

Synthesis – Theme 1: Context and challenges for career development policy

A synthesis of the perspectives of countries and international organisations attending the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy Symposium 2019

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Abstract

This paper synthesises and summarises theme one of the International Centre for Career Development Symposium in Trømsø 2019. This theme addresses the context and challenges for career development policy in the participating countries and is based on an analysis of the country papers. It is divided into three different parts. The first part presents and discusses key political, social, economic and technological issues that are likely to have an impact on people's lives and careers in the participating countries. The second part presents and discusses policy interest in career development, where the focus is on whether and why the level of policy interest is growing, shrinking or staying the same in the participating countries. The third part presents and discusses the roles in which career development programmes and services play in addressing the contextual issues.

1. Introduction

This paper synthesises and summarises the perspectives articulated by the 33 countries attending the International Centre for Career Development Symposium in Tromsø in 2019.

The production of country papers and then thematic syntheses are at the core of the methodology used in the international symposia (Watts, Bezanson, and McCarthy, 2014). This synthesis and the other three thematic syntheses (covering the aims for, and access to, career development services, integrating career development into wider society, and leading innovative change for the future) will be made available prior to the 2019 symposium and will be used to underpin discussion during the four-day event and inform the development of country action plans and the 2019 communique.

This paper focuses on theme one of the symposium which addresses the context and challenges for career development policy. It addresses the political, economic, social and technological forces which are shaping people's careers across the globe (OECD, 2019). The nature of these forces varies in different countries but there are a number of global trends which are faced by everyone. These include automation, the 'gig economy', the growth of unregulated and unreliable sources of information (including career information), conflict, growing migration, environmental change and a range of other issues.

These local and global challenges and the political responses to them can erode people's beliefs in public institutions, worsen working conditions and make career transitions more challenging. At the

individual level many citizens may feel anxious about what such a world might mean for their chance of planning a career and achieving the kind of life, work and career that they hope for. Such changes raise serious concerns for career development systems that merit new policies and new thinking.

The structure of the report

This synthesis summarises the reports submitted by countries attending the symposium.¹ The report is structured around the following questions.

- Key political, social, economic and technological issues that are likely to have an impact on people's lives and careers in the countries
- Policy interest in career development.
- What role do career development programmes and services play in addressing political, social, economic and technological challenges

2. Key political, social, economic and technological issues

In several texts (e.g. Sultana, 2017; McMahon, Watson, & Patton, 2014), it is emphasised that context matters. Meaning, that there needs to be an awareness of the inter-relatedness between the context and the individual, and how career development is understood and developed into services and programmes. In their reports, the countries and international organisations reflect many of the themes identified by the international literature in this area. Further, the issues highlighted in the reports correspond with the ones identified as present at the prior conference in South Korea (Hooley & Borbély-Pecze, 2017). The countries report, with some variations in what is being emphasised, that they are going through political, economic, social, technological and environmental changes that influence people's lives and careers.

Political issues

Political instability is highlighted as a main contextual issue in some countries (e.g. Republic of Kosovo, Syria). In Ghana on the other hand, it is highlighted that a stable political environment, and the peace and security in the country has greatly impacted foreign direct investment and the growth of businesses resulting in the emergence of new jobs and careers.

In England, there is an increased policy focus on addressing the issue of social mobility through Opportunity Areas, National Collaborative Outreach Programmes, and a range of other career development programme. In Ireland, the potential implications of the UK's exit from the EU will have a direct impact on the economy of Ireland, affect students attending courses in UK, the tourism industry in Ireland and may impact on the political stability and peace process for the island of Ireland. In Tunisia, a main issue is lack of coordination between key ministries involved in the guidance processes (education, vocational training and higher education)

In other countries, the political climate has a more direct impact on the provision of career development services. The Netherlands reports that there is growing political awareness, attention,

¹ The full texts of all reports is available from <https://www.kompetans norge.no/iccdpp2019/key-outcomes/country-papers/>.

and larger budgets for career development issues. Denmark reports that since 2013 there has been a growing political scepticism towards career guidance provision due to lack of evidence and documentation of the effect of guidance and declining recruitment to vocational education.

