



Julie Hamill Memorial Lecture 2006

**The future of educational and career guidance:
where next?**

**Presented by
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Guidance Studies
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Introduction

I'd like to begin by reflecting on the main reason for being here this evening, that is to celebrate and remind ourselves of the special contribution Julie Hamill made to educational and career guidance in Northern Ireland. We've heard about her achievements, characterised by her commitment to inspiring individuals from all walks of life to truly develop their talents and skills, and her energetic approach to learning, life and work. I'm truly honoured to present this evening's lecture in memory of a remarkable woman. I'm also honoured to be able to talk to you tonight given that although I left these shores 25 years ago, and my professional life has been based in England, I am at heart a Coleraine girl. My life and work experiences have been greatly influenced by people (like Julie) who have encouraged, inspired and supported me to realise and maximise my potential. I'm grateful to EGSA for providing me with this opportunity, especially since I am aware that the contribution they have made throughout the province is highly valued.

This evening I plan to build on the key issues highlighted in last year's Memorial Lecture, delivered by Catherine Bell, Deputy Secretary from the Department for Employment and Learning. My intention is to explore some key themes and to link these to current policy development at a national and international level in order to identify future possibilities for educational and career guidance work in Northern Ireland. My aim is to stimulate discussion and to contribute to a wider debate on this topic. In my remarks here I bring a research, policy and practice perspective that takes into account global and national trends which will have a significant impact on the social and economic prosperity of all UK citizens. From this, I want to then look briefly at related issues and developments in Northern Ireland. I then go on to explore some of the reasons why we seem to have failed to impress upon government and key policy-makers the inextricable inter-connectivity between educational guidance, careers work, personal financial management, employment flexibility and social responsibility. My proposition is that we need to assess and understand more fully changes in patterns of learning, work and lifestyles in order to develop innovative strategies that will make a positive impact on individuals' abilities to manage their learning and work experiences in the face of constant change. I'd

like to share with you a common framework (Blueprint) currently being piloted separately by the Canadian and Australian governments and invite you to reflect on its potential relevance to Northern Ireland. I present this as a 'case study' that endeavours to (i) create a national shared vision for raising the motivation, skills and attainment levels of all citizens, (ii) develop some common language that can be applied within and outside of educational and career guidance communities so that members of the public can understand more fully what actually is on offer; (iii) generate evidence on impact and benefits of educational and career development services; and (iv) inspire individuals, including employers, to better manage their lives, learning and work. I hope my reflections on 'where next' will find resonance with the reality of the challenges that many of you are seeking to address in your differing work settings.

Building on experience

Last year, Catherine Bell highlighted a series of key challenges that needed to be addressed in order to help release the talent and potential of people in Northern Ireland. She focused on the need to convince those "disconnected from learning", primarily individuals from poorer-socio economic groups, that "there is something in it for them and galvanise this talent for the right reason in order to help access learning and skills to use and develop their talent". She indicated that "the more learning, the more skills, the better the opportunities in terms of earnings, career, health and well-being". She also indicated that "the next generation of jobs in Northern Ireland will depend on skilled, flexible, creative and innovative employees". I would like to build on this by sharing with you some national and international trends that help confirm the reality of changes taking place throughout our society and how this is likely to impact on individuals' social and economic prosperity now and in the coming years. I am going to push the boundaries further by suggesting that all individuals, regardless of their social or economic circumstances, need to find ways of connecting with learning opportunities (both formal and informal) in order to prosper and achieve their true potential.

Let's begin by reflecting briefly on the common goals of educational guidance and careers work in Northern Ireland. There are at least three common elements: (i) supporting informed choices about both learning and work (paid or unpaid); (ii)

helping individuals manage their decisions more effectively; and (iii) inspiring people to develop knowledge and skills to manage transitions throughout their lives i.e. instilling confidence and sustained resilience in the face of constant change. It is also worth noting that a wide range of services, arising from initiatives and provision led by civil servants, universities, colleges, schools, voluntary / community organisations, as well as private-sector consultants, operate within this diverse planning and delivery arena. I shall return to this later when we consider future possibilities for educational guidance and careers work in Northern Ireland.

