centres, customer call centres (with first-line agents and second-tier professionals), and referral systems between call centres, telephone and cellphones, websites and face-to-face services. The system will also be linked to the government's Gateway provision. If a Careers Guidance helpline were to be set up, it would ideally interface where relevant with these services.

In Careers Guidance terms this presents the potential capacity for technological infrastructure for Careers Guidance delivery within a lifelong learning framework. For example, the learners' Careers Guidance portfolio from their school Life Orientation work will be in the system and whenever a learner, worker or workseeker approaches DoL for help navigating work, study and career routes, this portfolio is available and a developmental Careers Guidance process is thereby potentially furthered. Confidentiality and privacy concerns are the flipside of this plan and, while DoL gives assurance that only appropriate DoL staff have access, this may not be enough to assure citizens that the information will not be used as a tool for other agendas. This is a broader concern as technology revolutionises Careers Guidance services across South Africa and in many other countries. Personal information and privacy safeguards need to feature in the Careers Guidance field in general.

DoL is also including a Careers Guidance dimension into a system to identify suitable candidates for the Expanded Public Works Programme. The Netherlands routing model will be used to match suitable clients to opportunities by routing clients to training courses that lead to employment, based on their particular capacities, and will include Careers Guidance as part of the system. Other DoL provisions such as learnerships and skills training courses also provide 'work tasters' and can be linked to career

development initiatives. The Embassy of the Netherlands has supported DoL in integrating Careers Guidance within learnerships.

#### **2.4.4 SETAs**

The National Skills Development Strategy includes the mandate that SETAs make Careers Guidance available. DoL, attempting to ensure that careers information is available to all sectors of the economy, has built into the contract with all 23 SETAs that they each produce a careers guide for their industries. Each SETA interprets this differently. Most SETAs are short-staffed and have little or no access to students to understand information needs from the students' perspective. However, they have produced 23 careers guides, each on a particular segment of the economy. Some of these guides include a career decision-making and planning process with tips for job interviews, etc, and an attempt to be graphically appealing and accessible, while others merely provide basic information about jobs in a dull format. The Insurance SETA has also produced teacher manuals. The Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority careers guide is often described as the best that the SETAs have produced.

#### **2.4.5 Cross-sectoral bodies**

Many interviewed felt there was no leadership or strategic coordination in the field and that there needed to be. When asked who should do this, most said it should be government-funded and a cross-sectoral initiative. It was stressed that this is a function that various stakeholders should come together to fulfil – JIPSA and SAQA were most often mentioned as the kind of cross-sectoral entities that might initiate this. JIPSA's goal is to address priority skills acquisition in an integrated manner by coordinating all organisations addressing the skills shortage. ASGISA and JIPSA are national agendas and not government programmes, and this model was felt to be the way forward for leadership in the Careers Guidance field.

Many felt that SAQA, being a cross-sectoral organisation, a member of the National Skills Authority (NSA) and cutting across DoE, DoL, Further Education and Training (FET) and the SETAs, should play a coordinating function in bringing stakeholders together. A major obstacle to coordination in the Careers Guidance field identified by almost everyone I spoke to was the disjuncture between DoL and DoE. It was felt that SAQA could therefore play a special role in bringing together these two major stakeholders in Careers Guidance.

#### **2.4.6 The private sector**

##### *Educational Psychologists*

The three main sources of some level of Careers Guidance in the private sector are: educational psychologists, guidance services via employment-based training, and Careers Guidance/training organisations such as the National Training Directory and PACE.

Educational psychologists in private practice typically provide psychometric testing and tend to charge anything from R600 to R4 000. Reports are that the demand for these services is increasing dramatically, perhaps due to the attention given in the media to careers expos. Anecdotal accounts abound of educational psychologists' lack of information or knowledge about the world of work, and therefore the limitations on and, at times, distortions in the kind of advice they give. Their popularity, despite the expense, is a testament to the demand. One educational psychologist is so concerned with what

he regards as the completely inadequate knowledge of the world of work among these professionals that he has raised this situation in terms of unethical practice with his professional association. One young woman reported that although she was a top achiever in higher-grade maths and science and was interested in maths-related careers, the educational psychologist who gave her the battery of tests only recommended a career in commerce and never mentioned engineering or maths-related careers or study options.