Economic issues

Several countries highlight the importance of a rapidly changing economy to the way in which individuals are able to develop their careers (e.g. Cambodia, Egypt, Ghana, India, Qatar and Singapore). In India, the economy is undergoing a structural shift from agrarian-rural to becoming an urban and non-agrarian one, creating a demand for new forms of work.

In many countries (e.g. Cambodia, Canada, Croatia, France, Japan, Luxembourg, Sri Lanka, Switzerland) there is an increasing consensus that there is a growing gap between the skills that industries and businesses require and what young people in education institutions, whether academic or vocational training, acquire. As stated in the Canadian report they are facing the incongruous reality of both workforce shortages and underemployment, particularly among youth. Further, both skills shortage (Cambodia), skills mismatch (Estonia) and brain drain (Serbia) are used as concepts to describe this situation.

The lack of comprehensive information about the labour market is seen as an important issue in some countries (e.g. Canada, Egypt). In Finland the globalisation of the labour market and global mobility are highlighted as important issues. This implies more focus on making Finland a more active destination for work-based migration from other countries. Finland is interested in skilled labour force and supports integration process of migrants within the Finnish society.

Social issues

Some countries (e.g. Chile, Estonia, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands) highlight social inequity and the segregation of structures as a main issue. In Denmark, the predominance of a gender divided labour market and gender stereotypes in educational choices are seen as an important contextual issue. In England key issues are seen as an inequalities in the working population with high levels of people in work poverty, student debt, a lack of decent work and the growth of zero-hour contracts. This is likely to be exacerbated further by Brexit.

In South Korea, anxiety about employment has grown in response to a new employment policy which includes a rise in the minimum wage, the regularisation of irregular workers and a number of other initiatives. In Hungary, different vulnerable groups (women, low-skilled, youth, etc.) are underrepresented in the education system and in the labour market. The productivity level of these groups lags behind the prime age labour force. The availability of labour market, social inclusion and educational services are not transparent for these vulnerable groups.

In Mongolia, migration from rural areas to central regions and cities are an important contextual issue. In Norway, an aging population is highlighted. A smaller workforce must finance an expensive welfare state, and there is a greater demand for employees with competence related to health issues for the ageing population. This is also evident in the context of Singapore and Slovakia.

Technological issues

Many of the countries (e.g. Chile, Croatia, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Japan, Republic of Kosovo, Luxembourg) highlight how technology is changing the labour conditions of workers. The increase in automation, robotics, and the increasing use of digital technologies have generated a change in the business models of companies, generating modifications in the competencies demanded by the labour force, and changes in working conditions. The accelerated dynamic of the creation and destruction of occupations and jobs -stimulated in part by fast technological changes- has increased uncertainty and precarity for some.

