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Moving from information provision to co-careering: Integrated guidance as a new approach to e-guidance in Norway

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Norway has invested heavily in its career guidance system. This has allowed it to move rapidly from a relatively weak guidance system to an innovative and emergent one. One of the advantages of the historic lack of development of career guidance in the country has been the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others and to try out new and innovative approaches. A key opportunity that the country is keen to make the most of is the potential to use digital technologies to support guidance. Following a process of exploration of this issue the government has resolved to establish an e-guidance service located in Tromsø. However, at present the nature of this service is unclear. In this article we argue that that the concepts of (1) integrated guidance, (2) instructional design and (3) co-careering should be at the heart of the new service and indeed at the heart of the delivery of guidance across Norway.

Introduction

This article explores the development of the concept of 'integrated guidance' in Norway. Integrated guidance seeks to combine career guidance that is delivered through different modalities (face-to-face, by telephone, online etc.) in such a way that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Whilst the conception of career guidance as a multi-modal, diverse, but connected, set of interventions is not new (see for example OECD, 2004), current policy support for career guidance in Norway, as well as the country's high level of digital engagement and adoption, means that it offers fertile ground for the development of new ideas such as integrated guidance.

There is a long tradition of the use of online and digital tools in career guidance (Watts, 2002). Such tools offer a number of clear benefits including providing individuals with new opportunities to access career guidance any time from where ever they are and opening up the possibility of new kinds of guidance service (Hooley, Shepherd & Dodd, 2015). They also allow careers providers to manage demand more strategically and potentially to offer more diverse services than would be possible in a single location. Furthermore, there is a growth in client expectations that at least some services will be available digitally, reinforced by the way in which digital technologies have been used to deliver other kinds of services.

Online career guidance can take a variety of different forms. Hooley, Hutchinson & Watts (2010) summarise these forms as:

- the provision of career information and resources;
- the use of artificial intelligence and automation to replace aspects of what was previously done face-to-face by human professionals; and
- the development of new forms of communication and interaction through which careers services can be delivered.

Hooley, Hutchinson & Watts then go on to argue that communication and interaction can be one-to-one, one-to-many/many-to-one and many-to-many. Such an observation adopts a broad definition of guidance such as that advanced by the OECD (2004) as an activity that can take many forms including self-study, counselling approaches, classroom learning and experiential learning. In addition, by moving guidance online new modes of delivery are opened up such

as MOOCs (Brammar & Winter, 2015) and new pedagogies and approaches to guidance enabled such as connectivism (Staunton, 2016).

Despite the potential benefits offered by online technologies for the delivery of careers services, the evidence is mixed. Vigurs, Everitt & Staunton (2017) argue that there is little evidence to suggest that putting career and labour market information or other kinds of static resources online results in any positive and measurable outcomes for individuals. The evidence is more positive for the use of automation and artificial intelligence in the form of computer assisted guidance systems (CAGS) and for internet-mediated forms of communication. However, Vigurs et al. (2017, p.18) still conclude that online careers provision 'is not a replacement for professional information, advice and guidance' and that to be effective it 'must be embedded within a wider range of careers support services'.

The key insight that can be gathered from the research is that online career support is most effective when it attends to the context within which it is used and where its usage is supported with appropriate face-to-face and professional interventions. This finding moves the field away from a sterile debate where online careers provision is pitted against face-to-face provision and reframes the discussion as being about how to achieve the appropriate integration of different modes of provision. However, at present theory and research have largely ignored these questions and have not really developed thinking around the concept of integrated guidance. In this article we want to begin the process of theorising integrated guidance as a contribution to contemporary debates about the development of the Norwegian online career guidance service.

The emergence of blended guidance in Norway

Norway has been investing in the development of career guidance for over a decade. Notably establishing a national co-ordinating group within Skills Norway and investing in postgraduate level training for careers professionals. However, up until recently this development has been strongly rooted in face-to-face practice rooted in educational organisations and careers centres and has made little formal use of digital or other remote forms of provision. A small-scale pilot of online guidance was conducted and evaluated in some regional career centres, which garnered positive feedback from users (Ipsos MMI, 2012, 2013). This pilot adopted an approach to online guidance which was based around synchronous audio chat and strongly influenced by the Danish eVejledning (eGuidance) service (Jocumsen, 2017; Nygaard & Nielson, 2014). However, such experiments at best provide limited insights on what a national system might look like.