International and national trends

*Recently, Mark Savikas (2006)¹, a leading US expert in counselling and careers work, described the work of Frank Parsons, founder of career guidance in the early 1900s, as leading-edge within the context of the **industrial revolution**. When we reflect on this period of major social and economic change, clearly individuals' lives were transformed dramatically by their having access to new learning and work opportunities. Savikas invites us to compare the social significance of the industrial revolution to the new 21st century **digital revolution** whereby people are becoming conscious of the need to achieve balance in their lives, mainly brought about by the fast accelerating explosion of information technology impacting on work and family settings. If we accept this as a viable proposition, then it immediately follows that the time has come for some serious reflection on the coherence and efficacy of guidance services for all young people and adults. All individuals have to navigate their way through an increasingly complex and fast changing world of opportunities and challenges.*

*Recently, I was invited to prepare a UK Country report, '**Shaping the future: connecting career development and workforce development**', on behalf of government policy-makers to feed into an International Symposium held in Australia. This was attended by policy-makers and leading experts from 22 countries and 6 international organisations.*

¹ Mark Savickas is Professor and Chair in the Behavioural Sciences Department at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine in the USA. He has published 100 journal articles and book chapters as well as presented over 500 workshops on vocational behaviour and career counselling, most recently concentrating on the theory and practice of career construction. This reference was taken from his presentation at the Australian Association Careers Conference, Sydney, Australia -18th April 2006

Our work involved an in-depth review of the links between career guidance, social and economic development. The overall aim was to help advance the economic, social and cultural objectives of the nations represented. We examined public policy issues raised by reviews of career guidance services conducted by the OECD (2004), the European Commission (Sultana, 2004) and the World Bank (Watts & Fretwell, 2004), with particular attention given to the ways that career services contribute to effective workforce development systems. Let's also add 'educational guidance' into this scenario given the commonality in shared goals. The main findings highlighted that the scale of the current difficulties in meeting skill and labour requirements is large. Throughout the world, governments and employers are trying to develop, attract, utilise and retain skilled, innovative and self-directed workers. This has led to an examination of the impact of a broad range of policies: education and training; social welfare; industry; human resource management; industrial relations; retirement; pensions; immigration; and labour mobility. Within this, careers work was viewed as being critical to workforce development, in three respects:-

(i) Workforce preparation - supporting the career development of young people prior to entering the labour market.

(ii) Workforce adaptability and sustainability - supporting the career development of employed workers.

(iii) Workforce re-integration - supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and between jobs in different enterprises.

Leading experts from the OECD² highlight global demographic factors and key influences that are transforming the composition of the current and future workforce. For example, the size of the labour force will grow little or even fall in some G7 countries³; the economic imperative is now to skill, up-skill and re-skill the adult population; the basic competencies must be in place for newcomers joining the labour market; and the need to make all skills visible through a qualification system

² Werquin, P. & Tagoma, M. (2006) Directorate of Education, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris

³ G7 consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Together, those countries represent 66.5% of the world economy (source: www.undp.org). In 1991, following the end of the Cold War, the USSR (now Russia) began meeting with the G7 after the main summit.

that recognises informal and formal learning, particularly for those Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET), women, older workers and immigrants.

This illustrates clearly the need for new ideas on how best to address future skill shortages, personal and financial management, basic competencies and cultural diversity issues. All of these are likely to exert new demands on individuals to work longer than previously expected and to take more responsibility for managing their own long-term social and economic well-being. A main conclusion reached was that careers guidance (and I would include educational guidance within this) should be a key element of workforce development policies, as well as a key element of lifelong learning policies. Both have a role to play in active employment policies, in social equity policies, and in social inclusion policies. It is in this sense that Watts (1999) suggests that educational and career guidance are both a private good and a public good.