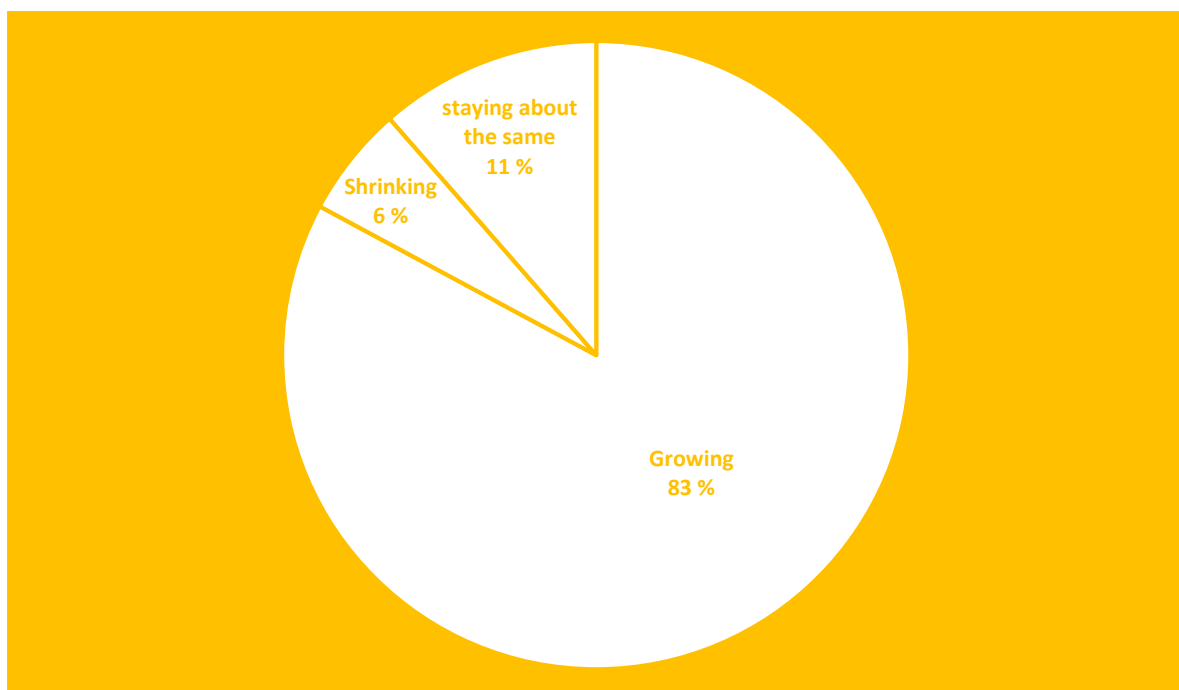
Environmental issues

In India climate change and environmental degradation is seen as one of the key issues impacting on the lives and livelihoods of people, especially those working in the agrarian sector. Eroding natural resources impacts on the livelihood of people living in rural areas and leads to growing precarity and migration away from villages. In the United States of America, climate change is creating hardship in every corner of the country including the farming industry in the Mid-West, tourism in the South, and the entire economy of California. In both examples, career development programmes and services play a minor (if any) role in addressing these issues.

3. Policy interest in career development

We asked countries to indicate whether the level of policy interest in career development was growing, shrinking or staying about the same. Figure 1 shows a clear pattern, with the overwhelming majority arguing that policy interest was growing with very few feeling that it was shrinking.

Figure 1: How is the level of policy interest in career development changing? (n=35)



The level of policy interest is growing

Most of the countries participating report that the level of policy interest in career development is growing. They advance a range of reasons for the growth in policy interest and suggest three main types of intervention that demonstrated this growing interest: 1) the development of national, cross-sectoral frameworks, 2) the strengthening of provision in the education system, and 3) the strengthening of provision in the labor market. Some participating countries can be categorised in more than one of these contexts. There are also some countries (Cambodia, Egypt, Mongolia and Singapore) where career development has emerged as a completely new policy in recent years.

The country papers also differ in whether the growing interest in career development policy is on a national level (e.g. driven by a national ministry) or at a local level (e.g. driven by a country or provincial government).

Development of national, cross-sectoral frameworks

8 countries provided evidence of the growing policy interest in career development by describing the creation of a national, cross-sectoral framework for career development. Cross sectoral frameworks can be defined as a career development framework that effects more than one area or group in the specific country. The rationale given by countries for the development of this kind of national, cross-sectoral framework was generally to ensure that people have access to career development and guidance through their life course.

Norway provides a good example of this kind of approach. The country has seen growing policy interest in career development and has been working to strengthen access to career services across all sectors. To achieve this the country is developing a cross-sectoral quality framework which emphasises quality development, governance, ethics, professional competence standards and models for career learning. The Ministry of Education in Norway has also started to develop digital career guidance service.

Qatar, Mongolia, Switzerland and India highlight the importance of a cross sectoral framework for career development policy but have not developed formal national strategies or policies to support this. Qatar is focusing on the implementation and design of national development strategies 2011-2016 and 2017-2022, and therefor policy in career development is growing. This is reflected in increasing attention for the role of career development within public education and training sector, public sectors employment, professional development, scholarship programs, employee training and career pathways initiatives. In Mongolia, at the level of Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports, various activities are conducted to develop cross sectoral career guidance system with support from international organizations and projects.