Companies emphasise 'employability' as a goal of the Careers Guidance services that they fund. For example, a Nokia/Lion's Club/USAID partnership has developed the Alliance for African Youth Employment to develop 'employability' for 14-24-year-olds in urbanising areas and to help them find employment. The National Business Initiative and Cisco Systems have a partnership with the DoE to develop skills to link school learning with work on the assumption that schools are not developing 'employable' skills among youth.

#### *Employment-based training*

A SAQA requirement for all accredited corporate training programmes is the inclusion of guidance and counselling, and trainers must have completed unit standards on guidance and counselling as part of their accreditation requirements. To the extent that this is done effectively, it represents part of an infrastructure for lifelong Careers Guidance. One person from the Chamber of Mines said that, in many cases, companies have found that providing workshops for adults to think through their life and work goals before signing up for literacy classes, improves their success levels in literacy courses by 60% to 70%.

#### *Careers Services*

The corporate sector is funding a plethora of initiatives, most often in the form of some version of the careers fair. They also support Careers Guidance websites by buying advertising. In both cases recruitment agendas figure fairly centrally. Careers fairs provide a link between individuals and the world of work and study, but need to be incorporated into a developmental Careers Guidance programme to have much impact. Often they are not. Also, organisers are often events managers and seldom have a Careers Guidance background to draw on in the planning of the events. Similarly, private-sector websites are often not developed by those with a background in Careers Guidance; companies are highly partial in what they present, with a clear agenda of drawing recruits to their field.

Paper resources are for sale in the market, such as the *Career Handbook* (PACE), *A-Z of Careers* (Penguin), bursary guides, job-hunting guides and contact information guides.

#### *PACE Careers Centre*

Because PACE Careers Centre is such a pivotal Careers Guidance organisation it is described here. For 16 years PACE has specialised in setting up career guidance infrastructures for institutions such as schools, libraries, higher education institutions, FET colleges and other youth advisory services; priority projects are accredited training of career guidance practitioners and resourcing of career guidance facilities. Their clients

include the DoE, the Department of Defence, the Department of Public Works, universities (locally and internationally), FET Colleges, and some 3 500 schools. PACE training and resources are said to be the most widely used in South Africa, and are also used in Malawi, Botswana, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. PACE resources have been accredited by the Education, Training and Development Practices and Services SETAs, the National Curriculum Committee of the Department of Education and the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

Over the past years PACE has been working to establish a common national career guidance platform based on benchmarked standards, that allows individuals access to free career guidance and counselling. A common platform will allow individuals to access a familiar career guidance system whether they are at a school, college, university, or in a labour centre. To achieve this, PACE has trained accredited guidance practitioners nationally who can offer a standardised career guidance methodology to clients. PACE is the founding member of the South African Career Guidance Association, which looks at coordinating and standardising career guidance activities in the SADC region. PACE is also the representative for the International Association for Vocational and Educational Guidance within the SADC region.

At this stage PACE training and resources are the only ones accredited by these third parties, and are therefore widely used.

Although a small organisation, PACE provides a national strategic leadership role in the following ways:

- It is a major provider of resources for others.
- It provides capacity building for sector agencies such as DoE and more recently DoL and is developing staffing capacity of the field by training careers practitioners.
- It has sought to develop a common platform and common language in the field by creating an articulation between the various career information systems and a self-assessment tool.
- It is seeking to further best practice models through conferences, etc.

#### **2.4.7 Non-profit organisations**

Churches, community organisations such as Itec in Port Elizabeth, and DoE resource centres expanded with private funding, provide outreach services to 'hard-to-reach' learners and have a wealth of experience in developing navigational tools as a response to specific needs. Their experience is essential if a Careers Guidance system is to be posited on learner's needs.

