

Crucial impacts on career choices:

Research to understand the influences on young people's choices in primary and secondary schools:

Final report



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Introduction

Although there are a well-developed career guidance systems across Europe, the crucial decisions that young people make are often influenced by family traditions, friends, role models, media and their social situations. How career practitioners respond to these influences during career guidance and ensure that young people are making the most of their real opportunities is an area of emerging practice particularly as the rapid growth in technology, the internet and new approaches to guidance are expanding. Finding new responses to these situations is one of the aims of the project.

This project comes at a time where social and industrial systems and processes are changing. Many traditional jobs are disappearing, and new ones are emerging often driven by changes in technology. How young people develop the necessary career management skills (CMS) to respond to this changing world of work is a second aim of the project. It is hoped that the project team will be able to create some new tools and approaches to respond to the changing demands on individuals' career management skills.

Helping young people to make crucial decisions about their futures requires practice bound by codes of ethics which are central to the career decision making process. This can be challenging for practitioners who may be tempted to influence these decisions based on their own stereotypes and perspectives on social justice. Understanding how practitioners mitigate these influences through reflective practice is the third aim of the project.

The research was undertaken by five project partners (The Czech Republic, The United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece and Spain) and lead by a team from the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby in the UK. The research was conducted between September 2018 and July 2020.

Project aim and research questions

The main aim of the research was to develop an understanding of the influences on young people's career decision making. The aim results in five research questions. These are:

1. How do young people make career decisions?
2. What are the influences on young people's career decision making?
3. How do young people learn about themselves and the world outside?
4. How do young people apply knowledge about themselves in their career decision making?
5. What professional career guidance interventions have been useful in challenging and supporting them to move on?

Target groups

Conducting pan-European research with young people required the project team to develop language and understanding to target the research consistently across all countries. The team noted the difference in language used across the partner countries in terms of educational phases. For example, in parts of UK, the primary phase of education ends at aged 11 when secondary schooling begins however

young people have no career decisions to make at age 11. In the UK young people only have career choices at aged 14, 16 and 18 whereas in other countries key decision points are similar but the names given to the types of school differs. For this reason, the group agreed that the focus of the research was around career decision making points and not limited by types of school. As the research is about career decision making, the research looked at two groups aged 13-14, and 15-16 about the choices they have to make.

Definitions

To bring clarity and a shared meaning, the following definitions were adopted for the purpose of this project:

Career refers primarily to the sequence and variety of work roles, paid or unpaid, that individuals undertake throughout their lives; but it is also the construct which enables individuals to make sense of valued work opportunities and how their work roles relate to their wider life roles (Career Development Institute (CDI) 2017).

Career guidance is an *umbrella* term which describes a range of activities which support people to make and implement career decisions. UDACE produced a list of seven activities (Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education, 1986) to help define guidance including information; advice; coaching; education:

Careers education is the delivery of learning about careers as part of the curriculum. Careers education is often closely related to work-experience and other forms of work-related learning (Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy 2016).

Careers information is the provision of information and resources about courses, occupations and career paths (Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy 2016).

Careers advice is more in-depth explanation of information and how to access and use information (Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy 2016).

Career coaching (also referred to as personal career guidance in some EU countries) - a formal definition from the International Federation of Coaching (ICF) states that a career coach “partners with you in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires you to maximize your personal and professional potential. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive [career coaching] guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning.” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004b)

Personal career guidance is a process which enables individuals to consider their circumstances, values and aspirations; confront any challenges; resolve any conflicts; build resilience and confidence; develop new perspectives; justify their thinking and reach a decision in the light of relevant career and labour market information (CDI 2017)

Career guidance interventions pertain to a wide range of activities that “include individual interviews, group discussions, school lessons, structured experiences and assistance via the telephone or the Internet, as well as people’s use of self-help resources in schools, offices and on the Internet” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004a; Sampson, J Dozier and Colvin 2011)

Persons receiving career guidance might include individuals, clients, students, advisees, customers, patrons and employees (Sampson, J Dozier and Colvin 2011)

Practitioners refers to a variety of professionals with varying levels of experience, qualifications and job titles including terms such as coach, counsellor, psychologist, teacher, adviser and development manager (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004a; Sampson, J Dozier and Colvin 2011)

Career resources “include career assessments; occupational, educational, training and employment information; and instructional materials and media” (Sampson, J Dozier and Colvin 2011)

Career management skills are competencies which help individuals to identify their existing skills, develop career learning goals and take action to enhance their careers (Neary et al 2016) .

Interesting practice – this refers to career guidance activities that is innovative in some way, makes use of technology in its design and delivery, and is demonstrably effective.

Stakeholders – this refers to the government and policy makers, parents, brokers and career guidance providers.

Research approach

The research involved four phases of research each of which was undertaken by the five country partners:

- A rapid review of existing literature including both published and unpublished works (grey literature) which provided evidence about the influences on young people’s career decision making.
- A quantitative phase involving online and paper surveys of pupils, students and parents.
- A qualitative phase involving focus groups with young people.
- Research circles which reviewed the data through the lens of practitioner insights.

A full description of the research methodology is included in the technical report which is appended to this report.

In total data was collected from 660 young people and 285 parents. The following table summarises the number of respondents for each phase of the research.

Figure 1: Research participants

Mode of data collection	Total number of young people	Total number of parents
Survey	487	285
Focus groups	173	0
Total	660	285

The methodology was chosen to provide a rich source of quantitative and qualitative data. It should be noted that whilst the research gathered data from a useful sample, it is not possible to generalise the findings as the survey did not gather data from

children and their parents. Rather parents and young people were sampled independently. That said, the data raises some interesting questions which will be explored throughout the report.

Literature review

Macro-economic conditions

The data for this research was gathered in a pre-Covid 19 world and the picture of the macro-economic situation in each partner country may have changed somewhat in response to the pandemic. It should also be noted that in the UK, the issue of both education and career development is a responsibility which is devolved to each of the countries which make up the UK. There are times within the report that the authors refer to UK wide issues where appropriate for example where economic data, or where issues which are common across all of the countries making up the UK are explored. Consequently, in places this report distinguishes at times between England specific issues and UK wide issues.

Whilst the five countries in this project do share some similarities with regards to their macro-economic conditions, there are also some key differences between them. Across the five countries involved there appears to be an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment levels, this is evident in some countries more so than others. At the time the research was conducted both the Czech Republic and Denmark have some of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU, with the Czech Republic boasting an unemployment rate of 2.1% in Q4 of 2018. Whilst the UK's unemployment rate is not as low as the Czech Republic's or Denmark's, it did decline from 2018 to 2019 to 3.9% and between April and June 2019 the country boasted an employment rate of 76.1% (Office for National Statistics, 2019), a record high figure that has not been seen since records began in 1971. In comparison, in 2019 both Spain and Greece recorded significantly higher unemployment rates, 14.1% and 17.3% respectively (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019) Whilst these are high figures, particularly for Greece, the unemployment rate has been on a steady decline in recent years following the economic crash in 2010.

Industry in the Czech Republic is mainly centred around automotive production and tourism, with Czech car exports comprising as much as 80% of the country's GDP. In 2018 there were 10.6 million international arrivals into the country, with 6.7 million visiting Prague, as such it is no surprise that in 2018 the service industry contributed to 54.23% of the GDP and employed nearly 60% of the active population (Nordeatrade.net, 2018). Similarly, tourism contributes significantly to Spain's industry in addition to growing industries such as exportation and real estate, however there are high numbers of temporary contracts across the country causing uncertainty for many employed people (Infojobs-ESADE, 2018). Greece is probably the most financially unstable country in this study, following the economic crash of 2010. As such in 2017 50% of young people aged 15-24 years old were unemployed, public spending on education declined 36%, teacher salaries fell 28% in the decade to 2015 and there has been a recruitment freeze for teachers meaning that many teachers are on 'substitute contracts' (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017). Added to this, Greece also has four of the eleven highest areas of NEETs in the EU.

Social mobility

Social mobility and the determinants on increasing active social mobility vary across the five countries in this research. In England strategies have been put in place to increase social mobility, particularly amongst those individuals who are in disadvantaged groups or living in disadvantaged areas. In 2017 the Opportunity Area Strategy was created to address social mobility, education inequalities and improve aspirations and outcomes in 12 of the most challenged areas across England (Department for Education, 2017b). Research by the Social Mobility Commission (2019) explored educational pathways of over 5,000 high-ranking individuals in Britain and reports Britain as becoming an increasingly divided nation with power structures being dominated by a narrow section of the population and the suggestion that the vote to leave the EU in 2016 reflected these divisions.

In the Czech Republic social mobility is highly dependent on literacy rates. Further to this, a child's education in the Czech Republic is dependent on their parent's educational background, with children from more stimulating households going on to study at multi-year general secondary schools (Czech Longitudinal Study in Education, 2018). This is a shared finding with social mobility characteristics in Greece in which 59.5% of people aged 25-59 who lived in great or some difficulty having been raised in a family or household that experienced great or some difficulty, suggesting that being socially mobile in these two countries is significantly constricted.

Furthermore, in the Czech Republic extreme poverty is experienced in rural areas across the country with a population which experiences low productivity, gender inequalities, homelessness, and high rates of early school leavers. As such there are high rates of the rural population migrating across the country to more affluent areas in the hope of successfully finding work. This has increased pressure on the local infrastructure and housing stocks.

Despite Denmark offering free and open access to all levels of education, with free and mandatory career education and guidance throughout compulsory schooling the country still falls behind other Nordic countries for compulsory education breaking through the cycle of negative social heritage.

An interesting factor that has been raised in literature from Spain and the Czech Republic is the inequalities in social mobility experienced by women. In addition to Spain displaying especially low levels of employment amongst young people, non-EU citizens and the disabled, it is also prevalent amongst women. This is also evident in the Czech Republic where statistics suggest that after having children, women face a long absence from the labour market and often struggle to find work following parental leave. Comparatively however, women who had older children and had returned to the labour market had the highest rate of employment (The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2018).

The skills agenda

Approaches to addressing a skills agenda varies significantly across the countries involved in this research, with only England and Spain showing evidence of having developed a national skills agenda.

In 2017 a Careers Strategy was developed in England as a means of creating fair and accessible career guidance opportunities for young people (Department for Education, 2017a). The strategy aims to implement guidelines for schools, young people, businesses, and the careers community to ensure young people are provided with adequate information aiding their careers and education decisions whilst also tackling the UK skills gap. In addition to this, pupils at secondary schools are also required to have at least one 'meaningful' encounter with businesses per academic year which is monitored during school inspection visits. The Local Government Association (2017) noted that the skills gap in England is worsening and proposed that by 2024 there will be a lack of high-skilled workers and an abundance of intermediate and low-skilled workers in the labour market. Recommendations by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (Department for Business Industry and Skills and the Department for Education, 2016) on how to improve post-19 education and training options in England suggest a need for simplification of the skills landscape, putting service users at the heart of the system and the provision of clear information on the quality of provision and the impact of skills development.

In 2019, the Delegated Committee of the Government for Economic Affairs in Spain updated its 2019-2022 Stability Programme, as well as its National Reform Programme for 2019, referring to the European Union frameworks. Two new sections were included in the National Reform Programme (Reino De Espana, 2019). The first of these was related to improving educational and professional competences, and the second was related to developing the citizens' professional qualifications.

Given the fact that Spain's early school leaving rate exceeded the European average, this was a priority. As part of the reform programme a comprehensive educational reform based on five pillars was developed including: children's rights; gender equality, prevention of gender violence and respect for sexual-emotional diversity; the continuous improvement of educational centres and a greater personalisation of learning; educating for sustainable development and global citizenship; and digital transformation.

Much like educational strategies in England, in Spain there is an additional focus on the implementation of programmes that strengthen STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) capacities and learning. Despite this the National Reform Programme makes no reference to the expansion of *soft skills*, which are included among the most needed basic competences in the 21st century (Foro and Económico Mundial 2018).

Comparatively, Denmark, Greece and the Czech Republic have all acknowledged the impact of failing to adopt a skills agenda, however they have all yet to introduce an initiative. In the Czech Republic, the employment rate amongst low-skilled workers is 30%, 50pp below the Czech average, with participation in training and lifelong learning being low, particularly for underrepresented groups (European Commission, 2019).

According to the research into the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, 2019), in coming

years many jobs requiring mainly routine skills will be substitutable with technologies, affecting 1.3 million Czech employees within 5 years, 2.2 million Czech employees within 15 years and almost 3.4 million Czech employees within 30 years. Added to this, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index, only 24% of Czechs have above basic digital skills, compared to the EU average is 31% (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019), which is unlikely to change in the imminent future as graduates are lacking in the fields of mathematics, science, statistics, and health and welfare studies demonstrating a mismatch in skills between education and employment.

This attitude is echoed in Denmark where a report (Denmark's Growth Council, 2016) signalled the impact of a lack of action to educate and increase the numbers of young people in vocational education. This would result in insufficient numbers of employees with the required communication and information technology skills. Denmark would lack 85,000 sufficiently qualified workers in 2025, as well as a loss of 85 billion kroner. The report presents four suggestions:

- A greater focus on young people choosing vocational education.
- Supporting education with a technological aim.
- Better service to the companies.
- Recruiting and retaining more qualified international labour.

In Greece, according to EUROSTAT's Regional Book 2018 (EUROSTAT, 2018) recent graduates in Greece appeared to face considerable difficulties in finding work, partially as a consequence of not having the necessary skills which are needed to provide a foundation for the longer-term recovery of the Greek economy. In fact, young people in Greece have been more adversely affected by the economic crisis than many other European countries, with 87% of young people in Greece feeling like they have been marginalised in their country by the economic crisis.

To deliver these outcomes Greece needs a strong vocational education and training system, and effective university and post-secondary education, responsive to the requirements of the labour market. Furthermore, the demands on the education system have grown. The large numbers of adults who lost their jobs during the 2010 crisis require re-skilling to be able to return to work as well as newly arrived refugee children and teenagers needing education and training to be able to contribute to Greece. As a result, the government is developing programmes focusing on the skills needed in Greece's most dynamic sectors.

This effort complements the government's investments in vocational education, apprenticeships, and adult learning systems. On the other hand, many out-of-work youths new to the labour force, can lack solid general education. For them, reinforcing transferable, general skills, alongside work experience can improve long-term employability and earnings more than specific skill training (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2015; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015)

Development zones

Enterprise and economic development have become the focus of all the countries involved in this research, however, each country demonstrates different ways in which they are tackling the issues. For some of the countries there has been a move to focus on the development of certain regions rather than the whole country.

One of these countries has been Denmark who have acknowledged the need for all Danish regions to experience development and growth and not just the larger Danish cities. Some of the most important initiatives to ensure development in all the regions in Denmark were: 1) Relocation of jobs away from the capital, Copenhagen 2) Additional funding to strengthen the education in rural areas and 3) A strategy for securing broadband to the whole country.

The Czech Republic experienced similar issues regarding regional disparities and in some regions this has resulted in talented, university educated people moving away from the area. (The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2018). This migration of talent further deepens other economic problems in differing areas of the socioeconomic structure that are manifested by population decline, falling property prices, reduced ability of these regions to take advantage of local communities' resources for the creation of new jobs or in conditions for civil society development. Furthermore, due to the lower levels of education along the borders of the Czech Republic and the fact that it is inhabited predominantly by elderly citizens there is a lack of highly qualified jobs, public services, and a strong infrastructure.