Switzerland highlights that career guidance has a growing interest in politics, business and education, especially vocational education at both the canton and federal government levels.

In India there is an increased interest in career development across sectors (government, corporate and social) and the country has started of several programs and initiatives to increase the coherence of career development services at central, provincial and local levels. Singapore has emphasised the importance of both career development in schools and the labor market. Workers need lifelong learning and skill upgrading and re-skilling. Therefor career planning and decision making for

students in schools and adults has been strengthened. There is established network of career counsellors, coaches and education to guide students and working adults in their career planning.

Luxembourg has structured all actors within career development together in Maison de l'orientation (House of Guidance). These actors are: The Adem Orientation Service (which is focused on choosing a profession or making a change in the labor market), The Psychosocial and Education Accompaniment Center (young people), the Local Action for Youth (which supports youth transitions into work), The National Youth Service (which supports young people who are unclear in their career direction), the Department of Schooling for Foreign Children (which supports the education of young foreign people from 12-24 years) and the Higher Education and Documentation Centre (which provides information about higher education). The House of Guidance covers all stages of career guidance and is defined as the coordinator of career guidance.

Neither Canada nor England have a single cross-sectoral career development framework. However, both have multiple career development policies, which collectively can be viewed as a cross sectorial framework. Canada has seen an increasing interest in career development at the federal level, but this has not reached the point where career development has been explicitly named as a policy priority. At the provincial or territorial level, it is highly variable with some provinces investing heavily in career development services, other have a hands-off approach. On balance there has been a growth in career development services across Canada with provision in education growing faster than that in the labor market.

England has developed different approaches to career development in different sectors nationally. These strategies relate to a broader industrial strategy which the government is using to drive growth in the country. The government has published a national 'career strategy' but this is largely focused on young people in the education system. The government has placed the Gatsby Benchmarks at the heart of this strategy (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014). The Benchmarks describes the core elements of career guidance that must be delivered by schools and vocational colleges. Beyond young people England also offers face to face and online career counselling to adults. While there is a limited universal entitlement most services remain targeted to vulnerable groups (e.g. low skilled workers, people with disabilities and special educational needs, single parents and older workers).

Strengthening provision in the education system

This category highlights examples of where the growing policy interest in career development is evidenced by strengthening provision in the education system. Examples of this include:

- **Cambodia.** Career development has existed in Cambodia since 2014, when the ministry of education designated secondary schools as being responsible for career development among students.
- **Egypt.** While there is no overarching policy there are a plethora of initiatives which are delivering career guidance services into high schools, universities and other youth outside schools in training centers. This has been supported by the development of study programs designed to educate career counselors and researchers.
- **Estonia** have rearranged their career services systems on the national level to make the system more efficient and less fragmented. National guidance forum has been given the

responsibility to give expert knowledge to carry out career service reforms and develop career services including career education in schools. In the national curriculum, the schools have the responsibility for availability for career services to schools. Schools deal with career development through a lifelong and career development topic. Also, career education is in the national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary schools and a curriculum renewal is ongoing.

- **Finland** has ongoing reforms in secondary school and vocational education. The emphasis is that students are entitled to career learning individual plans. Also, there is an evaluation on how regional guidance service providers are supporting students in transition phases between different education levels.
- **France.** Different career development strategies have been evolving for a year and half with regards to secondary and higher education.
- **Ghana** has increased attention to career development in both the private and public sector, but with emphasis in schools. Where the goal is to provide guidance and counseling services to schools. Also, there is a growing attention by ministries to improve career guidance in schools.
- **Japan** has integrated career development programs in their curricula from elementary, junior and senior high schools. The emphasis is to secure individual career counseling at every school. Career portfolios from grade 1-12 is being introduced.
- **Kosovo** sees the necessity to increase importance of career in the context of lifelong learning in implementation of career guidance policy. Career guidance is more current in education, youth and employment policy development.
- **Sri Lanka** the policy level intervention at the national level is limited. National level networks have been established to enhance career development and providing guiding services in schools. Also, there has been established a formal career development strategy for state university systems. There is an increased interest in career guidance policy making in the field targeting school's evaluation, tertiary education and higher education systems.