Of the network of Careers Guidance NGOs of the 1970s to 1990s, a few smaller career centres that started as youth projects and were mentored by the Careers Information Centre (CIC) in Durban are reported to have remained (although this information has not been updated for this study): the Durban South Career Centre, the Richards Bay centre that has become part of Richards Bay Aluminium, one in Eshowe that joined the Eshowe Teachers' Training College, and the Wentworth Careers Centre.

Anecdotal experience suggests that support to youth in finding information and study opportunities and in helping them make transitions is often a component of the many youth outreach organisations and churches. Reasons given are that the needs and the lack of alternative support are so obvious.

#### **2.4.8 Web-based services**

Advances in technology have resulted in a range of good careers sites with job descriptions that link to study options, bursaries and institutions. Many have a decision-making process that begins with a self-assessment questionnaire that directs the user to related options. Generally there are also options for developing a résumé, tips for job interviews and some link to international study opportunities. Some feature life stories on how various people's paths unfolded. Just launched, Career Planet brings its website to people by taking computer kiosks to malls. PACE offers [www.gostudy.co.za](http://www.gostudy.co.za) and [www.pacecareers.com/careercentre](http://www.pacecareers.com/careercentre).

The HIP2B<sup>2</sup> website 'cool careers' section includes a forum discussion on careers. Clicking on 'Get Typing' may land you in a conversation kicked off with six paragraphs encouraging people to weigh their options and consider their hobbies. It gives a short story about Jill the Engineer and Jack the Artist, contributed by a high school student member who seems to host the conversation. In response a member says: "Some careers may not seem interesting, but many people prefer to do the same jobs like their parents. To keep the business going or in the family."

Another from Durban adds: "I think fields in engineering are quite interesting. I have always been fascinated by electronics hence I would like to study electronic engineering." The response is: "What that all about, I heard of mechanical and civil engineering but never of electrical engineering!"

The host responds: "Electronic engineering deals with electronics and the working of circuits such as cellphones etc. It has a broad spectrum as you can go into telecommunication, computers, and a host of other option – Dude ...Its AI Gud!"

A 'New Member' exclaims: "One of my possible career options is politics ... long story!! but other people say that it would be better to get a stable position in a business. how do u decide what to study at uni????? its soooo hard!!"

A conversation ensues about people studying IT and the host member says: "A lot of people are taking IT in SA, the future looks bright for telecommunications," and clement99 says: "I am also doing IT. Does my future also look bright?"

The site links to a Facebook group and video diaries of students such as Senaly Singh, who has maths trophies, has published poetry, says how much maths is part of everyday life and that she loves maths.

These examples remind us of the potential of technology, expansion of outreach and interactivity to provide navigational tools including peer relationships and the obvious issue of the cultural, value and gender dimensions of a web-based service.

#### **2.4.9 Trade unions and media**

The view of key informants in the Careers Guidance field is that the trade unions have not yet approached the subject. However, this needs to be explored further. SADTU is

advocating for Life Orientation training to be included in teacher training curricula. In some European countries including the UK, trade unions are playing a significant role in advocating for Careers Guidance services.

SABC addresses Careers Guidance themes in a number of ways, one through raising issues in the soap, *Gaz’Lam*, and in programmes such the one on SABC2 by HIP2B<sup>2</sup> on careers in the fields of science, physics, maths, biology and entrepreneurial ventures. SABC also is a major funder of Career Expos around the country. Various newspapers provide regular careers supplements.