Both Spain and England have developed governmental objectives and programmes aimed at enterprise and youth employment and education. In 2011 the English government began developing Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and enterprise zones with the aim of fostering business and economic development across the country. The LEPs are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up to achieve local economic priorities, economic growth, and job creation. One of the incentives that has been offered up by the English government to businesses is the offer of tax breaks and government support for those looking to set up and operate within the zones.

In Spain, an Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment Strategy (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2013a) was developed to encourage and promote youth employability and recruitment, with education, training and guidance playing a significant role in this. In addition, the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2013b) was established for young adults, under the age of 25, to receive a good job offer, continuing education, apprenticeships or work placements within a maximum period of four months from the date on which they finished their formal education or had become unemployed. It has been demonstrated by initiatives adopted in both the UK and Spain that there is a focus on the development of strategies aimed at benefitting young people, with the knowledge that the country is reliant on these people for the development of the country.

Educational landscape

Ensuring a sustainable and up to date educational system is key to ensuring a strong economy which is why the countries in this research are focussing on changing the ways that the education system works in their country. The dominant focus of these educational reforms is the development of vocational education and training.

In Greece apprenticeships have existed as a distinct vocational education and training (VET) option for learners at upper secondary level since the 1950s, in the form of the EPAS (vocational - upper secondary - training schools) apprenticeship

scheme, largely offered through the national public employment service. The 2016 the national strategic framework was set out for upgrading VET including apprenticeships (hereafter referred to as 2016 VET strategy) includes the gradual introduction of new apprenticeship schemes next to the existing one offered by the Greek national Employment Service OAED (Cedefop, 2018a; Cedefop, 2018b).

In Greece, apprenticeships are conducted on the basis of a specific curriculum, in order to achieve specific learning outcomes and to ensure the cooperation of educational structure and business. It is necessary to stress the fact that there is provision for daily allowance and insurance for apprentices, aiming at the establishment of their labour rights and the assimilation of an investment culture by enterprises.

Education in the various OAED Vocational Schools (EPAS) around the country is based on the Apprenticeship system, which combines in-class vocational education with remunerated on-the-job training (traineeship) in businesses. The aim is to help students acquire professional experience in real work conditions so as to facilitate their subsequent integration into the labour market.

Denmark also focussed on the importance of vocational education demonstrated 2018 with a development of a joint agreement 'From school to skilled worker - vocational education for the future' (The Government, 2018). The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that more young people in the future will choose a vocational education after compulsory school. More than 100 initiatives are presented as part of this agreement including the imperative that success depends on a strengthening of the practical subjects in the compulsory school.

The Spanish compulsory education system is divided into Primary Education (from 6 to 12 years old) and Secondary Education (from 12 to 16 years old). Compulsory Secondary Education is organised into two cycles: the first cycle is comprised of the first three academic years and the second cycle is comprised of the last year of this programme, this particular cycle is designed to help prepare students for post-compulsory education.

In addition to the compulsory education offered, the Spanish secondary education system also offers Bachillerato (Post-compulsory education), Basic Level Vocational Training, and Intermediate Level Vocational Training. There are seven key competencies focussed on education, one of which refers to the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. This subject encourages the development of entrepreneurial and enterprise competences such as risk taking, innovation, negotiation, strategic thinking, and of taking on business ventures.

In England there is an increasing push for young people to work towards apprenticeships, despite this the number of young people starting apprenticeships fell following the introduction of a new apprenticeship funding system in May 2017 (Powel, 2019a). There were 119,100 fewer starts in 2017/18 than in 2016/17. The age profile of people starting apprenticeships changed between 2016/17 and 2017/18, with a higher proportion of starts from younger apprentices.

The gender profile also changed. In 2017/18, 49% of apprenticeships starts were by women and 51% by men (Powel, 2019b). This was the first time that more apprenticeships have been started by men than women since 2009/10. In addition to this, starting in September 2020 new 'T Levels' are being introduced to follow secondary education and GCSEs.

The two-year T Level courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work. T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 45 days. They will provide the knowledge and experience needed to open the door into skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

Career guidance

The partner countries in this research demonstrate differing attitudes and actions with regards to careers guidance. In England, 2010 saw the creation of the Careers Profession Task Force, established by the coalition government to provide the vision for high-quality delivery of careers education, information, advice and personal guidance. The taskforce made 14 recommendations 'to establish and enhance the principles of professionalism in the careers sector' (The Careers Profession Task Force, 2010) ensuring that careers professionals in England have the knowledge and skills required to enable young people to make informed decisions about learning and work pathways, and can manage and plan their own career and personal development.

Further to this, a recommendation was made that all careers guidance sessions should be held to a high standard of delivery and as such should be held accountable through Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspections. Changes to funding in 2011 removed the requirement for schools to provide statutory careers education, instead putting the onus on the school to provide young people with independent personal careers guidance during the relevant phase of their education, most often around the ages of 14 and 15.

Despite this, the Education Select Committee (2013) raised concerns about the quality of career guidance which was provided to young people and as a result, the statutory duty to provide impartial career guidance was extended to include pupils aged 12 through to 18. Ofsted also published a report (Office for Standards in Education, 2013) outlining its concerns about the quality of career guidance in schools. In the same year, research was commissioned into discovering 'what pragmatic actions could improve careers guidance in England' and resulted in the emergence of the Gatsby Benchmarks on Good Career Guidance (The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014).

The Good Career Guidance report identifies eight benchmarks to be used by schools and colleges for improving careers provision. More recently, the Careers and Enterprise Company have taken on an increased role in supporting the roll out of all the Gatsby Benchmarks, producing annual 'State of the Nation' reports detailing the progression of schools/colleges achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks. The most recent report (Careers and Enterprise Company, 2019) presents that at least 2 million children are receiving an encounter with an employer every year, schools are on average achieving 3.2 of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

In Denmark career guidance is instilled into their curriculum through the mandatory school topic of 'Education and Job', which is the responsibility of all teachers to teach, and is planned in cooperation with the career professionals employed at the Municipal Youth Effort (Ministry of Education (Denmark), 2019) The objectives for students are stated as 'gaining the necessary competences to make career choices based on their own preferences and abilities, understanding the importance of lifelong learning and comprehensive knowledge regarding educational and vocational options'.

In Denmark, all students in municipal lower secondary education (15-16 years old) must be offered guidance by the local youth guidance centres. Parents must also be informed of the educational and career guidance available to young people within the municipality and the options for education and training after completing lower secondary education, an interesting factor that perhaps puts Denmark further ahead than other countries in the study.

There is also a push by the Ministry of Education that career counselling is increasingly expected to target young people deemed at risk of being unable to choose, enrol in or complete a programme of upper secondary education – rather than, for instance, an understanding of guidance as a lifelong process for all as found in the European resolution on lifelong guidance (Skovhus, 2018). In addition to direct careers guidance prior to the completion of lower secondary education (Year 9), all students should have a plan for their further education and training – called the Personal Education Plan.

This plan should include: the student's goals for post-compulsory education; the student's preferences in terms of upper secondary education, the optional Year 10 (ages 16-17), employment or other activities preparing the student for upper secondary education; the assessment of the youth guidance centre or school regarding the student's readiness for upper secondary education and any response from parents. For students choosing the optional Year 10, the education plan must outline the student's goals for the year (Ministry of Education (Denmark), 2019).

Much like the rest of the countries in this research it is compulsory in the Czech Republic for guidance and counselling to be provided at all lower and upper secondary schools, like many other countries there is no clear state framework or instructions on how this should look like. Furthermore, there is neither in-service training specialised on career guidance and counselling, nor any state regulation on what kind of knowledge or skills should the school career counsellors have.

Due to the issue of funding, time for career guidance at schools is very limited, on average it is about 4 hours a week (in addition to teaching duties), which often includes educational and behaviour issues. If there is a need for deeper or more intensive care, schools cooperate further with local/regional partners – mainly with pedagogical and psychological counselling centres or special education centres. They provided deeper diagnostic tests and they can offer meetings with pupils and parents aimed to the explanation of the tests results. Some of the Czech regions are taking some further steps for career guidance development at schools, e.g., further education of counsellors in career guidance (short-term courses only), programmes

for pupils and students, mentoring programmes for counsellors, however there is currently no holistic approach to careers guidance for young people.

Across Spain there are guidance departments in Pre-School Education and Primary Education, and in both Compulsory and Non-Compulsory Secondary Education; Educational and Psycho-pedagogical teams for Pre-school Education and Primary Education; Student Information and Guidance centres for university students; Professional Guidance services, in particular for unemployed individuals; Professional Guidance within the accreditation and validation processes in both formal and informal Professional Qualification training.

There are also different establishments, entities, etc., which offer professional guidance services, such as trade unions, NGOs, chambers of commerce. Despite this, unlike England, the ability to evaluate the guidance services remains an unresolved task, especially in the non-university educational system. A state evaluation of the quality standards of said services has not been carried out since 2009 (Ministerio and de Educación, 2009), with secondary education students lacking access to adequate professional guidance which would enable them to channel their interests and abilities towards an active life.

In Greece there is a focus on careers guidance amongst the most disadvantaged groups in society with six Employment Offices in certain cities whose aim is to integrate into the labour market the population groups that are faced with the risk of social exclusion: people with disabilities; ex-offenders; those recovering from addiction; disengaged young people; and other socially vulnerable groups. In addition to this, there is careers guidance available not only to students but also to adults to support those out of work, and help individuals wishing to develop their careers.

The Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning (INEDIVIM) supervises 62 Career Guidance Bureaus that operate inside the Second Chance Schools all over Greece for adult citizens above 18 years who have not finished compulsory education. Moreover 35 Career Services of the Employment and Career Development Structures (DASTA) of the Universities and Higher Technological Institutions of Greece offer career guidance and counselling to students and graduates supporting their smooth transition to the labour market.

In the private sector the private and municipal Lifelong Learning Centres, licenced by National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), are providing among others career guidance services to support the career development of adult trainees, to improve their self-awareness, to plan their educational paths and to take better educational and employment decisions.

Young people's approach to making career decisions.

Across the five countries research suggests that a young person starts making career decisions from primary school age (5 years old) and it is heavily influenced by family, education and peers. For example, Blenkinsop et al (2006) note that there are several dimensions to a young person's career decision making; agency, school and the consequences of the decision and reaction to choice. This is supported by findings in the Czech Republic by Drahoňovská's and Šťastnová's (2011) which states that 'the influence of family, especially parents, on the choice of educational or

career path is considerable. Almost all primary school pupils discuss their future at home with their parents or other family members and get information from the Internet, educational organisations, and their friends.

Oomen (2016) reports that careers guidance interventions 'have been designed to involve parents more in adolescents' career development since the 1960s'. She emphasises the importance of involving parents in the educational setting and encouraging them to be a part of their child's career decision-making. What is important to consider however is that parents may not be aware of how influential they are in their child's career choices and as such it is even more vital for them to be included in career guidance sessions.

Oomen (2016) suggests that ways that parents can be included in their child's career development is through attending career sessions themselves and through themselves giving career talks in schools. However in some countries the parental involvement is more prevalent than other, for example, in the Greek society parents have a dominant role in the organisation of their children's lives, with children suggesting that they do not have full freedom to decide themselves what they want to do for a career (Mousourou, 1989).

Research by Blenkinsop et al (2006) describes eight types of decision makers when it comes to career guidance decisions:

- **Confident aspirational** (Confident and optimistic about the future and possibly slightly over-ambitious)
- **Determined realist** (Have a clear picture of what they want in the future and are optimistic about reaching their goals).
- **Long-term preparers** (No clear view of a long-term career but remain in education as they think it the best route to success).
- **Indecisive worrier** (Have no vision of the future and are anxious about the decision to be made).
- **Short-term conformist** (Thinking about the next step rather than the long-term future).
- **Unrealistic dreamer** (Have an optimistic vision of the future and select new and unfamiliar options).
- **Comfort seeker** (Focus on what they have enjoyed in the past and will therefore not cause them pressure in the future).
- **Defeated copers** (Have a pessimistic vision of the future and stay with what is familiar).

[The influences on young people's career decision making](#)

There is a strong correlation between how young people make career decisions and their influences on career decision making. In England, the Department for Education's evaluation of primary careers education found that accessing career guidance at a young age led to increased attainment and engagement. Furthermore, a study in England of over two hundred Year 11 (age 15-16) students in two schools found that career coaching and personal guidance programmes, and support delivered by career guidance professionals (those trained to a minimum of level 6 in career guidance) resulted in a greater level of career readiness and showed stronger indicators of successful transitions compared to the students who did not take part (Hanson and Clark, 2019).

This is supported by Danish research which states that 60% of students in a Danish Evaluation Institute study (2016) found that career activities have helped them in relation to their educational choice. In Greece the recent economic climate has been said to make the career decision-making for young people more difficult and demanding than ever before and has shown that young people in Greece change their mind about their career decision due to the economic crisis (Pappas and Kounenou, 2011).

Having said this, literature from Spain, the Czech Republic and England has highlighted how across all the countries family and peers are said to provide a significant influence on a young person's career making decisions. An interesting point raised by Danish researchers however finds that parents identify they lack knowledge and an overview of the various education programs: they want to support their children in their educational choice and transition. The parents' ability to support their children is highly dependent on their own educational background (Juul and Pless, 2018).

Learning about oneself and the world outside

As has been demonstrated in the previous research questions young people across the European countries value the opinions of, and are influenced by, family, peers, careers guidance counsellors and in some cases the country's economy. Through the career guidance sessions that the young people receive they are able to learn about the opportunities available to them once they finish compulsory education.

In Greece for example, careers lessons are taught on a weekly basis with the aim of helping young people to discover who they are and what they want to become. This is supported by the concept of career management skills which are defined by Neary *et al.* (2016) as 'competencies which help individuals to identify their existing skills, develop career learning goals and take action to enhance their careers'.

Literature however suggests that it becomes problematic when career guidance is framed only as a career choosing activity, because it will be perceived as a meaningless activity by those students who have already made their educational choice.

Skovhus (2018) recommends that careers related activities should be framed as a broader career learning activity, where there is a focus on horizon expansion, so that the students experience different ways to live their lives, in ways that can be understood as valued life opportunities. Further to this, studies such as those by Rodríguez *et al.* (2015) and Santana *et al.* (2013) explore how developing guidance actions that promote self-knowledge among young people is necessary in order to help them become aware of their potential and limitations, and likewise, these actions must provide them with accurate information on their labour and academic options, enabling them to make informed decisions.

Applying knowledge about oneself in career decision making

For many young people making the transition from school to further education or employment can prove to be a difficult process, despite the support and guidance from schools and guidance counsellors. In the Czech Republic they have tried to combat this through adaptation courses in secondary school to help them to prepare

and adapt to their new learning styles and surroundings, something which could no doubt help the young people during later transitions.

A similar idea has also been adopted in Spain where children are prepared at the end of primary education to start developing interests leading to autonomy and maturity, it is argued that participation in these preparatory activities guarantees a better process of adaptation to the next educational stage (González, C and González, 2015; Ruiz, Castro and León, 2010). Further to this, there is also a push in Spain for parental intervention with regards to career guidance and assistance in the decision-making processes. In Greece, a key transition in a young person's life comes at the age of 15 when it is required for the young person to be well informed and make crucial life decisions. At this age in Greece, it is the time where the student decides whether to go to a general or vocational school, something which is often influenced by family expectations, peer behaviour and government guidelines.