Following critical feedback from the OECD (2014a, 2014b) on Norway's skills system, including its limited career guidance system, the government established an expert committee to identify key components in a holistic lifelong system for career guidance in Norway. In their first report, which had a specific emphasis on the digital part of the system, the committee concluded that digital career information and services in Norway were scattered across several portals and that digital and face-to-face services were poorly integrated (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015). The committee also noted that the quality of information and resources available through these services is variable and is mainly focused on adolescents. Consequently, a number of areas of concern were noted, including the fact that there is very limited online careers provision for adults, people with special needs and those with a different first language than Norwegian.

The final report from the expert committee concludes that 'to improve the population's access to neutral, quality-assured information and to increase access to professional career guidance, the committee recommends establishing an online career guidance service consisting of a website with information and self-help resources and online counselling (e-guidance). The services as a whole will represent a significant increase in the availability of career guidance for the population at large' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, p.211). [1]

1 All Norwegian texts cited in this article have been translated by the authors of this article.

The focus on online career services in Norway can be seen as part of a broader movement towards e-government. The Norwegian e-Government Programme is pursuing a widespread programme of digitisation of public service which it argues 'will generate noticeable improvements across the public sub-sectors' and 'result in both more positive and faster interaction with the public sector for citizens and businesses alike as well as more efficient use of public sector resources' (Norwegian Ministries, 2012, p.4).

The Norwegian government broadly accepted the recommendations of the expert committee and funded the national unit for career guidance in Skills Norway to lead the development of a national online career guidance service (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Skills Norway were tasked to prepare a plan by the 1st March 2018 for the development of a digital career guidance system. Following the publication of the plan (Skills Norway, 2018b) it is now clear that the development of the digital careers service has four main workstreams. These are to:

1. further develop the existing web portal (utdanning.no[2]) into a national platform, accessible to all who are in need of information and guidance regarding educational and vocational choices;
2. establish a technical solution for a national e-guidance service;
3. establish an organisational structure for the provision of the e-guidance service; and
4. develop e-guidance skills for e-guidance practitioners and develop a quality assurance system for the service.

The term *e-guidance* is not fully defined in current documentation and so there is still considerable opportunity to shape the concept and the nature of the emerging service. Encouragingly the plan argues that e-guidance services need to be integrated into a national, holistic and lifelong system for career guidance in Norway. This means that the new e-guidance service will need to be brought together with traditional face-to-face guidance services to create an 'integrated' service. The question is therefore what kind of integration Norway should seek as it develops its career guidance services.

Theorising integrated guidance in Norway

Career guidance in Norway has been strongly influenced by a focus on *career learning*, drawing on the work of Law (1996) and other international theorists. This perspective has been further developed in Norwegian literature which has placed career learning at the centre of Norway's approach to career guidance (Haug, 2018; Svendsrud, 2015). At present, Skills Norway is running a major project where career practitioners, academics and policymakers are gathered together to develop a framework for quality in career guidance (Skills Norway, 2018a). This group has defined a quality outcome as ensuring that career learning takes place. Given this, it is important that the emerging integrated guidance approach connects with this career learning tradition rather than running contrary to it. This means that the introduction of new technologies should be understood as offering new opportunities for providing career education and enhancing career learning. While the provision of information is critical for such career learning, it is important to focus on what is received and understood by the learner rather than what is transmitted by the professional or the website. Integrated guidance in Norway therefore needs to recognise that new technologies afford new approaches to interacting and learning as well as channelling greater amounts of information to individuals.

The development of integrated guidance requires careers professionals and service designers to explore questions of what technologies to use and how to use them. This includes considering how digital learning environments should be designed, considerations of what the role of educators and careers professionals are and critically, questions about how online provision can be symbiotic with the activities that take place face-to-face. Such considerations are often addressed through 'instructional design', a term that describes the practice of developing learning experiences and environments that promote the acquisition of skills

2 Utdanning.no is the official Norwegian national education and career portal, and includes an overview of education in Norway and about 600 career descriptions.

and knowledge (Merrill, Drake, Lacy & Pratt, 1996). Instructional design is associated with online learning, but its key tenet is that it starts from what the learner needs and what is being learnt and then shapes the environment, technology, tools and content that are required to meet these needs. Learners' needs can be understood both in terms of what knowledge they need to acquire as well as in what way they need to acquire this knowledge. Instructional design, like the OECD's definition of guidance, therefore recognises that a growing variety of modes of delivery, often enabled by new technologies, can be usefully deployed and combined in order to facilitate learning to take place.