Hirsh (2006) recently argued that “the social and economic purposes of career development are inter-dependent. For example, social inclusion improves equity and quality of life for individuals but also gets people ‘off benefit’ and improves their mental and physical health.” These benefits are economic as well as social.⁴ At present, the current government’s approach to distinguishing those who should have access to free services in terms of their qualification levels (mostly targeted at low qualification levels) has resulted in limited access for other equally ‘needy’ groups such as new graduates, who increasingly require sustained support in moving from short-term jobs often designed to clear student debts to longer-term and more appropriate employment. This need is likely to be more pressing as the average debt of new UK graduates, which currently stands at £11k,⁵ is set to rise with increased tuition fees. This example illustrates that for these individuals personal and financial management, career exploration and employment flexibility are all inextricably linked. These are typical features that apply across the spectrum of today’s society.

At this point, I’d like to highlight a few current trends within the socio-economic context, two which specifically relate to Northern Ireland and one other that has

⁴ Refer to: Hughes, D. (2004a) *Investing in career: prosperity for citizens, windfalls for Government: Winchester: The Guidance Council.*

⁵ BBC Breakfast News 15/5/06.

broader national and international relevance. My first example is linked to the concept of 'brain drain'. Drawing on research findings from Elias & Purcell's study of NI graduates (2005),⁶ around 15% of those graduating from NI Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 1999 left the province immediately upon graduation. This research highlighted that graduates who possessed less than 10 A-level points and those with over 30 were more likely to be working outside the province, as were those graduates attaining either first class or third class degrees. Using Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, Elias & Purcell report that of the 2,020 NI-domiciled graduates who gained their degree via full-time study at UK institutions outside NI in 2003/04, 36% returned to the province six months following graduation, 55% remained elsewhere in the UK and 4% migrated to Southern Ireland. In March 2005, Sir Richard Nichols, Chancellor of the University of Ulster,⁷ said that many students leaving the province to study never return, and that Northern Ireland was 'haemorrhaging' thousands of talented graduates each year. It is perhaps unsurprising, in light of these concerns, that campaigns aimed at retaining graduate talent have been prominent. Other countries such as New Zealand and Australia have similar concerns. We all know of the excellent work undertaken in Queens University and the University of Ulster but we need to ask ourselves whether policy-makers have given sufficient attention to developing strategies to inform and develop graduate 'career resilience' after they have completed their studies.

My second example specifically relates to the rising wealth, falling unemployment⁸ and changing migration patterns unfolding throughout Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK. Findings from the Institute for Conflict Research (2005)⁹ indicate that migration patterns in the province have changed considerably over recent years. The currently available evidence suggests that the patterns of migration are distinctive in relation to the UK as a whole, with larger numbers of Eastern European migrants moving to Northern Ireland and a larger than expected number of migrants

⁶ <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/class99/>

⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/4376601.stm

⁸ Over the past decade, Northern Ireland has outstripped all other areas in the UK; job opportunities grew by 30% in the period 1990 -2005 while UK growth for the same period averaged out at 9%

⁹ http://www.community-relations.org.uk/consultation_uploads/Migrant_Workers_Update_October_2005.pdf

in the manufacturing, food processing and construction sectors. This is not simply an increase in scale of the previous patterns, but rather represents new trends, with migrants coming from Eastern Europe rather than Eastern Asia, from non-Commonwealth countries and from countries that do not necessarily have widespread use of the English language. Each of these factors add new dynamics to the patterns of demography, service use and social diversity in Northern Ireland. We need to consider whether policy and practice is sufficiently joined-up to ensure that basic competencies are in place for all individuals who have the potential to achieve and contribute to Northern Ireland's current and future economy.