In Denmark help for career decision making varies significantly across the country depending on the priorities of the schools and the young people (Center for Ungdomsforskning Pluss Leadership and Epinion, 2012). For some schools and teachers, career guidance is not seen as something which should be prioritised and is often described as a 'time robber' (Balslev and Jensen, 2012, p. 13). Thus, children and young people in school receive careers education to a very different degree. There are also differences in the opportunities created for students to gain experience and to reflect on education and work and to other part of life.

Gender and career decision making

Research suggests that there are still gender stereotypes that are occurring when it comes to young people making career choices (Francis, 2010; Chambers *et al.*, 2018). With time Francis (2010) suggests that girls are beginning to fight the gender stereotype and are starting to consider jobs previously associated with the opposite sex. Chambers *et al.* (2018) however state that girls are still found to be focussed on careers in caring and nurturing roles, with nine times as many girls wanting to be teachers than boys.

Research by Sanz et al (2007) found that females are more concerned with uncertainty, and experience doubts. They also emphasise the importance of time and money and the impact of the outcome of the decision. Females also tend to use emotion in career decision making. Males on the other hand tend to analyse the information more carefully and tend to identify. Research by Rojewski and Hill (1998) found that male adolescents were more likely to feel discouraged, lack necessary information about careers, perceive external barriers, and lack interest in making choices.

Making use of professional career guidance interventions

As has been discussed in earlier literature, impacts of careers guidance can be achieved through a variety of approaches which include one-to-one counselling, paired work, group work and online provision (Hooley, 2014). Despite the work across all the countries in this Erasmus piece of work, literature by Hodgkinson and Sparkes (1997) suggests that career decisions are strongly influenced by an individual's family background and culture and were heavily influenced by emotions and feelings. Furthermore, through a comprehensive literature review (Neary et al,

2016) suggest that recipients of career guidance valued help that was ongoing, supported transitions and fostered positive attitudes and behaviours.

Research from the Czech Republic (Hlad' and Drahoňovská, 2012) however argues that young people who received careers guidance and education appreciated the assistance and help provided by their subject teachers more so than careers counsellors, 20% compared to 14% (Hlad' and Drahoňovská, 2012). This finding suggests that teachers play a more important role in a child's career decision making than a fully qualified careers counsellor, perhaps because of the constant relationship and the knowledge that the teacher already possesses in relation to learning abilities, interests and familial background.

Álvarez (2005b) suggests that a few of the many ways that careers advisers can help individuals become more useful in challenging and supporting young people is by helping individuals to become aware of their interests, motivations, aptitudes, possibilities and capacities, and showing them the value of decisions taken in the short, medium or long term. Further to this, the Spanish research suggests the importance of bringing the working environment closer to the people who are at risk of social exclusion due to certain characteristics (disability, age, lack of interest or motivation, unemployed, etc.).

Danish literature suggests the need for an increase in internships and visitation days as it is believed these are essential for students' decision-making and sense of clarity in relation to their educational choice (Larsen *et al.*, 2011). The same literature also suggests the importance of these activities being carefully planned, followed up and included in a coherent counselling process. Research by Skovhus (2018) argues that there is an unfulfilled career-learning potential around careers guidance in terms of strengthening students' reflection on education and jobs, themselves and the world, and that is not beneficial to the students' sense of relevance to merely present 'supporting educational choices' as the sole purpose of career guidance activities. Indeed, instead it is important to take to opportunity to spark curiosity and learning, encouraging individuals to explore career-related questions in their lives into account when planning career activities.

An issue found in Greece, as in Denmark, is that there is a reliance on career guidance to be undertaken in lessons and is often undertaken by non-specialised staff due to a lack of money to both train and employ trained guidance counsellors.

Research findings

This section sets out the findings from the research.

Young people's approaches to making career decisions

Introduction

This section presents data from young people and parents about the way young people approach career decision making. Data is presented about how satisfied young people

are about their career decisions. The key findings are that

- Anxiety about career decision making rises until the age of 15 and then suddenly reduces.

- Not all young people experience anxiety about career decision making.
- The level of anxiety is not consistent across all partner countries.
- Females are more anxious than males about career decision making.
- Young people have a range of models for approaching career decision making.
- Young people are largely satisfied with the career-related decisions and parents also think this to be the case.

Feelings about career decision making.

The survey data indicated that there was no significant difference in the level of anxiety experienced by young people irrelevant of their country of origin or by their age although the data did indicate a slight increase in calmness by the age of 15. One explanation for this may be about the timing of the survey which was implemented in the autumn term. This is a time when this age group generally receive personal career guidance to help them with their next decision and this support may result in a reduction in anxiety. As we will see later in this section, there is a corresponding reduction in career thinking at this age and it maybe that young people have other issues on their mind as they deal with the inevitable pressures of being a teenager. The survey data did reveal a significant difference however between the anxiety experienced by gender with females being significantly more anxious than males. One female student responding to questions in a focus group described the feelings of anxiety and pressure associated with career decision making.

"I found it very difficult to make a decision about my future at that time. To make a decision about what I really want to do, if I will enjoy it or if I will fit in with new classmates. I was terribly afraid of it and I just did not know, why, I had to make such a big decision as early as 15. Would it be the right decision or the wrong decision? There were just so many questions in my head".

Female student from the Czech Republic (16 years)

Not all young people are anxious about the future. The extent to which young people were excited about career decision making did vary by country with young people in Greece being significantly more excited than their counterparts in other partner countries. Young people in the UK also demonstrated a level of excitement which was greater than those from Denmark and the Czech Republic. One student in the UK expressed his excitement about the future:

"I am excited about being independent and making money".

Male student from England (14 years)

Young people in Greece were also more interested in thinking about the future than their counterparts from other partner countries.

The age that career exploration begins.

The survey data indicates that the young people began thinking about their futures between the ages of 12 and 14. This was corroborated by the survey responses made by parents. What is interesting about the survey data is that across all partner countries a percentage of both young people and parents indicated that career exploration starts at a very young age. Focus group participants added a further dimension to this finding by explaining that although they may have started thinking

about careers during the primary phase of education, they didn't give this serious thought until they were much older (aged 13) around the time they received their first careers education input which encouraged them to think about career decisions. One young person explained

"We had a day in primary school in year 6 [10 years of age] when you came dressed as what you wanted to be in the future, but it wasn't taken that seriously. It was good".

Female student from England (15 years)

The following graphs (figures 2 and 3 below) demonstrate an emerging pattern of engagement in career thinking increasing with age until around 14 years of age and then suddenly reducing again between the ages of 15 and 16 years. This seems an unusual finding because across partner countries, young people are very much in the middle of career planning at this age. Given that the data noted that young people between the ages of 15 and 16 are slightly calmer about career decision making it does raise some concerns that maybe calmness and a lack of engagement in career thinking go hand in hand for this age group! One explanation maybe that most young people have made one decision about learning options by this age and during the period of 15-16 they are reviewing this. It is possible that having made one career decision, they are feeling less anxious about this and it becomes less of a focus for their lives.

Figure 2: Age when young people started thinking about their career choice.

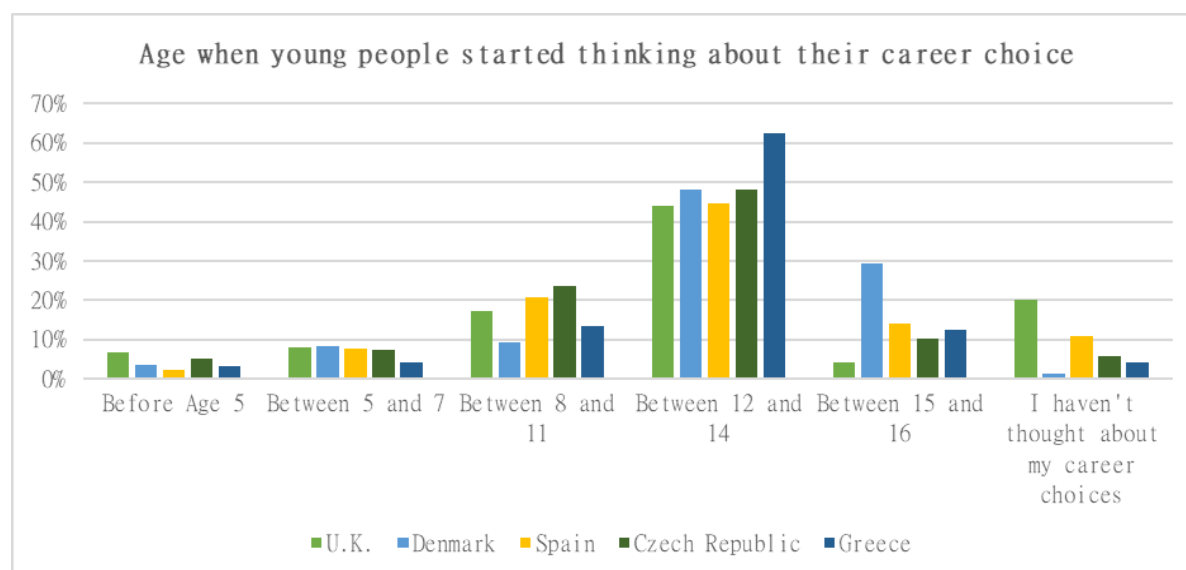
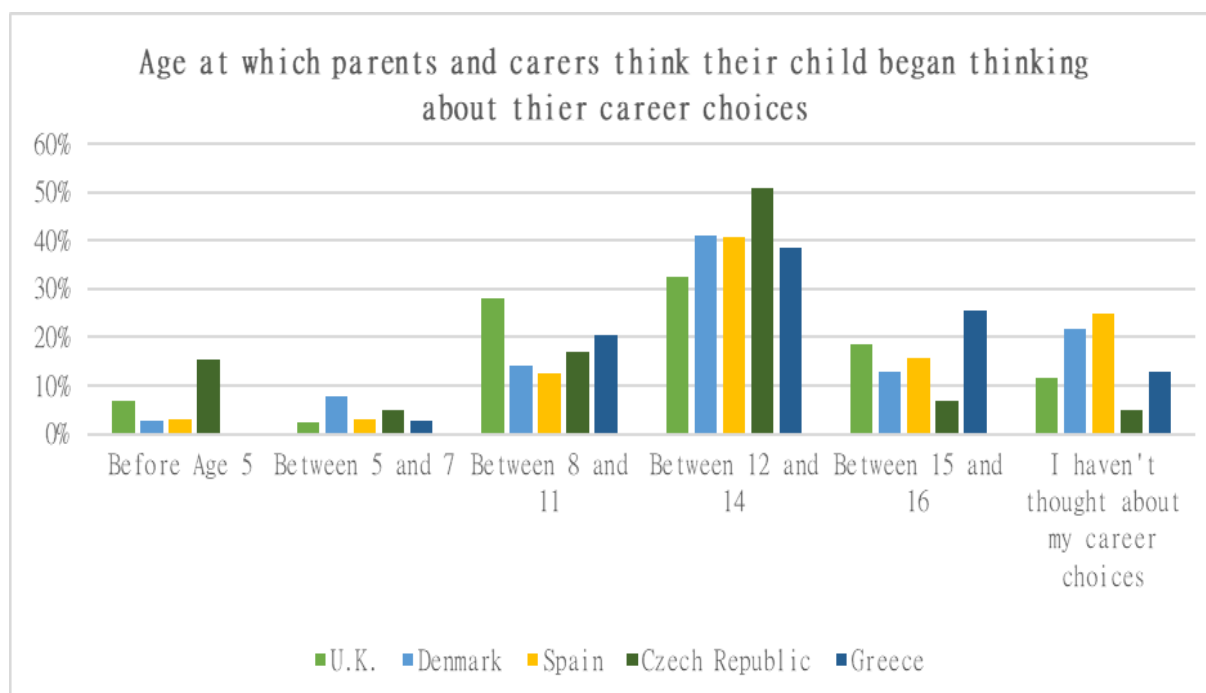


Figure 3: Age at which parents and carers think their child began thinking about their career choices.



Models of career decision making.

There were several models of career exploration and decision making adopted by focus group participants. This included thinking about:

- Subjects which they had previously studied and if they were good at them or if they liked them.
- Subject choices linked to hobbies and interests.
- Their own personal experiences which inspired them for example visiting doctors or other healthcare professionals.
- Their own academic ability and the impact this might have with different subjects.
- Jobs they might like to do in the future and whether the subjects would help them in that aim; and
- Skills and knowledge gaps and what options might help them to develop the different skills that could be used in their next steps.
- The pros and cons of their career choices and the path that they must follow to be able to get a certain job.

Satisfaction with career decision making.

Survey respondents who had indicated that they had already made a career decision were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with their recent decision, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied. Most respondents seem satisfied with their recent decision as most gave a score of 3, 4 or 5. There was little variation in this by country.

Parents and carers were also asked how satisfied they were with their child's decision about learning and work. Almost 50% of the people who responded to this question (68 out of 137) were very satisfied with their child's recent decision about learning and work. There was a slight difference in the answers provided by parents and carers from Spain who were less likely to give the highest score. This suggested

that in Spain whilst parents are less satisfied with their child's decision this does not appear to be the case with the children who are largely in line with their counterparts.

Conclusion

The young people in this research had all begun to develop their career thinking but the attitude and feelings which young people bring to this important phase of their lives appears to vary by age and gender. One of the unexpected findings from the data is that anxiety appears to increase until the age of 15 when it suddenly drops off and young people become much calmer. Whatever the explanation there are implications for those that develop programmes of career development in schools particularly because the age of 15 is also when most young people in the partner countries are approaching the second major career decision.

The research found that young people in Greece tended to be more anxious than their counterparts in other partner countries. One explanation for this is that traditionally, families stress the importance of career choice. Further to this, Greece has recently endured a significant recession due to the economic crash of 2010 leaving around 50% of young people unemployed in 2017 and this may have had an impact on young people's focus on career development.

Some young people are excited about career decision making and the future, but this is not consistent across all partner countries.

Young people begin thinking about their careers around the age of 12 however in all countries some young people began to think about this much earlier. Early career thinking is less focused or 'serious' amongst the younger age groups.

Young people approach career decision making in a number of ways. These approaches align to the dimensions set out by Blenkinsop et al (2006). This includes the extent to which young people have agency by exploring their own interests, experiences and abilities and linking these two options which will either give them pleasure or be fulfilling. Young people are driven to choose subjects which suit their academic ability, and, in this way, it can be said that school is an important contributor to the approach young people take. It is important in this approach that young people feel that they will succeed in line with expectations. Finally, young people consider the implications of their decision making on jobs which may be available to them in the future and adopt approaches which allow them to consider the positive and negative aspects of different career decisions.

The influences on young people's career decision making.

Introduction

This section explores the research data about the influences on young people's decision making. It considers parents attitudes and impressions along with the views of young peoples. The key findings are that:

- Young people do not always feel prepared to make decisions about future careers.
- Young people use information from a variety of sources but value that gathered from parents the most.
- The internet is a big influence on young people's career decision making.

- Parents mis-understand the extent to which young people use the internet to influence their career choices.
- When researching their career options, young people tend to look for information based on a set of criteria which is consistent across partner countries.
- Parents hold the most influence over young people's career decision making compared to all other groups of adults and peers.
- Young people have role models who they wish to emulate however the language surrounding role models is changing social media-influencers now stimulate career thinking alongside more traditional role models.
- Young people value the support through schools' careers programmes including work-related learning activities.
- Young people do not always recognise the value and impact of extra-curricular and informal learning opportunities may have for career decision making.