Staker & Horn (2012) offer four instructional designs that could be reworked as approaches to integrated guidance to provide an example of the way in which instructional design operates. Their first design is the ***rotation model*** in which guidance professionals and learners rotate between modalities during a programme of learning to combine the advantages of face-to-face provision with those of online provision. Their second design is the ***flex model*** in which most guidance is provided online, but learners can access a careers professional in a flexible way to meet their individual learning and support needs. The third design is the ***self-blend model*** where learners access core materials face-to-face but supplement them with additional learning opportunities online. Finally, in their ***enriched-virtual model*** career learning primarily takes place online but with strategically positioned face-to-face touch points. These different types of instructional design are not offered as alternatives from which Norway must choose, but rather as strategies that can variously be adopted based on resources and learner need within the right integrated guidance system.

The recognition of these different approaches to integrated guidance highlights that the extent to which the learner needs to interact with a careers professional to support their career learning and the nature of those interactions is likely to vary. For example, research in Canadian employment services found that where individuals were assessed as suitable for a self-study career development programme and incentivised to complete this programme the programme doubled participants self-assessment of their skills and their likelihood of being in work (Redekopp, Hopkins & Hiebert, 2013). It also found that once the initial assessment had been done and participants introduced to the programme there was little additional advantage in practitioners providing ongoing support. This project provides an example of an integrated instructional design which makes use of careers professionals to triage clients and guide them toward well designed learning resources.

Although a digital 'career compass' tool is now available at the utdanning.no portal which allows for interactive exploration of different areas of work and occupations, this interactive approach is not typical. Most existing forms of online career information and guidance in Norway have typically taken the form of work and career related databases, like the public employment service portal[3]. These databases offer articles and other types of information with little attention given to how learners encounter, engage with and learn from such information. A more pedagogic approach to instructional design needs to be developed if the promise of integrated guidance is to be realised in Norway. Given this it is important that the development of the e-guidance service is not viewed as a 'digital problem' but rather as a 'career guidance' or 'career learning' problem. The answer that is found to this problem will need to extend both the access to, and quality of, Norway's existing career guidance system. It should offer tools to extend the reach of professionals and increase efficiencies as well as allowing citizens to self-serve where appropriate. Given this, a key question is who is involved in the design of this new system, and how can the process of development be organised in such a way as to effectively capture the insights of existing professionals, digital specialists, instructional designers and perhaps most importantly the voices of the users themselves.

Research from Finland (Kettunen, Vuorinen & Sampson, 2013) provides some useful insights into some of the challenges of creating an integrated guidance system which builds on and extends the capacity of existing careers professionals. This research found that the level of integration of technology, specifically social media, into guidance practice, varied with the capacity and technological orientation of the counsellor.

3 https://www.nav.no/en/Home

Where careers professionals were negative about the integration of social media they sought to disengage from it and emphasise face-to-face communication. This had the effect of placing them in the position of experts who were able to control the career learning of the clients that they were working with. On the other hand, counsellors that considered technology as indispensable and viewed the digital world as the place where people live, regarded the careers professionals role as more of a facilitative one focused on supporting learners to engage with a broader career learning environment.

Technology shapes pedagogic possibilities, but it does not necessarily determine them. There are a a range of ways in which any technology can be used as part of a career learning programme. On one hand it is possible to use technology to deliver highly instrumental and hierarchical forms of learning, but Kettunen et al. found that where careers professionals adopted a positive orientation towards social technologies this was more usually associated with a non-hierarchical approach to pedagogy and information exchange. Staunton (2016) describes this non-hierarchical, technologically informed, pedagogic tradition as 'connectivism' but Kettunen et al. use the term 'co-careering'. We have adopted the term 'co-careering' because it allows us to focus on the way in which technology can transform the relationship between career professionals and learners and highlights the fact that it is a pedagogic decision by the professional to foregrounding career learning and place themselves in a facilitative rather than didactic role.