As my final example, let's consider key findings related to the concept of 'Generation Y': a new breed of consumer emerging in today's society. Col Mc Cowan, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, suggests that, over the last decade, individuals have witnessed significant technological advances and economic growth. This has resulted in many young people (i) owning electronic gadgets e.g. mobile phones; (ii) adopting technology as the main conduit for everyday communication e.g. the internet; (iii) parents and grandparents often seen as 'money trees' e.g. a constant source of finance; (iv) self-image paramount e.g. dedicated followers of fashion; and (v) their perception of an opportunity for self-gain as an 'entitlement' or a 'right' as opposed to something which must be earned e.g. rewards and material goods . Simultaneously, many adults want a better quality of life, learning and work for themselves as well as their children. As a result of these dual agendas, families can find themselves in conflict with mismatched expectations. This, therefore, necessitates a major rethink of guidance and support services designed to meet the aspirations and needs of both young people and adults. In Australia, the government has invested in creating a Blueprint framework to inform the design of services which takes into account the perceptions and expectations of the new 'Generation Y' consumer group and the needs of adults. This was an adaptation of the Canadian Blueprint developed by the National Life/Work Centre. In contrast, within guidance services in the UK, the emphasis on assisting individuals to better manage their lives, learning and work has been downplayed compared with our Australian counterparts.

Here in the UK, guidance professionals have failed to impress upon government and key policy-makers the inextricable inter-connectivity between education guidance,

careers work, personal and financial management, employment flexibility and social responsibility. This is evident in government policies for skills and workforce development which tend to be targeted mainly at the unemployed (or under-employed) or disadvantaged groups. The main reasons for this can be summarised as follows:

- lack of sufficient evidence to demonstrate the impact of certain educational and guidance interventions;*
- lack of common agreement between differing bodies from within the guidance community with regard to finding a common approach for educational guidance and careers work;*
- insufficient standardisation of terminology which often sends out confused messages; and*
- poor links established between government social and economic objectives and how educational guidance and careers work can help unlock individuals' potential.*

For 11-19 year olds in England, major weaknesses have been identified in career education and guidance in schools and colleges, highlighted in the government's 'End to End Review of CEG' (2005)¹⁰, which emphasised the need for a universal service for all young people, not simply those disaffected or disengaged from learning. In Northern Ireland the situation is not entirely dissimilar; however, CCEA's¹¹ proposals for the introduction of a revised curriculum (to be introduced from September 2007) represents positive progress in this regard. The new curriculum aims 'to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives'. This will involve a more holistic approach to teaching and learning, with a greater emphasis on the development and application of skills rather than on prescribing subject content, and the teaching of Learning for Life and Work at Key Stages 3 and 4.¹² A new

¹⁰ Department for Education and Skills, (2005), *Report of the End to End review of Careers Education and Guidance*, DfES, London

¹¹ <http://www.ccea.org.uk/>

¹² Department of Education (2005). *Entitlement Framework – Initial Guidance*. Circular 2005/18. Belfast: DE.

Entitlement Framework¹³ will be in place from September 2009 onwards. In addition, the Careers Service has recently undergone major reorganisation. For the first time, it has a corporate identity, a dedicated management structure, and responsibility for its own policy and strategic direction.¹⁴ As part of this, it has increased the professional staff it can commit to work in schools and colleges. It has introduced a model of differentiated service delivery and is gathering evidence on the impact of its work with young people and adults. Instead of a 'one size fits all' approach, it now seeks to provide a wider range of interventions, adapted to the timing and nature of individual pupils' needs. These developments, alongside the work of EGSA, the Sector Skills Council and other key agencies, should help individuals to develop competencies to better manage their lives, learning and work. This presents an exciting opportunity for Northern Ireland to be part of the leading-edge of good practice on a world-wide basis. Most importantly, there is significant potential to inspire and empower individuals throughout Northern Ireland to maximise their talents.