Researching career options

Several focus group participants felt that they had not been given enough information to help them with subject choices. One student explained the complexities of choosing subjects to study:

"You are told that you should take options out of different lists. Some of these are core subjects too. If you don't like the core subject, then you might do badly even if it isn't anything you want to do. It might limit going to University".

Female student from England (15 years)

Young people need to research their options and the survey data indicated that young people access information through a number of sources. The most frequently cited source was parents and carers (76.2%) followed by the internet (71.5%) and friends (66.3%). The least popular sources used were talking to people in the community (2.3%), visiting the public employment service (3.7%), and visiting the library (4.1%). Whilst these data are not unsurprising and corroborated by other sources (Oomen, 2016; Mousourou, 1989; Drahoňovská and Eliášková, 2011) the data indicates that this varies by age so for example, although learners aged 12 are less likely to have begun researching their careers, they are more likely to spend time in a library researching options than their counterparts. Sourcing information from workplaces became more important with 15-year-olds.

Young people search for a wide variety of topics on the internet for example information on university courses or job information. One young person noted that his research on the internet had included finding out about opportunities to visit a local learning provider:

"I was looking for some school for car mechanics. We got a book with the list of schools. I have chosen one school from the catalogue. And then I searched it on the Internet to know when it was open day at this school."

Male student from the Czech Republic (16 years)

Some young people had used the internet to complete online skills assessments although the results of these activities did not always find favour:

'I don't want to be a dog walker for the rest of my life'.
Female student from England (15 years)

The survey data provided an interesting insight into the differences between the types of information young people use and the beliefs that parents have about the types of information young people use. So, whilst young people hold the internet as the second most important source of information, parents give this much less importance with only 6.8% citing this as important in influencing their child's decision making.

Young people also value opportunities to visit organisations and gather information about a range of options. When researching, young people are looking for information on

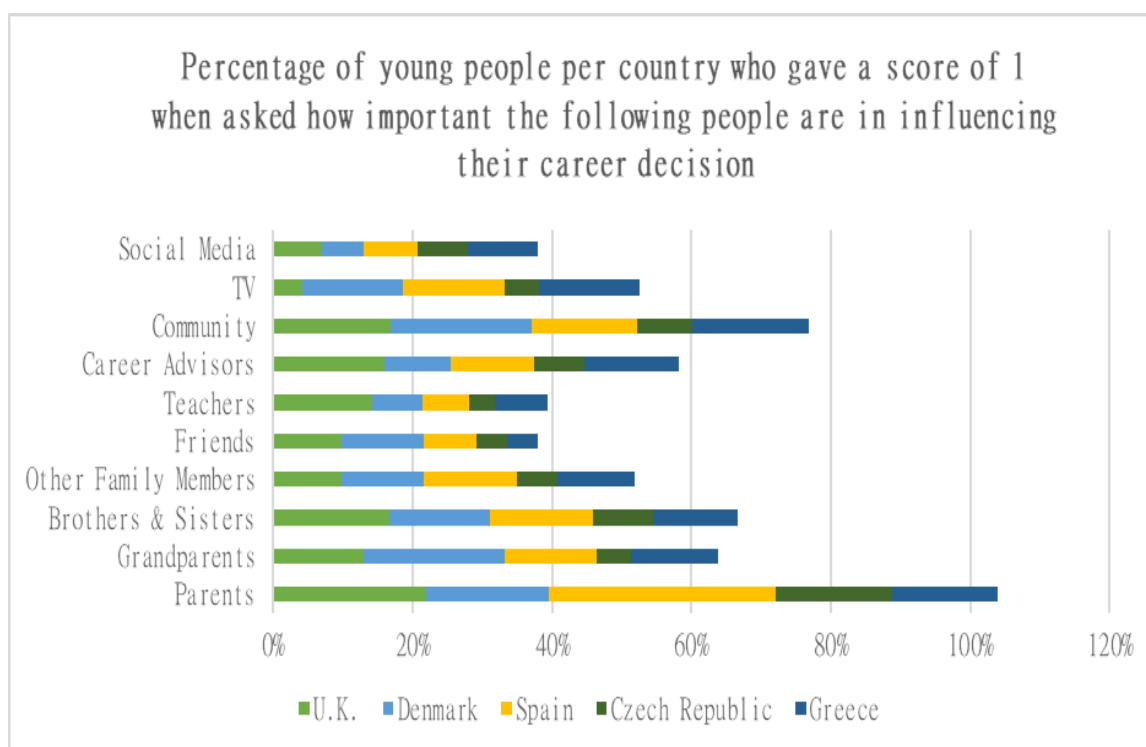
- Job prospects
- University and colleges courses
- Entry requirements
- Progression steps to achieve career aspirations.

Parents role in career decision making.

Not only are parents the most important source of information for young people they are also the most influential in informing career decision making. Survey respondents were asked to indicate how important a range of people are in influencing their career decisions by scoring them between 1 and 10, where 1 is the most important and 10 is the least important.

Figure 4 below displays the percentage of young people by country who gave a score of 1 to each person (i.e., the most important).

Figure 4: Percentage of young people per country who gave a score of 1 when asked how important the following people are in influencing their career decision.



In Spain, students suggested that having approval from parents was a key component of their career decision making.

“The fact that my family says that if it is what I want I should go for it.”
Female student from Spain (14 years old)

Some students noted the pros and cons of speaking to parents. In some cases, participants told us that parents knew them best and knew what they liked to do. One student noted that sometimes they pushed you into doing something that they liked. One student was philosophical:

‘They just want you to get a good job. They just said there are three of us and they said one needs to be a solicitor and one needs to be a doctor- all high paying jobs so that they can get the money!’
Female student from England (15 years)

Another student noted:

‘My dad doesn’t like his job and he didn’t get to go to Uni- he just wants me to do better than him, so I don’t end up in the same situation. He puts a lot of pressure on me to do well.’
Female student from England (15 years)

In the Czech Republic, parents were more influential and were often described as steering the choices made by their children and in some instances 'choosing for them'.

"My mom told me that I am interested in computers and I am good in it, so then I went to Internet and I googled some IT schools."

Female student from the Czech Republic (14 years)

"My dad told me some professions that he would like I will do in future. And from these professions I was interested in the mounted police most, because I enjoy horse riding. Then I was looking for some schools on the Internet".

Female student from the Czech Republic (14 years)

In one instance, a student had changed her career decision after discussing it with her mother.

"I told to my mother that I wish to become a clothing designer. We discussed this and after then my mother helped me to decide not to become clothing designer, but to become a jewellery designer, because it is a similar profession and there is a vocational school for jewellery design in our town".

Female student from the Czech Republic (14 years)

It is common for students to emulate their parents in their choice of career. In the Czech Republic for example, four focus groups spoke of following their parents' example:

- One male who aspires to become a software developer said that his role model was his father. His father is a web programmer.
- One female who aspires to become a mounted police officer said that her role model is her grandfather, who was a police officer.
- One female who aspires to become a pastry chef said that her role model was her grandmother. She helped her grandmother with preparing pastries.
- One female who is studying secondary school of nursing noted that her role models are her parents because her mother was a midwife, and her father was a paramedic.

Another student in England noted:

"My dad owns a haulage company and specialises in heavy haulage. That's the job I want to do".

Male student from England (15 years)

One female Spanish student noted:

"My parents have some clothes shops and I sometimes help them. And since I love fashion, and everything related to it they also help me quite a lot because they have good taste and I know more or less what I like".

Female student from Spain (15 years old)

Many participants from England said that their parents had said 'just do something you enjoy'.

"Don't do the job that you are good at if you don't like it. Do the job that you want to do".

Male student from England (15 years)

Finally, one student noted that parent's advice is not impartial. Parents have their own experiences of work and may use this to try and influence their children.

'My mum doesn't work, and I don't see my dad much but when I do, he just rants on about work being terrible. He is a Site director at a building company'.

Male student from England (15 years)

One student noted:

"I can't really go to my parents as they didn't go to college, they started work at 16 – I have spoken to my cousin as she went to college".

Male student from England (16 years)

One English student noted that they could look up to their mum and dad but noted that they couldn't really see themselves doing the work that her mum and dad did. As a rule, conversations about career-related topics occur spontaneously and can arise from unplanned conversations and meetings.

"It came up in a conversation during a dinner; we started to talk about what we wanted to be when we were older".

Male student from Spain (14 years old)

One student spoke of the opportunities that he had during long car journeys with his family which often resulted in talks about the future.

In the case of students from disadvantage backgrounds students are less likely to have had career conversations with their parents. In Greece, for example, one student noted:

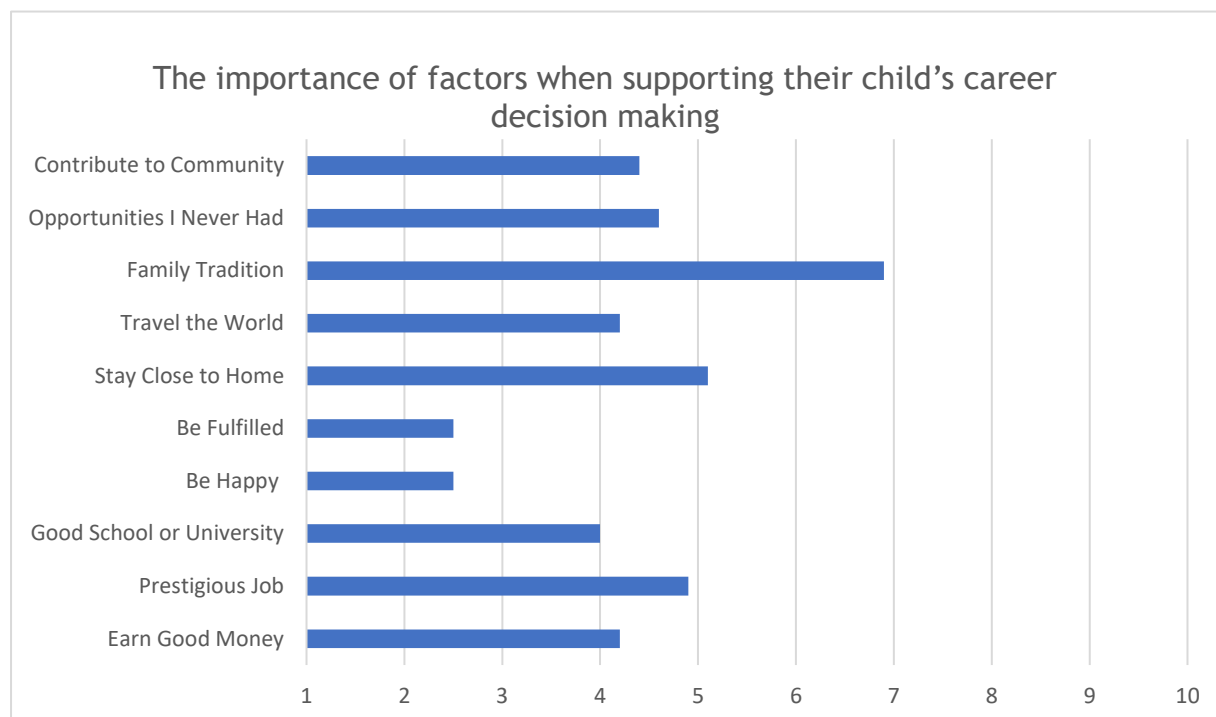
"My mother is so busy doing everything at home, so she doesn't have the time to talk about career choices. She just wants me to get a job and help her".

Male student from Greece (16 years)

Parents and carers were asked to indicate how important a range of factors are when advising their child from a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very important and 10 is least important.

Figure 5 below displays the mean score of each factor by country.

Figure 5: The importance of factors when supporting their child's career decision making.



On average, parents and carers felt that advising their child about being happy (2.5 out of 10) and fulfilled (2.5 out of 10) was most important. Carrying on family tradition was the least important (6.9 out of 10).

Role models

Historically, young people have often modelled their future selves on the inspiration gained from role models (Gibson, 2004). Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they had a role model and the following table sets out the responses.

Young people were asked to indicate if they had a role model or someone who they look up to. Overall, approximately 41% (200 out of 487) of survey respondents stated that they had a role model or someone they look up to, 25% (123 out of 487) did not have a role model and around 34% (164 out of 487) of young respondents were unsure if they had a role model. Denmark had the lowest percentage of young people who had a role model (29%; 25 out of 85) while Czech Republic had the highest percentage (48%; 67 out of 139).

Parents and carers were also asked to indicate if their child had a role model or someone who they look up to. Overall, approximately 35% (99 out of 280) of parents and carers stated that their child had a role model or someone who they looked up to, 18% (51 out of 280) felt their child did not have a role model and around 46% (130 out of 280) of were unsure if their child had a role model. Spain had the lowest percentage of parents and carers who thought their child had a role model (28%; 18 out of 64) while Denmark had the highest percentage (41%; 31 out of 75).

In England, the role models that the young people looked up to were thematised into the following categories: musicians, athletes, family, teachers, and performers. In Denmark, the role models that the young people looked up to were thematised into the following categories: famous businesspeople, musicians, artists, and family. In Spain, the role models that the young people looked up to were thematised into the following categories: musicians, performers, athletes, family, teachers, and influential figures.

In Czech Republic, the role models that the young people looked up to were thematised into the following categories: family, leaders, musicians, athletes, and performers.

In Greece, the role models that the young people looked up to were thematised into the following categories: family, musicians, athletes, performers, artists, medical professionals, and entrepreneurs.

The language around role models has recently changed with young people often referring to influencers. This term is usually reserved for individuals who have a presence on social media. One female student noted the impact of influencers on social media.

“There is this family that I used to watch on YouTube. They sold everything they had and travelled around the world. They are travel journalists now. That’s what I want to do”.

Female student from England (aged 15)

One student from Spain noted:

“On social networks and YouTube people you follow upload videos, and they talk about what they are studying, and this is really helpful”.

Female student from Spain (15 years old)

Students were quite clear about the downside of influencers: One student noted that too many people are jumping on the bandwagon. In terms of whether becoming an influencer was a viable option as a job for themselves one student noted:

“It looks easy, but it is hard. It is about luck. If people don’t like it you are finished. Things and fashions change. Take Zoella - she had a peak and she is going downhill. It is hard to keep relevant and stay at the top”.

Female student from England (15 years)

Young people draw examples from many people in their social circle for example friends, siblings and other family members (other than parents). In the Czech Republic for example, friends were the second most frequently cited career informants, and they are an important part of participants career decision making. Older friends are often asked about their educational experiences and transitions:

“I talked to my friends about what school they would like to attend and why, but I also asked my older friends who had already attended college”.

Female student from the Czech Republic (16 years)

In addition, some students spoke of emulating celebrities from the sports or arts. One student from the Czech Republic explained:

“I would say that my role model is Taťána Brzobohatá (Miss World 2006). Because although she is a model and a beauty queen, she also has a foundation through which she helps older people”.

Female student from the Czech Republic (16 years)

In some cases, students indicated that their teachers or club teachers were important career informants. They value them as people who can evaluate their talent for an area and motivate them in its further development.

“I asked my teacher, because she could observe me during lessons and then give me feedback”.

Female student from the Czech Republic (15 years)

The role of school-based curriculum career learning.

Young people were asked if during their education at school, they receive any careers-related activities to help them make decisions about learning and work. The survey data showed that, young respondents completed the following activities the most: specific subject lessons about learning and work (38.2%), learned about learning and work options in some subject lessons (39.%), and given information about their options (39.2%). The activities that young respondents completed the least were: creating an action plan (6.6%), volunteering (8.4%), and mock interviews (11.5%).