The concept of *co-careering* defines a professional role which is highly compatible with an instructional design approach. Careers professionals who seek to co-career with the learners that they work with are essentially viewing themselves as a resource, that is available for the community, but one which co-exists alongside other resources that may exist online or elsewhere. This approach offers the advantage of allowing diverse learners to access the blend of support that meets their needs rather than having to make choices between accessing the services that are offered through different modes.

The possibilities for integrated guidance in Norway

The discussion of the possible approaches to integrated guidance suggests a number of key things to keep in mind whilst developing the guidance system in Norway. Firstly, our discussion suggests that integrated guidance needs to connect meaningfully to the existing approach to guidance in Norway. Career guidance in the country is viewed as a learning activity and new digital services must work with the grain of this approach. For example, in upper secondary schools, Norwegian students study a compulsory career learning program designed to offer them insights into the world of education and work and increase their self- awareness. The main learning approach used in this program is visits to careers fairs and workplaces, combined with group discussions in the class. A more systematic integration of exploratory web-based tools and active use of the labour market information available online, could increase the learning in this program. Additionally, it is important that online services recognise that this programme is one of the main contexts in which young people will consume the resources that they provide and take account of the pedagogy of such programmes.

Secondly, the concept of instructional design provides a useful approach when thinking about how the appropriate integration between different pieces of the system can be structured. Again, this focuses on the concept of learning as being the principle issue rather than the provision of information. It also raises the question of who the instructional designers should be in Norway's new e-guidance service and how far they should have expertise in career learning as well as in instructional design.

Thirdly, the development of integrated guidance needs to take account of the existing infrastructure of career support that exists in face-to-face services and provide them with opportunities to extend their reach and increase their efficiency.

Finally, existing careers professionals will need to engage with the affordances offered by new technologies and consider how they can adapt their practice to make effective use of these new technologies. Perhaps most challengingly such ideas may require professionals to relinquish some of their

traditional power and influence and engage in co-careering, a change that may require an attitudinal change in addition to new skills. Our hope is that knowledge of the affordances and potential offered by technology will support such a change, and that the ongoing discussion about professionalisation of career guidance practice in the project on quality in career guidance will include such competence.

The shifts described above will require investment in research, service design and technological development. But, the success of all of this is likely to hinge on the effective engagement of careers professionals and the need to provide continuing professional development programmes to support them to develop their skills and knowledge. Until now the main resource that exists for professionalisation in this area have been webinars developed by Skills Norway, and local initiatives from practitioners with a special interest in integrated guidance. Some Norwegian practitioners have also attended the *ICT in guidance and counselling summer school*[4] developed by the Nordic network VALA, but we argue that educational programs need to be connected to Norwegian context, and include competence standards, systems and platforms already in use.

To address these concerns we are developing a new training programme which will run at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences from 2019. The programme is entitled *Integrated guidance – integrating technology into career guidance* and will build on the insights summarised in this article. The module is organised round the following themes:

- digital skills and digital career management;
- the use of technology in career guidance;
- the changing role of the careers practitioner;
- models and theories of blended guidance;
- online and integrated practice;
- evaluating the effectiveness of integrated guidance;

and

- the role of technology in education and the labour market.

The program will be carefully organised to exemplify the integrated pedogogic approaches that it is teaching. It is designed as a practical 'learning by doing' module, underpinned by relevant theories. As such, it will include a number of micro-teaching and simulated integrated guidance exercises designed to build students familiarity with integrated career guidance.

Conclusions and recommendations

The ongoing discussion about the future of career guidance in Norway offers a rare opportunity to develop an integrated and holistic approach to career guidance. At present, the entire make up and quality standards of both school-based and community-based provision of career guidance for both young people and adults is in a period of rapid development. This offers an ideal time to consider how to integrate digital provision to enhance the career guidance system. By introducing the principles of (1) integrated guidance, (2) instructional design and (3) co-careering into this discussion, we hope to shape the development of the Norwegian guidance system so that digital services add value and extend what is on offer face-to-face rather than competing with existing services. Such an approach places careers professionals at the heart of the integrated guidance system, but also ask careers professionals to develop their practice. The development of our new training programme is designed to help them to do this.

In this article we have focused on the uniquely Norwegian context for the development of integrated guidance. However, we believe that the concept has wider applicability and that developments in Norway will offer further insights that can influence the development of integrated guidance internationally.

4 https://www.jyu.fi/en/current/archive/2018/06/summer-school-ict-in-guidance-and-counselling-summer-school-13201317-august-2018

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