Future shape and characteristics of effective guidance services

The term 'guidance' has yet to be fully understood by the general public, including policy-makers, which creates a major problem for those seeking to develop such services. The shape and characteristics of guidance provision can appear fragmented and broadly incoherent to outsiders. Therefore, a new and dynamic vision has to be articulated in order to stimulate new investments made by policy-makers, employers and most importantly, for individuals from all walks of life to better manage their lives, learning and work. One possibility is to adopt the approach of countries such as Canada and Australia who embrace the notion of guidance and have embodied this within a 'blueprint for career development'. This approach makes explicit the competencies that all individuals need to develop in order to manage effectively life, learning and work. It also provides a schema for the development, implementation and evaluation of career interventions designed to help individuals achieve key learning outcomes. It can be argued that the current

¹³ Op.cit.

¹⁴ McCarthy, M. & Millar, R. (2006). Career guidance in Northern Ireland: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34 (1)

emphasis on 'citizenship' within the statutory education system provides a potential link to such as concept. However, at present this does not address the fundamental issue of how best to support the career development of all individuals, including adults and those in work.

The Australians and Canadians are totally convinced of the benefit of this approach in:

- *helping people to continuously adapt to change and manage their careers;*
- *facilitating and supporting the quality and consistency of services;*
- *optimising the development and efficient use of resources targeted upon the achievement of competencies;*
- *supporting the integrity of services by maintaining the focus on the individuals' career development whilst, at the same time, supporting government social and economic objectives; and*
- *evaluating and reporting on the impact of specific interventions to inform future investments.*

In addition to the blueprint framework providing national consistency, it also facilitates the recognition of differing cultural beliefs and values in supporting the achievement of individuals' goals. We can also learn lessons from our colleagues in New Zealand¹⁵, where the Career Service offers a customised approach for Maori and Pacific peoples by delivering career guidance within a framework that reflects their cultural beliefs and values. This is something that Northern Ireland may need to consider due to the influx of immigrants, as mentioned earlier.

I am fully convinced that if we adopted this type of 'Blueprint approach' it would provide clearer 'product definition' and offer a solution to government policy-makers by inspiring and encouraging individuals to accept responsibility for their own career development and sustained financial independence. The Blueprint defines the career development competencies which services are aiming to help their clients to

¹⁵ Vaughan, K. et al (2006) *A New Zealand Perspective: Country Report. International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Sydney, Australia. p.145.*

develop. In their 'mega-synthesis' of the OECD, World Bank and EC policy reviews, Watts and Sultana (2004) identified this as a key instrument which could be operationally useful across the whole of the guidance field and help to harmonise it, particularly if they could be linked to common branding and marketing of services. Evidence from learndirect and elsewhere suggests there is latent demand for career development which could be stimulated by effective marketing. A newly launched learndirect telephone guidance pilot is testing out this assertion and we await the results from this. The Blueprint approach would complement existing organisational quality standards (Matrix) and recognise individuals' competencies derived from informal as well as formal learning. This approach also encourages us to think about training and continuous professional development issues. To what extent are we developing new tactics and strategies for evidencing the impact of educational guidance and careers work? Hiebert's work in Canada¹⁶ provides a showcase of strategies and resources that highlight innovation in Canadian career development policies and practices. There are 48 separate digests, each one of which targets a specific aspect of career development and career counselling in Canada. It is a resource for acquiring knowledge of best practices and professional developments in the field. It offers career practitioners a wealth of information. Authors include Vince Povey, Lynne Bezanson, Norm Amundson and Danielle Riverin-Simard.

In addition, we need to consider more fully the differing extent to which training in career development support is being built into other allied professions. For example, basic teacher training should encompass careers work as a pre-requisite to employment so that those responsible for teaching and learning strategies in schools and colleges are more aware of the changing nature of work in the 21st century. Clearly, there are other professional training links that need to be made with Human Resource experts (HRD). In South Africa, their constitutional framework advocates "the need for effective career management in the Public Service by referring to the cultivation of good human resource management and career development practices as one of the basic values and principles governing public administration"¹⁷. Whilst

¹⁶ Hiebert, B. (Ed) (1995). *Exemplary career development programs & practices: The best from Canada*. Greensboro, North Carolina: ERIC/CASS Publications.