Students were generally positive about the support that they received through school. One student noted:

“There is lots of things going on, in Year 10 we had a careers workshop where loads of different colleges and employers would be that we would talk to – I think everything that the school does related to careers is useful”.

Female students from England (aged 15)

From the list of school-based activities, the survey respondents were asked to choose the five most important activities that have helped them when thinking about learning and work decisions. Young people seemed to value a range of activities. The activity they found most important was receiving options information (43.3%), closely followed by specific subject lessons about learning and work (33.5%), learned about learning and work options in some subject lessons (32.9%), and talking to subject teachers (31.6%).

When considering what jobs and careers might be available, one focus group participant noted that there were not many opportunities to learn about specific jobs in school: much of the conversation in school related to maximising earning potential. Many noted that they had little opportunity to learn about unusual jobs whereas the standard jobs like medical doctor or lawyer were more likely to be spoken about.

Focus group participants provided a list of opportunities to learn about options for the future for learning and work included:

- Meeting employers
- Assemblies
- Careers fairs
- Super learning days
- Work experience
- Visits to public employment centres or benefits offices.

Students in the Czech Republic also described activities which helped to develop decision making skills, communication skills and teamwork skills and other work-related skills. Some of the students noted that even if the topic of the project was not of their interest, they appreciated those project days activities.

Participants noted the importance of being well-prepared for activities. Some students explained that they didn't really feel well prepared for some events. One female student noted:

"You were not really sure what you should get out of it. Especially if you don't yet know what you want to do".

Female English student (15 years)

Even though careers education is a mandatory element of the curriculum in Denmark, for students aged 14-15, participants of this age were unable to describe career related activities which they had received. This could indicate that the students have not experienced any career education, or that the activities chosen as part of career education have not been delivered in an effective way. It might also indicate that career learning activities have not been understood, and internalized by the students, as actual career learning activities. Danish students indicated that career-conversations largely occurred with parents and siblings and were seldom a feature of their relationships with school staff. Many of the older Danish students (aged 15) also failed to identify and careers education activities that they had participated in. Where these had been offered the students noted that they did not really place value on these interventions. Danish students were wary of skills assessment tests as they believed the purpose of these was to put pressure on them to work harder rather than as information which could be used to support career decision making.

In Spain, students reported a range of planned school-based activities including academic guidance talks (for choosing subjects), talks on future job prospects, and organised visits to workplaces. There was a sense with Spanish students that curriculum subjects in and of themselves were not useful indicators for career decision making as they do not include subject-relevant career links.

"Subjects can be helpful, for example, if you are good at maths and you like it then you will lean towards choosing science rather than arts subjects. That helps you a little, but there are not many elective courses to choose from which are career oriented".

Female Spanish student (13 years)

On the other hand, the activities programmed by the educational centre, such as school trips or visits by professionals, are positively valued because they get to connect with their future professional interests.

“Visits to museums and these kinds of places, in my case, especially visits to aquariums”.

Female Spanish student (14 years)

“A civil guard came in. He told us about what they do, and if you like the sound of it, he can tell you that if you want to be a civil guard, you should do it”.

Female Spanish student (13 years)

Students value specific career-related activities because they provide them with “first-hand” information to help them with future decision-making processes, as one student noted:

“It can be helpful because it can show you the different things you can do and how to obtain information about the different careers opportunities, degrees and courses”.

Male Spanish student (13 years)

The older students mentioned that developing transferrable skills or practical knowledge by participating in school projects can be a useful tool for their future career, regardless of the area.

“Any project which involves trying new techniques or carrying out research will provide you with something new to learn about”.

Male Spanish student (16 years old)

One Spanish student suggested that his school do more activities of this kind:

“They should come in, or we should go on more visits, or more professionals working in the jobs we are considering should come in”.

Female Spanish student (13 years old)

At what age should career programme begin?

Parents and carers were asked to indicate the age at which they feel their child's careers education should start. Approximately 56% of respondents felt that careers education should start between age 12 and 14 (144 out of 253). Most respondents from Spain (71%; 38 out of 53) felt that careers education should start between age 8 to 11. In England, 32% of respondents felt that careers education should start before the age of 7 (14 out of 43).

Parents think that personal career guidance should begin from age 12 and this does coincide when the majority of young people give this some serious thought.

The role of work-based or work-related learning in informing career decision making. Survey respondents were asked whether they had received any help or support from people in the workplace to prepare for the next steps such as job interviews, help with CVs, mentoring or visits to workplaces. Almost half of young respondents from Denmark have received support from people in the workplace which is considerably

higher than the remaining four countries. England had the lowest percentage (14.4%; 10 out of 70) of young people who had received support from people in the workplace. Most 12-year-olds had not received or were not sure if they had received any support from people in the workplace.

The scale and scope of work-related activity across countries varied significantly. Many focus group participants in England noted the importance of work experience and work-related activities in helping them shape their career decision making. Work experience is delivered in different ways across the schools in England for example where work-related activities are not mandatory the focus group participants noted that some schools deliver this for 15-year-olds and in others this may be done for 16-year-olds. In the Czech Republic, the picture is quite different. Students noted that there was no discussion with any employees or employers during their studies between the ages 13 and 15. The majority of participants in this age group learn about the world of work and various jobs through the Internet by themselves for example through YouTube or Google, television, newspapers. In Denmark, work-related learning is mandatory for young people who receive a minimum of three days of this type of activity.

The survey data indicated that there were differences in the extent to which these activities were valued between countries for example, young people in Denmark appear to value these activities more than their counterparts in other countries. 35.3% indicated that talking to people from industry was important and 32.9% indicated that visiting workplaces compared to 18.7% and 14.7% respectively for young people in England. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the mandatory nature of work-related activity in Denmark which may give it a higher profile which in turn may make young people value the intervention more.

Focus group participants expressed an interest in opportunities where they could speak to members of the business community. Many found that talks with and from employers helped them to understand a little more about what to expect in certain jobs or industries. Learning about dealing with difficult customers during insights into customer service jobs in retail was mentioned as a particularly helpful and insightful talk.

One group of participants described an activity called 'Guess my job' which they had received in in year 7 (12 years old) in which three adults came into school and the students had to work out what job they did. The adults had jobs such as clothes designer, football referee, and midwife. Each adult had previously studied at the school and the students found this particularly inspiring.

The older focus group participants provided some examples of work-place visits. One student explained:

"We have visited the train station and we have seen the different professions working there".

Male student from the Czech Republic (14 years)

One student noted that the whole class had visited a factory producing muesli sticks. When asked, what they learned during the visit, they explained:

"I decided not to work at the factory. I wouldn't like to do that".

Female student from the Czech Republic (14 years)

Students in the younger age group in Greece spoke of visits from employers and employees and noted how helpful these activities were in shaping their career thinking.

In Spain, there are no learning activities which are linked to work experience. Some students sometimes accompany their parents to work where they get experiences of the workplace and derive learning which they incorporate into their career thinking.

"My mother sometimes worked doing activities with children and animals, so I went with her a few times to find out what it was like".

Female student from Spain (15 years old)

And another girl discovered her interest in mechanics through car-related activities:

"When I was younger, I sometimes accompanied my grandfather when he had to go to the workshop to do something like changing the tyres. I also helped relatives to fix something on their car at my mother's uncle's house".

Female student from Spain (15 years old)

These examples were also similar to those from students in the Czech Republic. Work-based or work-related information is often provided by parents and extended family. Participants explained how examples from their parents informed their thinking:

"My father is a salesman. He works from home. I would enjoy doing this maybe".

Male from the Czech Republic (13 years)

"My mother is an accountant. It is boring. I would not enjoy doing this".

Female from the Czech Republic (13 Years)

"My parents' profession is an insurance agent. It's not completely bad, but I would not do it".

Male from the Czech Republic (14 Years)

The responses from survey participants indicated that encounters with employers whilst not the most important of the school-initiated career development interventions were still popular activities. When asked to choose the top five most important activities offered by schools to support career decision making, 26.6% indicated that talking to people from industry was important and 24.8% indicated that visits to workplaces were important.

What is clear from the research participants is that experiences of workplaces and conversations with employers are valued by many young people and inform their career thinking.

The role of optional (extra-curricular) learning in career decision. making.

Young people were asked whether they had undertaken any additional activities in school, such as competitions, projects or visits, that helped with their career ideas. Approximately 43% (212 out of 484) of respondents had not undertaken any additional activities in school, 34% (164 out of 484) had undertaken additional activities and 22% (108 out of 484) were not sure if they had or not. Most 12-year-old respondents had either not undertaken additional activities or were not sure if they had.

Respondents who answered yes to the previous question were asked how helpful these activities were on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful. Spain had the highest percentage of respondents who scored the additional activities as not helpful at all (16%; 6 out of 37). Greece had the highest percentage of respondents who scored the additional activities as extremely helpful (30%; 8 out of 26). Around 65% of respondents gave a score between 3 and 4.

The role of community-based activities in career decision making

English focus group participants noted several examples of how extra-curricular activities had informed their career thinking however these were not obvious to them without prompting. This may indicate that they did not always associate these activities as opportunities for career learning and thinking.

Survey participants were asked whether they had undertaken any additional activities outside school, such as volunteering or clubs, that helped with their career ideas. Approximately 43% (208 out of 480) of respondents had not undertaken any additional activities outside school, 37% (178 out of 480) had undertaken additional activities and 19% (94 out of 280) were not sure if they had or not. Around 75% (12 out of 16) of 12-year-old respondents had not, or were unsure, if they had undertaken any additional activities. Only 7.8% indicated that they had undertaken any voluntary activities initiated by school and this was consistently low across all of the partner countries. The responses from both the survey and from focus group participants indicate that young people generally do not associate these types of activities with career development.

Survey respondents who had indicated that they had participated in activities outside school were asked how helpful these activities were on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful. Most respondents score the activities as a 3 or above. Respondents from England had the highest percentage of respondents who scored the activities as extremely helpful (33%; 5 out of 15).

Focus group participants on prompting were able to provide some examples of activities outside school which they participated in and could explain how these had helped their career thinking. One focus group participant had joined army cadets and now wants an army career as a result. One participant belonged to Young Farmers group where he participated in meetings and talks about farms. This male already engages in part-time work on a farm as a result of his contacts and sees this as a stop gap in his route to a career in haulage. One female participant volunteered at a youth club where she used to go as a member. As a result of a suggestion by a youth worker to volunteer, she attended a lot of conferences and a residential. One female participant attended sports clubs and noted that she has always liked sports, and this makes her want to do it more. She attends gymnastics club and recently she

did a coaching course and she now teaches younger children and that is why she thought she would do this as a work experience placement. There were few examples from the Czech Republic, Denmark or Spain although Greek participants did note that sports or dance clubs had influenced their choice of career.

Conclusion

The previous section noted that in general, career decision making is associated with heightened levels of anxiety until the age of 15. The research finds that despite the pressures on them, young people indicate that they do not always feel well prepared to make these important decisions.

Young people rely on a variety of sources of information to support them in career thinking but tend to value that gathered from parents over that from other sources. It is not unsurprising therefore that young people also state that parents are also the most influential people when it comes to making career decisions. Whilst this is largely helpful, it is important that educators recognise that this can sometimes prevent young people from making autonomous career decisions. This is widely reported in the research literature but as Oomen (2018) notes, parents may not always be aware of the extent of their role as influencers.

Parents are the most significant influencers, and schools will need to address this through programmes of information and support for parents so that they can influence appropriately.

Young people draw information on careers from the internet and this includes information about job roles, entry criteria and qualifications. Not only do they use the internet for this, but young people also use social media influencers in a range of ways to motivate and inform. Young people identify individuals to act as role models whom they look up to and emulate. The language around role models has changed and now includes social media influencers as well as the more traditional role models from family, community, sports and the arts.

Young people value the provision of careers programmes made by schools including work-related activities and would like this to start early from age 12. This is corroborated by parents and is linked to the age which young people suggest they begin seriously thinking about the future. This suggests that governments need to promote career guidance programmes for all students and not just specific targeted groups so that all young people have access to the information and support they need to. Young people also need to be well prepared in order to gain maximum impact from their school-based activities such as encounters with employers or careers fairs.

The research indicates that young people do not always recognise the importance of informal or extra-curricular activities in helping them to develop useful career or employability skills. Programmes of career guidance should therefore help young people link these experiences to their own career development so that they can be utilised in decision making and during transition activities such as personal statements, CV's, applications and interviews.

Learning about personal skills and attributes

Introduction

This section considers the role of skills audits or career assessments in influencing young people's career decision making. The key findings are that:

- Young people from all partner countries had some experience of career assessments although this was not the norm for most young people.
- Testing is usually voluntary.
- The extent to which young people found tests helpful in supporting career decision making varied by country.
- Younger students find the test more helpful than older students.
- It is important that tests are timed to coincide with key decision-making points.

Auditing career-related knowledge skills and attitudes

Participants across all partner countries had some experience of career assessments although the extent to which this was the case did vary by country. Survey respondents were asked whether they had undertaken a career assessment. Aside from Denmark, each country had a higher percentage of young people who had not undertaken a quiz or test compared to those who had. In Denmark, 63.5% (54 out of 85) of young people said they have undertaken a quiz or test compared to 36.2% (31 out of 85) who had not or were not sure.

The number of those having undertaken tests increased with age with just over 50% (75 out of 146) of 16-year-olds indicating that they had undertaken a quiz or test.

Tests are often voluntary, and some students access these by themselves online. A variety of tests were mentioned including, in England, the Buzz quiz which is embedded on the website iCould and which is based on a Myers-Briggs type personality assessment. In another English school, students were able to describe two examples at different stages of their education where they had taken a career assessment (one at age 15 from a booklet and one at age 16 through the online platform Unifrog) and these were helpful.

"They were interesting to see what job we got matched with – I got a farmer, but I don't want to be a farmer".

Female student from England (15 years)

Some English focus group students had used an online careers assessment called Kudos. The students explained that they were given this as a task during school time, but no one talked about the results with them once they had completed it. One student said

"I don't want to be a dog walker for the rest of my life".

Female student from England (15 years)

In the Czech Republic, many participants noted that they had undertaken a personality test or career orientation questionnaire. This was the common experience between students across the target age group. However, just a few students were able to describe how it helped them to understand their skills and talent. One concern by the students was the timing of the test and the receipt of the results. This needs to be at a time which supports career decision making and this was not always the case. One student noted:

“We had to pay for the test and did it on the computer. And it took about three months to get the results. No one was interested after that because we had already chosen the school”.

Female student from the Czech Republic (15 years)

Survey respondents who indicated that they had been involved in career assessments were then asked how helpful theses were on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful.

Young people from Denmark and Spain found the quiz/test the least helpful while respondents from the U.K. and Czech Republic found the quiz/test most helpful. 16-year-olds found the quiz/test less helpful than younger respondents as 24% (18 out of 75) scored it 1 (the least helpful) and just 2.7% (2 out of 75) scoring it 5 (the most helpful). Overall, 14-year-olds found the quiz/test most helpful with 19.4% (6 out of 31) scoring it 5.

The older focus group participants (15-16 years old) were able to provide examples of taking career assessments but had little regard to the results when thinking about their futures particularly if given too early. The older students (15-16 years) generally valued tests more than the young students.

“We should have more next year, because now we have to start choosing what we want for our future and that could help us”.