## **2.5 Reflections, summary and conclusion**

### **2.5.1 Reflections: access, equity, redress and support**

Careers and gender issues are so intertwined that it was surprising no-one raised this in the interviews. It should be a best-practice criterion and a dimension of quality assurance. One guidance teacher claimed there was "no sexism in my school" and went on to tell me that science careers were not of interest to girls. (Thankfully he realised the contradiction and suggested that gender awareness be introduced in his school). The Hip2B<sup>2</sup> website features women entrepreneurs in history and then adds: "Every night I am sure Mom is glad the dishwasher was invented". Careers, study paths and jobs have been and are major sites of contestation around gender equity and gender audits and criteria must be an explicit dimension of all Careers Guidance services. If they are not, the legacy of gender stereotyping will be transmitted through Careers Guidance services. Studies and services should be gender-disaggregated to ensure specific learner needs are understood and addressed. In other African countries there are proactive gender and Careers Guidance projects: for example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organisation recently funded a multi-country team to develop a curriculum on Careers Guidance specifically for girls. Linking girls' education, AIDS awareness and Careers Guidance seems an obvious and effective strategy. It is also strategic in terms of hooking into international funding agendas in which youth, AIDS and girls' education feature prominently.

While we need to build on what is working and on relatively good-quality careers information and guidance, in policy terms we should bear in mind how the current provision further advantages those at the higher end of the economic scale, the disparity between the top and bottom end of the household income ladder being 1 to 94 (Stats SA 2007). Currently available navigational tools are most effective as complementary services to a well-resourced education system that serves people socialised into formal work and study cultures before encountering the information. This is generally not the context for the almost 80% of people who are not eligible for further study after school.

A radical rethink of Careers Guidance in a developing country such as South Africa must accompany expansion of services. A review of the models and legacy from the Careers Guidance outreach NGOs of the 1980s and 1990s would be fruitful in this rethink. Added to the policy values of access, flexibility, portability, and redress must be support. Support, in the form of Careers Guidance, is a missing ingredient in initiatives to address access.

### **2.5.2. Summary**

There have been significant gains in the field of Careers Guidance over the past six years. The array of career guidance initiatives includes: good information websites and

printed material; a nascent use of multi-channel services; careers programmes on TV and careers material in newspapers; Careers Guidance as a formal part of the school curriculum; strands of Careers Guidance running through many DoL programmes; and community organisations and churches valiantly trying to fill the navigational tools gap. Working adults are more likely today than ever before to receive guidance at work related to training and succession planning. The plethora and popularity of careers expos, many partnering with the media, are one testament to an increasing recognition that something has to be done. There is a technological and human resource infrastructure that represents a potential for reaching more learners with navigational tools, and there is a policy environment within which Careers Guidance is beginning to come out from the shadows. More and more individuals within and outside professional and academic Careers Guidance are passionate about providing navigational tools to meet the needs of learners where they are to make work and study transitions.

However, the vast majority of learners do not receive adequate, or any, careers information and guidance. The frontline community organisations are hopelessly underfunded, Life Orientation teachers are mostly overwhelmed and there is no comprehensive and independent careers information that is accessible to all. The information 'thundershower' provision is largely of a quality that does not start where the vast majority of learners are.

Web-based services have the potential for being more developmental as users can create portfolios and return and build on their research and combine a range of services. A few organisations are starting to use cellphone technology. These multi-media developments are revolutionising access, although language, style and culture need to be addressed as access issues. They also raise ethical issues of privacy and confidentiality. However, these changes do not address the fundamental challenges of the past: quality, comprehensiveness, coherence and the strategic leadership required to ensure national provision for all. A few small initiatives such as PACE are taking on the role of leadership in the field in the absence of a national coordinated effort.

### **2.5.3. Conclusion**

In spite of the differences between developing and so-called developed country realities, the problem of providing Careers Guidance that is both affordable and reaches the hard-to-reach is shared. A solution being developed in a few other countries is a mixed service that optimises the potential of technology and combines a call centre, e-mail, a website with blogs and a face-to-face service, with personnel at different career bands providing the various services. The central recommendation of this paper is to establish a cellphone/telephone careers information and advice helpline that will reach a far wider range of learners than ever before and buttress and enhance the many valiant initiatives already underway. SAQA is probably the best-positioned organisation to take the lead in this initiative.



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