¹⁷ Malan, M. (2006) *South Africa Country Report: A South African Public Service Perspective International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy*, Sydney, Australia. p.145.

this has yet to be fully achieved, this example illustrates the potential role of human resource departments as key providers of career development services. Interestingly, weak links exist between the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Careers Professional Associations. The challenge is how best to achieve a balanced membership that represents educational guidance, career development services and those operating within this broad church of activity.

Where next?

In summary, my central message is that just as Parsons' developments arose out of the requirements of the industrial revolution, so now guidance professionals need to seize the initiative and address the social and economic needs of this new 21st Century. We need to be more innovative and fresh in our approach. We need to agree a common framework (blueprint) that galvanises our collective efforts to deliver high quality services for the benefit of potential consumers, focused on the concept of 'career development'. We need to design, develop and deliver training and professional development programmes to support the role of the professional career development worker. Crucially, we also need to join-up our relatively small-sized professional associations to present a more concentrated and coherent message to policy-makers and employers.

Politicians and civil servants in the UK have yet to realise the full value of using career development to unlock individuals' potential. In addition, we have failed to impress upon government the inextricable inter-connectivity between a variety of self-management skills including those of career development, entrepreneurship, personal financial management and social responsibility¹⁸.

Finally, in my preparation for this presentation the image of a 'spider's web' as a metaphor came to mind as a way of understanding and making coherent sense of what is it that we're trying to achieve. I have to thank a colleague in South Africa for kindly sharing this image with me¹⁹. We all have seen a spider's web and would

¹⁸ In 1999, the late Linda Ammon CBE conveyed this sentiment in delivering the very first CeGS Public Lecture.

¹⁹ Magriet Malan, South Africa

agree that it is a masterpiece of architecture at work. The spider follows a fixed routine - not using rational logical intelligence, we are told - but following instincts that may be 200 million years old, and adjusting its instinctive blueprint to ground reality. The spider starts the web by spinning a long thread and this forms the bridge/cornerstone of the web... if this thread is not properly hooked then the spinning cannot start, or if the spider does continue, it would probably not be functional. Another interesting attribute of the spider is the silk that it produces. It is said that the silk, which is a type of protein, is stronger than steel – when you compare steel of the same thickness (diameter) with spider silk. What makes it so strong or as they put it - “high energy-to-break”, is the combination of strength and stretch. Similarly, in trying to solve the “problem” of shaping the future for high quality, effective and impacting guidance work, we are reminded that this is not a one dimensional act – it has multiple dimensions encompassing multiple agencies, acting in dynamic equilibrium. Policy is also not a one-off effort – it needs to be constantly adjusted to keep pace with rapid changes in our society. Its success relies heavily upon a network of committed organisations and individuals who have a shared vision of developing and delivering high quality provision. A recent ‘Future Search’ initiative (2006), jointly organised by the Department for Education (DE) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), has started this process of creating a shared vision for 21st century careers work in Northern Ireland. In closing I would like to leave you two key thoughts. Firstly, be bold and adventurous in thinking about how best to inspire individuals to invest in their own career development. My colleague Lynne Bezanson, from the Canadian Career Development Foundation, talks about “looking at our Life Quality and in building a Quality Life”. In my mind, this truly captures the essence of educational guidance and careers work. Secondly, be active in sharing new practices through networks, learning and innovation, particularly in relation to creating a strong evidence-base for educational guidance and career development services for all citizens in Northern Ireland. Continuously assess and measure progress and take steps to embrace accountability so that policy-makers are left in no doubt of the social and economic

benefits associated with investing in educational guidance and career development services.

Finally, my family and friends in Northern Ireland have always kept me grounded in the reality of life, learning and work and I thank them for this. I hope my thoughts and ideas resonate with the principles espoused by Julie Hamill and other colleagues. The digital revolution is here, let's take stock, reshape and re-energise our services.

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