Female student from Spain (13 years)

It is not just important to get the timing of career tests at the point when decisions are being made. Focus group participants in the Czech Republic noted the importance of receiving help to interpret the results of the tests. When asked about the wider implications of the test results, participants noted they had not been helped to understand the wider implications of the results of tests on their understanding of employability skills. This was corroborated by participants from Greece.

Conclusion

Young people's experiences of career assessments or testing is varied as is the extent to which they value this intervention. Testing amongst older students around aged 15 is most effective. Younger students find testing less effective in supporting career thinking. Career assessments or tests are valued when the test is given at a time associated with making career decisions and when it is supported by additional interventions where young people are helped to understand the outcomes. Career assessments or tests are not valued when testing is not contiguous with key decision-making points or is unsupported.

Applying knowledge about oneself in career decision making

Introduction

This section explores the extent to which young people are enabled to make links between the knowledge that they develop through a variety of self-development and self-awareness opportunities and information about their options. The data suggests that:

- Young people understand the need to develop career and life skills and attributes to support them in their career advancement.
- Not all partner countries provide opportunities for young people to link information about themselves to career options.
- Some schools have systems in place which reinforce the development of employability skills and attributes for all students.
- Where young people are provided with opportunities to develop employability or personal skills and attributes, they regarded them as helpful.

Improving employability and life skills

Participants recognised the importance of developing employability skills. Some participants explained the importance of developing personal skills such as effort, dedication and motivation:

"I think that motivation is also important because if for example, you are not motivated, you are not likely to do your best in that activity".

Male student from Spain (15 years)

Personal development learning linked to career decision making was not universal across all participating countries. In Denmark for example, participants were not able to provide examples of activities aimed at developing self-awareness. In Greece, the younger age group (13-14 years) were able to talk about classroom-based activities aimed at helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses, but this was not always linked to career decision making.

Focus group participants were able to give more details about their experiences. In one English school, students gave examples of where they had received individualised support to think about developing key skills or employability skills through a merit system. They described a piece of paper (one male produced his) which the teachers record current expected (target) grades for the final year in key Stage 4 (15 and 16 years old). The sheet also contained information about progress towards goals and effort grades. The effort grades are combined across subjects and each term the top 30 students who showed most effort across all their studies were selected to have a social where they get together and watch a film. This activity did motivate them to try harder. One group of English students noted that their school used Attitude to Learning (ATL) grades for behaviour. They indicated performance in lessons and were received at parents' evenings four times a year

Participants were able to provide several instances where they had been given opportunities for personal development. In one English school, younger students, had undertaken a step into the NHS (National Health Service) quiz which helped them understand what qualities they had that could be used in different health service roles. This group of students had not been helped to understand the wider implications of the results of this quiz on their understanding of employability skills.

Parents evenings are often the occasion where subject teachers discuss subject specific and personal development progress with students and their parents. This included discussion about behaviour and generic skills. Very few participants suggested that this was a valued opportunity.

Survey respondents who indicated that they had received opportunities for developing employability or personal skills were asked how helpful this support was on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful. Most survey respondents gave a score 3 (40.2%; 51 out of 127) or 4 (30.7%; 39 out of 127). There was a significant difference in the respondents from young people in Greece who had the highest percentage of respondents who found the support extremely helpful (35.7%; 10 out of 28).

Conclusion

Many countries recognise the importance of employability and personal skill development as an important component of career development and include reference to these as important learning outcomes of career development programmes. What's more, the research indicates that young people also value these skills and recognise the importance of developing them to advance their career. The provision of opportunities to understand these competences and to make links between them and future options are not always made available equally amongst partner countries with some more than others providing opportunities for this type of learning. Even within countries the approaches used to embed employability skills varied with some schools having merit systems which reinforced employability skills and attributes such as indicators around attendance and useful behaviours. Where young people are provided with opportunities to learn these skills, they largely find these helpful although they are not unanimously endorsed. Schools provide fertile ground for young people to learn the skills and attitudes needed to move into higher level learning and work. Schools will need to consider ways of enhancing the important messages about employability and key skill development so that young people can include these in their goals for learning and their career decision making and transition activities.

Developing transition skills.

Introduction

This section explores how young people use the experiences of past transitions in the way they prepare for future ones. The key findings are that:

- Young people begin making transitions from age 11 although this varies by partner country.
- Some young people find this a time of anxiety whilst some enjoy the experience.
- Preparation for transition is of varying quantity and quality.
- Young people recognise the support they would like to receive to help them make successful transitions.

Reflecting on early transitions

In the UK young people experience their first transition at aged 11 when they move school. Reflecting on this transition one participant noted

"We were a bit scared cos you are coming up to a new school- you are just getting used to it".

Male student from England (15 years)

The transition at age 15 is when students in the UK choose which subjects to study further. Participants explained that the pressure is greater as they progressed up the school. At age 15 years old the participants explained that they felt a bit more 'grown up' and that they had to work harder. Students keep being told that they need to concentrate in the lesson. They are told to secure work experience, get good grades and do more homework. One student noted

"We got a lot of homework. I had 15 home tasks over the weekend. There are a lot of online tasks that you get sent. There is no time to have fun with your friends".

Female Year 10 student from England

In the Czech Republic, transition was usually described as a positive experience. Young people were excited about new environments and friends and to leave behind aspects of their education which they had not enjoyed (staff and colleagues for example). One student was very philosophical around change. They noted,

"Since I did not like my classmates at the primary school, I was really looking forward to the secondary school. I perceived the transition to the high school as a part of life and life is a change. It was a step towards adulthood. I was looking forward to new people. I was wondering what people here would be like and what it would look like at school. I enjoyed it and I'm glad where I am now".

Female student from the Czech Republic (16 years)

In the Czech Republic, students aged 14 and 15 need to sit an entrance test to access secondary school. Students from the secondary school expressed strong dissatisfaction with this approach. There was a perception that not all schools prepared their students to the same extent and therefore there was a potential for some students to be disadvantaged. Some students noted that parents pay for additional tuition for the entrance test and once again, this disadvantaged some students.

Anticipating future transitions

One group of English focus group participants in anticipating a future transition noted that they would value help with how to apply for colleges, how to write a CV and 'how to prioritise, organise and sort out their life before you step into it'. It was evident from some comments that students were encouraged to take responsibility for developing and enhancing their transition skills. One student noted:

"We did a lot of work on CV's and personal statements. The school kind of give you skills and information about what you need to do to get their but it's our responsibility to do it".

Male from England (16 years)

Conclusion

Young people begin making transitions from age 11 however they have different experiences of transition planning with some finding the process exciting and some finding it difficult. The research finds that schools offer transition education to varying degrees however, young people indicated that they want to develop transition skills, and this should start in plenty of time for them to make a successful transition.

Schools will need to review their career guidance programmes to ensure that they include content on transition skills.

Making use of professional career guidance or counselling interventions

Introduction

This section explores the extent to which young people use and value professional guidance or counselling interventions. The key findings are that:

- Many young people across the partner countries have not received professional career guidance or counselling with the exception of those from Denmark.
- Where young people have received personal career guidance or counselling, they value this as a useful intervention.
- Parents report that their children do not usually discuss the outcomes of personal career guidance or coaching with them.

Young people's experiences of personal career guidance

Young respondents were asked whether they have had an interview or group session with a career's adviser/counsellor/coach.

Most respondents from the U.K, Spain, Czech Republic and Greece have not had an interview with a career's adviser/counsellor/coach. In contrast, most respondents from Denmark have had an interview (70.2%; 59 out of 84). The percentage of young respondents who have had a careers interview was small amongst 12, 13, 14- and 15-year-olds. At 16, almost 50% of respondents have had an interview (49.3%; 70 out of 142).

Respondents who answered yes to the previous question were asked how helpful this support was on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful.

Overall, most respondents scored the interviews between 3 and 4 out of 5. Almost 50% (6 out of 13 of respondents from Spain scored the interviews as 1 (not helpful at all) however the total number of responses for this question was low which may explain the high percentage.

Parents and carers were asked if their child has discussed any conversations about their career which they have had with a career's adviser/counsellor/ coach. Over half of parent and carer respondents said their child had not discussed any conversations about their career which they have had with a career's adviser/counsellor/coach. Spain is the only country where more parents and carers have had a discussion with their child compared to those who haven't.

Conclusion

The extent to which young people participate in personal career guidance or counselling varies by country. Those that had it valued the intervention however young people do not regularly discuss the outcomes with their parents. There could be several explanations for this. Firstly, the process of career guidance or counselling encourages young people to be autonomous in their career decision making. In some countries, the code of ethical practice which career development practitioners operate under explicitly underpin the need for this and stress the need for confidentiality. This leaves young people as the sole owner of the outcomes of

these interventions and as we have noted previously, in some countries and cultures parents can have an over-developed sense of autonomy when influencing their child's career choices. It may be that young people are trying to protect their role as the primary decision maker.

Parents experiences and views of career guidance

Introduction

This section relies solely on survey data as parents were not interviewed as part of the research. The key findings are that:

- Parents believe that they have primary responsibility for supporting their child's career decision making.
- Generally, parents feel prepared to take on this role.
- Parents recognise the important role that the internet plays in their child's career exploration.
- Parents themselves seek out information and use the internet to undertake research about their child's career options.
- Young people talk to their parents about the careers curriculum activities which they have engaged in.
- Young people often initiate conversations with their parents about career choices.
- Parents value the programmes of career guidance provided by their child's school although this was not consistent across the partner countries.

Responsibility for career development.

Overall, parents and carers responding to the survey overwhelmingly felt the responsibility for their child's careers education is on themselves (80.7%) and on their child (74.7%). They were then asked to indicate how prepared they felt to support their child on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not prepared and 5 is very prepared. The average score across all responses was 3.9 out of 5 with most respondents giving a score of 3, 4 or 5.

There was no significant difference between the responses of any country.

Parents views of their children's approaches to career decision making.

Parents and carers were asked what approaches they thought their child uses when they make their learning and career decisions. The most popular approaches that respondents felt their child uses to inform their career and learning decisions were internet (52%), leaflets (27%) and talking to friends (40%). The least popular approaches were talking to people in the community (7.4), volunteering (8%) and using the library (9%).

Parents and carers were asked if their child has discussed any school lessons or classroom activities with them which have involved thinking about their careers. Approximately 65% of parent and carer respondents said their child had talked to them about school lessons or classroom activities they have been involved in which have included thinking about their careers.

Parents and carers were next asked identify who initiated the discussions between themselves and their child about future career options.

Overall, approximately 50.9% (87 out of 171) of respondents said that their child initiated the conversation with them about future careers, 35.7% (61 out of 171) said

that they initiated the conversation and 13.4% (23 out of 171) couldn't remember who initiated the conversation.

Parents use of career and labour market information to support their child's career decisions

Parents and carers were asked whether they had sought any information to support their child's decisions about their future. Overall, 73.8% (192 out of 260) of parent and carer respondents said they had sought information to support their child's decisions. In Denmark there was a more even split between those parents and carers who have sought information (54.1%; 40 out of 73) and those parents and carers who haven't (45.9%; 33 out of 73).

The most common approach that parents and carers took for seeking information was using the internet for research (60.4%). The least common approach visiting libraries (1.1%) and just 3.2% had not done any research at all.

Parents and carers were asked if they sought this information by themselves or if they involved their child in this process. Approximately 70% (133 out of 189) of respondents said they involved their child in this process while 30% (56 out of 189) sought information on their own.

Parents and carers were next asked whether they attended any visits to schools, colleges, universities or employer events. Overall, 56.3% (148 out of 263) of respondents have been on visits to different institutions while 43.7% (115 out of 263) have not. Respondents from Czech Republic had this highest percentage of parents and carers who had been on visits (73.8%; 31 out of 42). Respondents from Greece had the highest percentage of parents and carers who had not been on visits (79.5%; 31 out of 39).

For those who answered yes to the previous question, they were next asked how helpful they found the visit on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not helpful at all and 5 is extremely helpful.

Overall, most respondents gave a score of 3, 4 or 5. The analysis by country should be interpreted loosely as the total number of responses for some countries was low.

Parents and carers were next asked how they would rate their child's existing careers support on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is non-existent and 5 is excellent. The analysis revealed that respondents from Denmark rated their child's career support significantly higher than respondents from the U.K Respondents from Czech Republic also rated their child's career support significantly higher than respondents from Spain ($p = .00$).

There was no statistically significant difference in career support ratings between any other countries.

Conclusion

As we have seen, young people indicate that parents are the most important source of careers information and are the most influential of all of the adult and peers surrounding a young person. The research finds that parents corroborate this finding as a large proportion across all countries believe that they have the responsibility over and above their child's school for supporting their child's career decision making.

Parents value the careers programme which their children receive and young people do discuss the career-related learning that they have taken part in. Parents undertake research themselves to support their child and generally feel well prepared to take on this role. The research suggests however that parents might not fully understand the impact that their role may be having on their child's career development. The literature review revealed the role of parents does vary by country with parents in some countries considering themselves the primary career decision maker for their child. Young people also spoke earlier in the research about wanting to please their parents. This does raise some important questions for example, do parents really have the most up to date and relevant information to help their child? What can schools do to support parents in developing the knowledge, skills and attributes to help their children most effectively? Whose job is it to support parents in this endeavour?

This research does not seek to make this judgement however in the next chapter of the research the role of parents is explored further through several research circle case studies.

Exploring the data further using research circles

A note about research circles

Early in the development of the research methodology, partners from Denmark suggested that the research team adopted the methodology describes as research circles (Klindt Poulson, Boelskifte Skovhus, and Thomsen, 2018). This was a new approach for most of us and therefore in adopting this approach we adopted an action research methodology about research circles themselves!

Research circles developed in Sweden during the middle of the twentieth century and were founded on the idea of study circles. The methodology encourages researchers and practitioners to come together to share and explore their own experiences. There is no specific leader, and each member is valued equally. Through this act of empowerment, the members use their different perspectives, competences, and experiences to explore a certain issue or problem together. The purpose is not necessarily to derive a solution to an identified problem but to learn more about it. In this democratic process the members create a meeting place in which they search for new knowledge and may result in concrete action and outcomes.

In this research practitioners were supported to understand this process by their Danish colleagues who were well versed in this research approach. Each partner member then used the research findings to explore particular issues in more depth. The outcomes of this process have been set out in this section as a series of case studies.

Case study 1 (By the UK team): Parental engagement in career decision making

The UK team reviewed the data from the research and identified this topic as a focus for the research circles as it was a growing focus of policy development in England. The team felt that in drawing together researchers and practitioners it would be an interesting opportunity to explore innovative practice, the barriers and enablers associated with parental engagement and to see if there were opportunities to develop some new approaches of products which might help with this issue. The research circle met virtually three times and involved the following members:

One career leader from a 16-19 college (Vocational education)
One career leader from a secondary school without a sixth form (11-16 years)
One career leader from a school with a sixth form (11-19)
One enterprise co-ordinator
Four researchers

What data was analysed and why

The group explored the data relating to parents and their experiences of their child's career development and career decision making. Of particular interest was that the research data indicated that parents are the most frequently sought out source of information on careers by young people and they regard them as the most important influencer. Parents also indicated that they have responsibility for supporting their

child's career decision making. The data gave rise to several topics which the group agreed to explore more fully. These were:

- The confidence of parents when it came to engaging with schools and career specialists to discuss the career decision making of their child.
- The extent to which equality and diversity issues were considered when providing parents with information about career options.
- Where does responsibility lie to ensure that parents have the competences required to effectively support their child's career development?
- How does geographical location influence parental engagement?
- How does staff confidence in the use of LMI affect their approach to working with both students and parents?