Strengthening provision in the labor market

This category describes how increased the increased policy priority on career development has led to increased provision in the labor market.

- **Austria** has an increased attention towards factors such as economy, companies, and technology and that new approaches to career development are needed. Also, there is an increased effort to positively shape changes and challenges in various ways, also career development policies.
- **Croatia** has an increased focus on transition to lifelong employability. More explicit, proving competencies in a changing labor market and the growing divarication in educational programs has increased the need for career planning and development at a national level.
- **Germany** has increasing awareness on well-functioning labor market with high demand on qualified labor and dropout from universities. In addition, a project on lifelong vocational guidance is developed.

- **Hungary.** Lifelong guidance is defined as a tool for workforce development and can serve the country as a tool to build more competitive labor force. The emphasis is to ensure skilled and qualified professionals meets the requirements of the economy. This is ensured by improving skills, competences and career management skills.
- **Ireland** has increased interest nationally in career development tools. Most focus is on employer groups and higher education sectors.
- **Korea** has focus on employment promotion rather than career development because of the financial crisis. Employment promotion reduces the employment rate based on reality problems. There is also developed an employment promotion policy.
- **The Netherlands** has increased their attention towards a tight labor market where there is an urgent need for personnel. The focus is on labor demands in the future.

The level of policy interest is shrinking

While most countries reported that policy interest in career development was growing, a minority reported that interest was shrinking. This could be for a range of reasons. One example is shown by Denmark which has seen a setback in the level of policy interest in career development. Career guidance in schools have been transferred from independent institutions to the municipalities and to a certain extent to primary and secondary schools. The political focus on career guidance has been turned to political skepticism due to lack of evidence on the effect of career guidance and declining recruitment to vocational educations.

A contrasting example is offered by Syria where while there is increased attention on how to fight poverty and enhance peoples career status, career development has slipped down the policy priorities due to more acute needs. The country's instability and poverty make it difficult to focus on career development when survival is the main priority for most people in Syria.

The level of policy interest is staying the same

Some countries reported that the level of policy interest in career development had not change. This was either because reforms and strategies had recently been introduced and had not yet taken effect or because of political disruptions nationally. Examples of countries in this category included Slovenia who emphasised that nothing is changing with respect to career development.

In Serbia a national career guidance and counseling strategy was introduced in 2010. Since then educational laws and reforms have recognised career guidance and standards for career guidance and counseling services have been developed for secondary schools. Serbia could be interpreted into the category where the interest level of career development policy is growing, but in terms of the country report Serbia categorized the level of interest as staying the same.

The USA describes themselves as being in a period of pendulum politics, where the objective is to reverse or eliminate previous policies. This has resulted in disruption to the world of work that is unsettling for workers. The consequence of this is an increased sense of instability that infiltrates the sectors in the labor market. At the present, these disruptions are the focus of USA's national discourse at the expense of having a more productive conversation between career development professional and scholars.

4. Roles in which career development programmes and services play in addressing the contextual issues

In this final section concerning the countries response to theme one, we address how they report on the roles in which career development programmes and services play in addressing the contextual issues presented in the prior section.

Many countries suggest the role career development programmes and services *should* play in addressing the contextual issues. Chile for example propose that the career development programmes and services must try to take, in the short-term, the following roles: (1) *a functional role* as the catalyser of diverse initiatives and policies (working at different levels with different sectors and actors) which may contribute to the preparation of individuals, families, and communities for the development of positive academic and work careers; (2) *a normative role* to help to protect the role of autonomy, empowerment, and agency as key aspects in the preparation of individuals, families, and communities for active life and positive transitions during their lives; (3) *a field role* where each career programme and service should be aware of the relevance of configuring a professionally recognised field in order to increase its influence in public policy discussions and instruments at micro, meso, and macro levels, as a key aspect for the preparation of individuals, families, and communities.

In the following, we will present some of the examples on how career development programmes and services already play a role in addressing the contextual issues.