The context for parental involvement in children's career development in the England.

In England, parental involvement is seen as essential however there is no statutory requirement for schools to work with parents. This is subsumed into policy documents and the requirements of several quality frameworks. For example, several sections in the statutory guidance for career guidance in England makes explicit the need to inform parents about the careers programme in their child's school. The quality framework for good career guidance referred to as the Gatsby benchmarks (The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014) makes explicit the links to parental involvement and requires every school and college should have a programme of career guidance that is known and understood by amongst others, parents. The benchmarks recommend that all students and parents should have access to high-quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities and to have the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information. The benchmarks also note that parents should be encouraged to access and use information about labour markets and future study options to support their children.

What theories and concepts underpin this data?

There are several theorists who we can draw on to understand parental engagement in children's career development.

Bourdieu (1977) developed the concept of habitus which sets out the process by which our behaviours are determined by the underlying structures in society. Bourdieu calls the range of possibilities open to an individual 'the field' and habitus is the way we enter this for example through the knowledge that we have. Personal action is guided by our subconscious recognition of possibilities and is based on an unconscious calculation of the risks and probabilities associated with the outcomes of certain actions. Young people's aspirations will be shaped by their contexts. In terms of career development, this could be that a young person is entering into the next stage of his career (education or employment) using knowledge and behaviours which are predetermined by their contexts. These could be geographically, economically or socially determined.

Roberts (1968) in his opportunity structure theory argues that sociological factors pre-determine occupational choice. Where we live, the qualifications we have, the state of the economy, our family background, our gender determine what opportunities are open to us. This is about adjusting to the opportunities which are available.

Law (1981a) in his community interaction theory proposes that individuals career choices are determined by a series of interactions in the context of their local communities. Community influences can be summarised under the following headings:

- Expectations of family and community group.
- Feedback from a variety of sources specifically about their suitability for various roles.
- Support in reinforcing individuals.
- Modelling or influence by example.
- Information about other people's work habits and patterns.

Social learning theory was first proposed by Bandura (1977). The theory proposes that individuals learn from each other through a series of interactions such as observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory describes the relationship between individuals' innate abilities and their experiences. Krumboltz (1994) applied this theory to the context of career decision making and described three categories of influence on an individual's career decisions:

- Genetic endowment and special abilities including race, gender and physical attributes.
- Environmental conditions and events such as an individuals' social, cultural and political context, economic factors and natural forces and resources.
- An individual's learning experiences.

Research in the UK (Barnes *et al.*, 2020) found that parents feel underconfident in supporting their children with career decision making. The report suggests that there are two ways of thinking about how parents are involved

1. Through activities at home and in an institution, which provide psychological, financial, well-being or educational support and structure.
2. Through institutional based activities such as communicating with teachers or career development practitioners or by attending events and activities.

Support for career development can be categorised as

- Instrumental and practical support (writing applications or CV's for example).
- Career-related modelling and informational support (based on their own experiences).
- Verbal encouragement.
- Emotional support.

Parental engagement and support are important in helping students develop:

- Information seeking and research behaviours.
- Self-efficacy, career decision making and efficacy.
- Planning, goal setting and creating a sense of direction.
- Career adaptability, flexibility and employability skills.

What conclusions have been made?

The research circle felt that the research data and their growing understanding of policy, theory and context raised several important questions:

1. Are the activities which institutions provide, the correct ones to ensure parents have opportunities to be involved?

2. Do schools and colleges provide opportunities for parents to develop the knowledge and skills needed to support their children?
3. What are the competences which parents require?
4. How can parental involvement and engagement be evaluated?

What has been the outcome of this activity?

The group considered the questions raised by the research and noted that more research was required to determine the types of engaging activities which were most successful in engaging parents and how these activities could be evaluated. The members of the research circle were, however interested in answering questions 2 and 3 concerning the competences which parents required to help their children with their career development.

Much of the guidance provided to English schools focuses on the need to provide good quality and timely careers information. The Careers and Enterprise Company (2017) provide guidance to schools which includes the need to involve parents in school activities and ensure that they have the knowledge of current progression routes and that they understand the roles of key stakeholders for example those tasked with facilitating education/ business links. They also suggest that parents are encouraged to have career conversations. There is little in the document which suggests how parents can be helped to have meaningful and effective career conversations. For some parents, as we have seen from the research presented in this report, confidence in being able to have these conversations remains a barrier.

The members of the research circle began to ask the question what competencies parents need and how can they be encouraged to develop these. This was the focus of the main outcome from their work and the team produced a draft framework of outcomes to support schools and colleges to improve their parental engagement activities. This can be seen in appendix 1.

The members of the research circle are keen to experiment with the framework and acknowledge that this will need developing further through consultation and empirical research. The group intend to encourage organisations to pilot the framework with a view to publishing a final version for use in the partner countries and beyond.

Case study 2 (By the Danish team): How to engage with parents

The Danish team chose to focus on the challenges and opportunities for parent engagement as all research circle participants felt that they had something to gain from helping to improve this important aspect of young people's career development.

The research circle met virtually three times and involved the following members:

One guidance counselor in an employment center with a target group of 18 - 30-year-olds.
--

Two career counselors in a municipal guidance center. Working primarily with young people aged 13-15
--

One career counselor in a municipal guidance center working primarily with young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
--

One counselor at University College
Two university researchers

Topics relating to the exploration of parent engagement in career counseling

The team reviewed the survey data and identified several topics and questions for exploration. These were:

- Parents, as a resource, but also as a barrier
- How to involve parents in career guidance activities?
- What competences do career guidance practitioners require in order to effectively engage parents
- What impact does parental engagement have on the way young people create stereotypes which impact on their career decisions?

The framework for parental engagement in young people's career decision making in Denmark.

In Denmark, parental engagement in the guidance process is considered important. This is emphasised through the annual evaluation of what is impacting on the career decision making of young people's aged 15-16, which is conducted by the Danish Ministry of education. The results of the Danish Ministry survey align with the results of the CICC survey.

Danish parents' involvement in their children's career decision making is largely limited to information events however this type of activity is usually a one-way communication whereby practitioners provide information about educational options and processes rather than any in depth conversations. As a result, parents do not feel actively involved in the process. (Evaluation of engagements of parents in career counseling, BFAU, 2018). In recent years, the national digital e-guidance service has been strengthened in Denmark. Evaluation of this system shows that the number of parents seeking information's is a large group and is still increasing. The trend of parents using e-guidance, was reinforced in 2015, when a political decision was made that guidance in schools should be given priority to the 20% of young people who had the greatest need for professional career counselling. The other 80%, of the young people in primary school and their parents, had to manage to a greater extent on their own - for example by using e-guidance services.

Recent research on parent's engagement in career decision making.

Recently, a large, nationally funded, Danish research project was conducted in cooperation with 15 municipal career guidance units (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2018). One of the main purposes of this research was to investigate parental engagement in young people's career decision making, as well as to explore new career activities which could strengthen parental engagement.

The research found that parents often feel a lack of skills and knowledge about the education system and the various possibilities to support young people in their career making process. This is primarily because there are now more educational paths than previously, and that the education system has changed significantly since they themselves were faced with an educational choice. The main findings of this research were that:

- The parents find the decision-making process very important, but experience a lack of knowledge to be able to support their children in the choice of education,
- Parents want to ensure that their children's career choices will result in immediate and appropriate jobs,
- There is a great connection between parents' educational background and the children's educational choice, and
- Teachers and career counselors lack tools to engage parents in the career decision process.

What theories and research underpin this data?

The Danish team explored several theories which underpin parental engagement in children's career development. Gottfredson, (1981) describes how individuals create themselves as their psychological selves interact with environmental factors, including gender, prestige and social class. She notes that career choice and career development is first and foremost a desire to implement a social and psychological self. Categories such as gender and social class have crucial importance for young people's educational choices. To fit into a social category for example gender or social class, individuals make eliminate options and make compromises through their choices. The outcome of the choice is a secondary product of the individual's desire to be accepted in social contexts.

The Danish team also noted the work by Krumboltz and Mitchell (1996), who described Social Learning theory. Krumboltz and Mitchell describe three different key influencers for the individuals career decision. These are

- Genetic influencers: This includes how we look, gender and psychological attributes
- Environmental and social conditions: This includes the role of parents and caretakers
- Learning experiences: Career choice is a result of an individual's prior learning experience

Community Interaction theory (Law, 1981) suggests that career choice is a result of different interactions in the local community. Law highlights 5 different influencers.

These are

- Expectations: from the community or family members
- Feedback: how we see us self in the eyes of the feedback from other people
- Support: from others
- Modelling: exemplification by others
- Information: the direct or indirect experienced and communicated information

Skovhus (2018) examines the importance of the significant focus on the need to 'choose education' has on young people's career decision making process. Skovhus argues that the strong focus on educational choice itself weakens the possibility of real and curious career exploration. By focusing only on educational choice young people are less likely to explore other career possibilities and the impact of life values on their career decision making. Skovhus proposes a shift in perspective by strengthening the focus on holistic career learning rather than on educational choice. What conclusions have been made?

Given that since 2013, only 20% of young people received personal career guidance, the role of parents has grown in importance. The research circle wished to

explore this problem further and to seek answers and solutions to the following problems:

- How to engage parents in the career learning activities
- How to support and build parents competences so they feel confident to support their children's career decision making
- What new knowledge and data is required about how we strengthen the engagement the parent's in the career decision making

What has been the outcome of this activity?

The members of the research circle noted that most of the activities involving parents are largely passive information provision which do not encourage curiosity and commitment. They concluded that it was necessary to find new ways to engage parents. One participant shared an example from their practice which showed that when parents participated in an education fair, the young people rated the career learning activity twice as highly as young people who did not have the parents with them. This example contributed to discussions and ideas on how pilot activities to investigate how to strengthen parental engagement in various career learning activities. It also emphasised the need to explore and evaluate career learning activities in guidance practice. As a result of the research circle, the group are intending to develop and pilot new ways of evaluating the impact of parents' engagement in different career learning activities in their own practice.

Case study 3 (by the Spanish team): Developing an holistic approach to career decision making

The Spanish research team met three times to share practice and ideas. The team consisted of the following members:

One career leader from primary and compulsory secondary education (6-16 years).
One career leader from Compulsory Secondary and Post-compulsory Education (12-18 years).
One teacher from Primary Education (6-12 years).
One university researcher whose research focuses on career choice.
Three CICC project researchers

What data was analysed and why

The Spanish team reviewed the data from the CICC surveys and focus groups and identified two topics as a focus for the research circles. These were:

Theme 1: The group appreciated the importance of a comprehensive and holistic approach to career decision-making activities but felt that cognitive aspects prevail over social and emotional dimensions in the design and delivery of career decision-making activities but, all three are essential. The students and families who participated in the research expressed its importance.

The team felt it important to explore the emotional and social aspects of career development because they felt there were no existing models which integrated all three components and they noted that young people experience emotional charges which can influence the decision making for the students' career.

It is important to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses (emotional and relational dimension).

The context for career decision-making in Spain

Career decision-making is a continuous process in which the student is an active participant who uses cognitive, social and emotional dimensions in the career decision-making process. The comprehensive model of decision making (Alvarez, 2005a; Álvarez and Rodríguez, 2006; Álvarez and Obiols, 2009) finds that individuals apply cognitive, emotional and social areas to their career decision making. However, in the design and delivery of career interventions, the social and emotional dimensions have a lower emphasis than cognitive factors. In Spain, the law emphasises the importance of professional and educational guidance for students to help them to integrate many factors into their career decision making such as knowledge, skills and values. This principle has been reinforced for students aged between 12 and 16 years old. All educational centres have an academic and professional guidance plan which is a compulsory document which sets out the organisation and development of career activities.

What theories and concepts underpin this theme?

The model put forward by Krumboltz (1994; 1996) establishes a series of phases, with their corresponding activities, that characterize the cognitive process that leads to a career decision. The Pentagonal Model of Emotional Competences (Bisquerra and Pérez, 2007) has applications for the development of career development interventions. It is structured in five blocks: 1) emotional awareness; 2) emotional regulation 3) emotional autonomy; 4) social competence and 5) competences for life and well-being. This model would underpin the development of a career guidance intervention which includes emotional competencies.

Ecological Systems Theory allows us to understand the influence of the environmental context in career decision making. The Systems Theory Framework of Career Development (Patton and McMahon 2014, 2018) is also interesting because it offers an overview of the multiple influences that can impact on career choices. This theoretical approach suggests that an individual has a wide range of intrapersonal characteristics that influence their career choice.

What conclusions were made?

The research circle group agreed that as a result of their research circle discussions, there was a need to identify strategies that could be used to integrate the three dimensions in the career guidance interventions. It was also important to make the client the primary focus of career guidance interventions.

What has been the outcome of this activity?

The group considered that it would be necessary to apply the comprehensive model and to propose a career activity plan (Alvarez, 2005a; Álvarez and Rodríguez, 2006; Álvarez and Obiols, 2009) that integrated the three dimensions (cognitive, social and emotional). The group also agreed that it would also be interesting to review the type of activities that are carried out in educational centres (especially for Compulsory Secondary Education stage) to examine the balance of the three dimensions.

Theme 2: The team identified the need to improve the visibility of the career guidance activities in educational centres. The participants shared their experiences of the organisation and management of the career guidance programmes and highlighted that these regularly had low visibility in educational centres. The exploration of this theme was important because it was felt that there was a need to improve the visibility of the work of the career professionals. Students and school

staff also need to develop a better understanding of the work of career development practitioners so that they view this as a career option for themselves. By raising the profile of the work of career development professionals it was felt that this could stimulate demand for professional career guidance. The team identified strategies to promote career guidance activities and to raise its profile in educational centres. The members identified the centre website as a place to promote career guidance activities. This resource would be a useful way to engage students and families and to give meaning to the career guidance activities that the centres offer.

What has been the outcome of this activity?

The group proposed the creation of a student focussed career activity log which would be used to help them to link their career-related learning in each curriculum lesson and in additional career activities. This would promote career guidance as a global and continuous process to students and families. It would also improve the visibility and could be used on educational centre websites to demonstrate the links between the organisations provision and the national requirements.

Case study 4 (by the Greek team):

Measuring and evaluating young people's satisfaction with their career decision making

The research circle was formed as a result of an open call for participants. The participants were recruited for their interest in the subject of career guidance and due to their willingness to express their point of view and share their experiences on the field of career counselling in the Greek schools and particularly in Vocational Secondary Education. The research circle members were:

One career leader from a secondary vocational education school (15-18 years)
One career leader from a secondary vocational education school (17+ years)
One career counsellor from a municipal career office
One psychologist from an educational adviser centre
One career leader from adult education
One assistant career counselling employee (Lifelong Learning Centre)
Two university researchers

What data was analysed and why?

The CICC survey showed that almost 88% of the Greek students who participated in the survey were satisfied or highly satisfied with their career decision and the team felt the need to explore the reasons for this level of satisfaction. The team settled on a new survey which explored the satisfaction criteria used by young people when judging their experiences of career development.

A paper-based survey was developed which was based on Minnesota's University satisfaction questionnaire¹. The questions for this can be found in appendix 2. The survey was given randomly to 40 students some of whom had previously participated in the project focus groups from the previous year (age 16). Data was collated and analysed using Microsoft Excel.

What theories and concepts underpin this data?

Paul Ekman et al (1969) who is a pioneer in the study of emotions and their relation to facial expressions identified six basic emotions that he suggested were universally

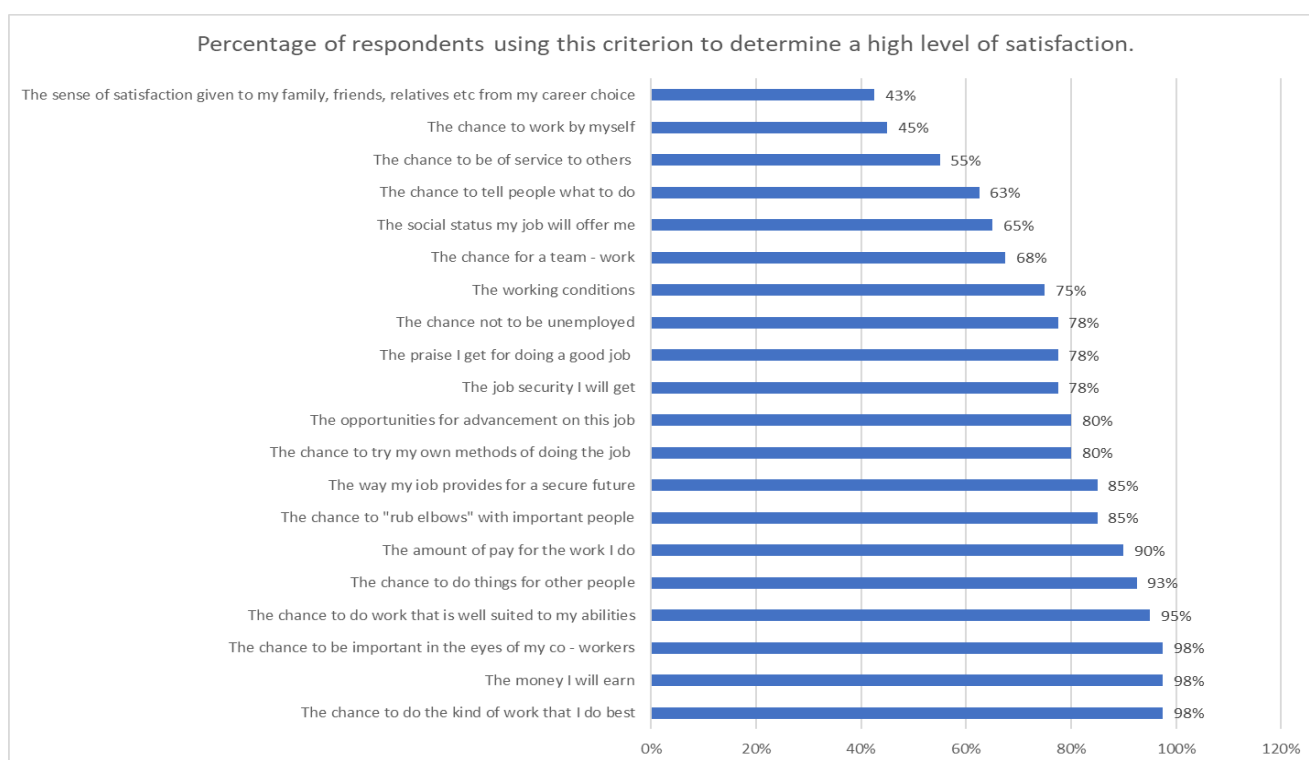
¹ <http://vpr.psych.umn.edu/instruments/msq-minnesota-satisfaction-questionnaire>

experienced in all human cultures. The emotions he identified were happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, and anger. He later expanded his list of basic emotions to include such things as amusement, contempt, contentment, embarrassment, excitement, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, satisfaction and shame. The word life 'satisfaction' has been defined as "the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads" (Veenhoven, 1996. p6). An initial exploration found little research into the way young people describe their satisfaction with their career decision making and where materials did exist, this was largely from the professional's perspective rather than from the service user's perspective.

What has been the outcome of this activity?

The research aimed to clarify the factors which Greek students use to judge their satisfaction with their career choice. Students were asked to rank each criterion on a scale of 0- 4 where 0 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied moving through from 1 which was very dissatisfied to 4 which was very satisfied. Figure 6 below sets out the results of the survey for those answering very satisfied to each of the criterion.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents using this criterion to determine a high level of satisfaction.



In summary, the most popular answers between students referring to the criterion for satisfaction are

- The chance I will do the work I do best
- The money I will earn from the job I will do
- The chance to be important in the eyes of my co-workers

The first has connection with the absence of anxiety, or the desire for someone to be less anxious. When someone does something they know well, it is more likely create anxiety compared to when it is an unfamiliar activity. The second refers to an external motivation and the idea of becoming independent is generally very appealing to most people. The last one reflects an internal motivation and suggests that which to be admired and respected by the peers and colleagues.

The team were surprised by the finding that, despite Greece being a very family-centred country and the original CICC survey having shown that 74% of responses indicated that parents were an important career influencer, young people identified that having parents or friends being satisfied with their career decision was the least important criterion (42.5% indicating that this was) which influenced their own satisfaction with their career decision.

The purpose of the research circle was to examine the nature of the Greek students' satisfaction and the activities which the team developed have illuminated more clearly the reasons or the origin of this satisfaction.

Case study 5 (by the team from the Czech Republic):

The Czech team shared their interests about how to raise young people's aspirations. Based on the research data, this developed into the theme for the research circle *"How to raise young people's interest in the future by including the issue in school curricula and by using the internet"*,

The research circle met three times, two meetings were "face to face" and one meeting was virtual. The team involved the following members:

One researcher (NGO)
One observer
One policy maker
Three career counsellors from an upper secondary school (pupils at age 12 – 15)
Two academic researchers

What data was analysed and why

The group compared the practical experiences of three teachers from different schools, the national curricula (which is currently being updated) and relevant theories.

The team identified the following issues:

- Pupils in the Czech Republic (in general) do not see the connections between what they learn at school and their future career.
- Pupils are not motivated to explore more information.
- Pupils (as well as their parents) do not find it easy to imagine what the future might look like.
- It is also matter of values (for some parents money is valued more than other issues, on the other hand the young people see how much time the parents spend in work, and the responsibilities which they have. They find this hard to understand and dismiss it.

- The Czech national curriculum focuses more on “knowledge” than competencies; there is only a little space for games and exploring.
- It is not possible to force young people to become motivated or to become aspirational. This is a gradual process which is facilitated by skilled counsellors.
- Young people shun formal systems and wish to be more independent of formal social structures. They do not care about the economy, and their relationship to work is different from that of their parents’ generation.
- The teachers wish for more time for the long-term career related activities.

The context for raising awareness on the future career in children’s career development and the curricula in the Czech Republic.

A new Strategy 2030+ has been issued which describes a new curriculum framework. The Strategy 2030+ has a strong focus on skills development and there is a recommendation to reduce the emphasis on “information knowledge”. Unfortunately, unlike the Strategy 2020, there is no mention of careers education. If teachers decide to develop the careers education programme in their school, they no longer have a clear national framework to support them.

There is no professionalisation of the role of careers adviser in the Czech education system and how people take on the role is dependent on each school. Individual training is lacking.

What theories and concepts underpin this data?

The team began the research circles by introducing careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) to the participants, including school career counsellors, who noted, that they do not encounter or rely on career theories in their practice. They are more likely to look for examples of good practice from Czech schools or from abroad. Yet, or perhaps because of that, the introduction of this theory broadened their perspective on the impact of career services on young people. Specifically of interest, was the idea of how social determinants and policy discourse influenced individuals career decisions making.

Time perspective theory (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999) helped the group to think about a specific way people perceive the flow of time in their minds. The team discussed how this different mind setting could influence the career decision making of young people. According to the experience of the practitioners, young people often struggle to connect their present actions with future consequences. The group then went on to discuss how to ignite young people’s interest in the future and how to make the concept of the future perhaps a little easier to grasp. The group also argued that cultural background can play an important role in the debate on the future.

The team discussed several Czech studies (Vitošková and Pavelková, 2016; High, 2017) which highlighted the relationship which students have with the future and the extent to which concepts of the future created motivation to achieve. The studies prompted the group to explore the question “How is the topic of students own futures described in the Framework for Educational Programmes for Primary Education?” (The Ministry of Education, 2020). This is considered a binding framework for the development of school curricula and as such should include specific reference to

career development if it is to be incorporated into school curriculum planning activities.

The participants noted that the existing curriculum contains the educational area “Man and the world of work”, which focuses on the formation and development of practical skills and personal qualities, which are a prerequisite for pupils future successful integration into working life. At the same time, the group recognised that it should expand pupil’s knowledge of the opportunities presented by the world of work. On the other hand, this is sometimes difficult to put into practice, as teachers can struggle to engage children in thinking about their own future. The group recommended that there should be a clear and understandable description of this topic in the Framework of Educational programmes for Primary School.

What conclusions have been made?

During the sessions, the team presented several options for possible career related activities and the school counsellors and teachers agreed to pilot the activities.

What has been the outcome of this activity?

One school counsellor who is an IT teacher developed a project based on helping young people to identify an interest or passion (a passion). This was followed by discussion which was focused on meaningfulness for the learner, social responsibility, and congruence with their personal values. The project involved using the internet, social media, and other information sources. The next stage, based on this pilot will be to make a recommendation to include this project into school curricula, and to develop a model to be applied in other schools. It is hoped that further work will be carried out extend the project.

Conclusion and recommendations

The crucial decisions that young people make are often influenced by family traditions, friends, role models, the media, and their social situations. This Erasmus funded project has explored new responses to these issues. The research has illuminated the similarities and differences in the way young people approach career decision making and the influences which prevail. Whilst there are some differences between the partner countries, largely due to the economic or social conditions which prevail, there are many similarities. The findings from this research will help those tasked with developing programmes of career development and support to identify and focus on specific aspects of their programmes. The recommendations suggested by the research are set out below.

Recommendations

- To ensure that the emotional, social and cognitive aspects of career decision making are addressed in programmes of career education.
- To ensure that processes are developed which help parents to develop their ability to support their children effectively.
- To ensure that young people can connect their learning from both formal and informal curriculum activities to their career decision making.
- To increase the profile of employability and enterprise learning in school programmes.
- To increase access for young people to professional personal career guidance /counselling.

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Appendix 1: Parental competence outcomes framework

This framework has been developed as an aid staff in schools and colleges who are tasked with engaging parents in their children's career development. The framework can be used as both an audit and development framework to ensure that activities not only engage parents, but equip them with the knowledge, skills and personal attributes which they will require to successfully support their child's career development.

Parents of primary age children		
What should they know?	What should they be able to do?	Personal attributes
The difference between, job, work and skills	Talk about how people work and the value and contribution that work makes to family and the community.	Be a positive role model
Fanciful ideas are ok- realism comes later	Encourage their children to think positively about their future and the roles they would like to fulfil	Encourage a love of learning
People in the family and community are important role models for future success	Encourage their children to think about a broad range of jobs even if they seem fanciful or unrealistic.	Be aspirational
There is no pressure to choose 'a career'. Believing that you have a choice is more important	Celebrate the achievements of all the members of family however trivial they may seem.	Be open
	Reinforce the relationship between effort and reward. This does not have to be linked to financial reward but can be about feelings of well-being or gaining new knowledge, skills or confidence through experiences.	Be community minded
		Value own achievements

Parents of Young people aged 11-14		
What should they know?	What should they be able to do?	Personal attributes
Thinking about the future has become an important part of early teenage years	Encourage their child to have conversations about the future. These should be exploratory in nature and not require a commitment for any job or progression route.	Be open minded and non-judgemental
Thinking about the future can seem both daunting and un-necessary for young people of this age	Encourage their child to watch TV programmes, or read books, articles or blogs by people who are positive role models.	Be aspirational for self, family and community
Young people are beginning to formalise their ideas for future jobs and roles	Talk positively but honestly about their own experiences of learning and work	Make time to talk about the future
Young people are beginning to understand their strengths and areas for development and are beginning to set targets for improvement. This contributes to the development of their own self-image	Reinforce the relationship between work and reward. Be interested in your child's targets.	Be honest about own ambitions and experiences
Young people are influenced by those that they see around them. This can include social media influencers as well as more traditional role models such as family, friends and community members.	Be open to conversations about roles and careers which might seem unusual or different to those which they have experience of	Value your own achievements
A tool kit of questions which can open up meaningful career discussions		
A range of career-related vocabulary		
Who they can contact if they have a career query or need to signpost their child to sources of support		

Parents of young people aged 15-16 years		
What should they know?	What should they be able to do?	Personal attributes
Understand all of the progression routes and their relative merits and disadvantages	Open up meaningful career conversations with their child. Using questions such as 'Who do you want to be?' rather than 'What do you want to be?' is a good way of exploring your child's values and aspirations.	Be open minded and non-judgemental
Understand how some subjects link to jobs	Ask for help if they feel that either themselves or their child needs to talk to someone about decision making for future options.	Be aspirational for self, family and community
Know where to go for more information on careers and the labour market	Develop their own CV and social media presence so that it reflects positive attributes.	Make time to talk about the future
Know the referral process so that they can request a careers interview for their child.	Have strategies for seeking paid work or voluntary activities	Be honest about own ambitions and experiences
Know that young people in this age group are often undecided about the future. This is OK. It is more important that they understand that they are the key decision maker, and the future is exciting.	Talk about the value of education and its contribution to achieving work and personal goals.	Value your own achievements
Be clear about their own values and beliefs and how this contributes to their own view of jobs, work and career.	Talk to their child about their feelings of transitioning to post 16 education.	Be an active citizen
Know about the schools careers programme including events and workshops for both themselves and their child.		Be mindful about the messages which you convey about learning and work.
Understand the role and power of positive self-promotion including what constitutes a good CV or a helpful on-line social media presence.		

Parents of young people aged 16-19		
What should they know?	What should they be able to do?	Personal attributes
The process of applying for post-16 options including for further and higher education and apprenticeships	Talk to their child about their feelings of transitioning to post 18 education or work.	Be honest about the 'empty nest' syndrome but don't burden your child with feelings of guilt or responsibility
Know about the schools careers programme including events and workshops for both themselves and their child	Encourage conversations with their child about the merits of different options for learning and work	Be open minded and non-judgemental
Know the referral process so that they can request a careers interview for their child.	Encourage their child to learn the basics of budgeting and financial management	Be aspirational for self, family and community
Know about sources of funding and other sources of financial support and how to apply for them	Ensure that their child has the knowledge and skills to live independently	Be an active citizen
	Encourage a commitment to life-long learning	Encourage managed risk taking and adventure

Appendix 2: Survey questions used to determine career decision satisfaction

Which of the following makes you feel satisfied according to the career path you have chosen (Please answer using the following scale:

- Very Satisfied **4**
- Satisfied **3**
- "N" (Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied) **0**
- Dissatisfied **2**
- Very Dissatisfied **1**

1. The chance to be of service to others
2. The chance to work alone on the job
3. The chance for a team - work
4. The chance to be important in the eyes of my co - workers
5. The way my job provides for steady employment
6. The chance to do things for other people
7. The chance to tell people what to do
8. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities
9. My pay and the amount of work I do
10. The chances for advancement on this job
11. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job
12. The working conditions
13. The praise I get for doing a good job
14. The chance to do the kind of work that I do best
15. The sense of satisfaction given to my family, friends, relatives etc. from my career choice
16. The chance to "rub elbows" with important people
17. The job security I will get
18. The money I will earn
19. The chance not to be unemployed
20. The social status my job will offer me
21. The job security I will get

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