Political issues

- In **Egypt** career development provides support to the national development needs in response to ‘Egypt Vision 2030’ in steering the engagement with new qualifications needed for future jobs.
- In **England**, The Careers & Enterprise Company, an independent company that receives grant funding from government, was established by government to build an infrastructure whereby educational institutions can link with employers more purposefully through the establishment of an Enterprise Adviser Network. Within the adult sector in England the National Careers Service is funded on a payment by results basis emphasising the need for customers to develop career management skills allowing them to independently construct their careers using a range of digital tools, resources and support from the National Careers Service and other agencies.
- In **Estonia** the programs that deal with development of career services system also entail activities of upgrading the skills level of career specialists working in EUIF (the sole provider of career counselling and career information services in Estonia), since there are no programs in formal education for career specialists).
- **Finland** is also focusing on capacity building among guidance practitioners who deliver these services (e.g. their digital and intercultural competences and ability to utilise labour market intelligence/information efficiently for the benefit of their clientele).
- In **Norway**, In the Norwegian skills policy, lifelong guidance has been pointed out as one of the solutions to challenges in a changing Norwegian society in several political documents.

- In **Sri Lanka**, career guidance is widely recognised as an essential part of the learning process in the education system. Career guidance centers in school have been established according to the circular no 16/2006 and no 06/2013. This program is named school guidance and counselling program and key focus in this program is to address the mismatch between the needs of the labour market and the product of the educational and training system.

Economic issues

In Serbia, as a measurement for increasing job-skills mismatch and in response to the fast developing industries, especially IT, a dual model of secondary education is established nationwide and career guidance activities are recognised as important with the recent establishment of the working group dedicated to schools' teams for career guidance in schools with dual programs. Additionally, many project-based and NGOs activities aim at the development of the skills needed in this industry through different re-training programs and supporting activities

Social issues

- In **Austria** specific measures exist for older employees, for women and women returning after family phases, for immigrants and refugees and for persons with special physical or mental needs.
- In **Canada**, career development is described as the adaptive strategy for how humans can adapt to the pressing challenges of our time.
- In the **Estonian** context, in order to support young people in making the choices about their future career paths and along with it diminish the level of school drop-outs, career services have the role in teaching the youth competences of decision-making while having full knowledge and being aware of the future trends of the economic development and labour market in line with it.
- In **France**, services focus to enhance mobility of pupils/students/individuals in France and overseas.
- In **Finland**, the career services are taking into account the cultural background of the individuals and promoting their active role in the community.
- In **Hungary**, career development is seen as a tool for social inclusion and labour market integration. It also has a significant added value in reducing early school leaving in encouraging lifelong learning, as well as increasing the attractiveness of VET and tertiary level education.
- In **India** career services have started paying special attention to groups hitherto marginalised on the basis of gender, ability status, religion, caste, ethnicity and location. As a consequence, individuals from these communities are getting educational and employment services which are helping them come out of intergenerational poverty and achieve social mobility.
- In **South Korea**, the development of career guidance programs for the underprivileged is stimulated, and policy attention is emphasized. For example Employment Successful Package provides people in low-income groups that have difficulty finding employment due to the disadvantages they face are offered comprehensive support to enter the labor market through an employment action plan geared towards the individual, including everything

from prognosis and career path development to motivation & skill enhancement, and focused employee placements. Once hired, they are provided a successful employment compensation from the government

Technological issues

- In **Germany**, orientation programmes at schools are established to raise awareness and inform young people on developments, labour shortages, including modernised online information portals.
- In **Scotland**, the new careers strategy currently being developed, will support people to access careers information, advice and guidance on a lifelong basis. It will ensure equal access to high quality careers provision and be underpinned with robust Labour Market Information. It will ensure that the careers sector is sufficiently flexible to respond to the changing economic climate, such as the possible impact of Brexit on the Scottish economy and labour market.

5. Conclusions

The objective of developing strategic career development policies to ensure accessibility for persons in career transitions was articulated by almost every country paper. However, the complexity of the context where career development policies are developed in relation to the complexity of challenges for career development policy speaks for a development where one sees that interest level, the context, and the actual career guidance services are interrelated.

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