8.9. Expanding CGC Professionals' Understanding of ICT

Raimo Vuorinen and Jaana Kettunen

The past decade has seen an incredible expansion in access and use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This has led the career service sector to acknowledge the need to expand the understanding and use of existing and emerging technologies in career guidance and counselling. There has been a consistency in various policy documents emphasising the need for quality assurance, and a more diverse service delivery in CGC services (OECD, 2004; European Council, 2008). New forms of virtual tutoring and support, new paths for distributing working life information, and online resources for career planning and development are being developed. In the last few years, the potential of ICT for the development of more integrated lifelong guidance systems is also being realized. ICT is not only used as a tool but is also acting as a powerful agent of change regarding current education, employment, and social policies (ELGPN, 2010).

CGC professionals vary considerably in their experience of using technology in practice. Some practitioners are not convinced of the relevance of technology in delivering CGC services and others lack the skills or confidence to be able to do this effectively. However, a consensus has emerged that both the practitioners and ICT have an important role to play in the design and delivery of career development services via the Internet (e.g Vuorinen, 2006). In order to consider the usefulness and potential of existing and emerging technologies, CGC professionals need to understand the general goals of CGC services, must be able to identify the targets of career guidance and counselling, and conclude how theoretical frameworks are used in existing CGC related ICT services, or how theoretical frameworks can be embedded in the design of ICT services. Within professional training, the use of the ICT should therefore be integrated in the methodology of training and not be treated as a separate subject. Adaptation of ICT can only be successfully carried out if a clear understanding of the relationship between the two is first established. Students should have opportunity to use key Internet-based career services and resources within their individual practice with individual clients and groups from the very beginning of their studies. The training programmes should cover not only the potentials of ICT applications regarding all NICE Core Competences, but also wider understanding of ICT relating to professional paradigms.

If the career field is to develop CGC professionals' understanding of technology in a more consistent direction, it has to take into consideration not only the practical knowledge, but also prevailing personal conceptions. The professionals' conceptions on modern technology vary from seeing it as a threat or a passing fad to a desirable and indispensable positive potential. These variations are linked e.g. to CGC settings and paradigms, the nature of interaction, and the roles of CGC professionals. This is of importance when considering the overall adoption and integrations of new technologies in CGC services. There is evidence that practitioners´ conceptions of new technology are interrelated with their approach to practice: negative conceptions of new technology in career services seem to be closely linked with a 'directive' approach. A similar relationship seems to hold between the clearly positive conceptions to ICT and a customer-centred, holistic approach in practice (Kettunen, Vuorinen & Sampson, 2013). The CGC professionals need to remodel their practices and concepts of quality to take account of the need not only of clients who come through the door, but of all citizens who need career services (Sampson, 2009).

Existing and emerging technologies in Career Guidance and Counselling

Several innovations have emerged to supplement traditional career guidance practice. One such innovation is the use of ICT. The past decade has seen an incredible expansion in access to ICTs and today technology permeates almost every aspect of our lives. Individuals are now able to access the Internet not only through their personal computers but also through mobile phones and other mobile devices. The "read-only web" has changed towards a more social, collaborative, interactive and responsive web.

The goal of developing and using ICT-based career guidance and counselling resources and services as well as career information is to help young people and adults to make informed and careful occupational, educational, training and employment decisions, as well as plans on how to implement them. Completing practitioner-assisted or self-help career assessment via ICT provides people with a resource for clarifying self-knowledge about values, interests, skills, aptitudes and employment preferences. Using occupational educational, training and employment information provides a resource for enhancing knowledge of options. Additionally, ICT enables communication among and between CGC professionals and individuals and thus provides opportunities to manage the overwhelming amount of information that is now available (Sampson, Shy, Offer & Dozier, 2010).

Career Guidance and Counselling via Existing and Emerging Technologies

The increased use of ICT and especially the Internet can be helpful for supporting peoples' career development. But on the other hand fragmented services and data overflow are now bigger problems than previously. At the same time, the gap between low and high readiness in career decision-making among the citizens has increased, together with the diversity of life and career models and expectations.

As the practitioners observe the different level of readiness, as well as different levels of needs among individuals, they see a meaningful rationale for different levels of CGC service delivery. On the one hand they must accept that they are not so much needed by those individuals who can autonomously identify their needs and when these are met. On the other hand some

individuals, who have not been successful in getting the information which they need, need additional support from practitioners. However, there are practitioners who do not believe that individuals are capable of utilising career information on their own (Vuorinen, Sampson & Kettunen, 2011).

As the demand for services continues to grow, we need to continually review our service delivery mechanisms and look for ways to widen the service delivery modes in reaching more people in an economic manner. In order to do so, we must ensure that neither missing ICT competences, nor negative conceptions among the practitioners are a barrier to maximising the effective use of ICT in career guidance and counselling.

Generic CGC processes have been developed to help clients make effective use of ICT in career guidance and counselling (Sampson, 2008). According to Sampson (2008) CGC services can be designed consisting of three elements. Career services include self-help, brief staff-assisted, and individual case-managed services that are delivered by staff members to assist individuals in making informed and careful decisions. All these elements can contain forms of web-based career services. Effectiveness in the use of the ICT in career guidance and counselling is likely to be improved:

- By providing professional support for individuals who need it
- By systematically integrating modern technology to existing CGC services as well as CGC services into modern technology,
- By developing and continuously improving standards of practice for the use of ICT in CGC services and programmes
- Through an awareness of ethical issues and professional standards in the use and design of modern technology in CGC. designing ICT-based or ICT-supported services, and
- By conducting research and evaluation to appropriately guide the evolution of modern technology in CGC services (Sampson, 2008).

Critical Implementation of ICT in Training

A successful integration of technology in guidance and counselling is dependent on practitioners' willingness to accept the changes a new technology may bring to the service delivery. One of the main goals in integrating ICT in the design, implementation and the management of academic training programmes for CGC professionals is that the students learn to use in practice those methods which support their own learning process. For example, they should analyse how to define personal goals for their learning, how to design an individual learning programme, and how to use modern technology for reflective learning. They should experience modern technology in their own education, including the evaluation of their studies. During their learning process the students should be supported in reflecting on how to turn their experience in the use of ICT into their own professional competences, for promoting and conducting individual learning programmes or career paths with their own future clients (Kasurinen & Vuorinen, 2002).

Implementing ICT in the training of CGC professionals is neither about only using ICT-based methods, nor is it about giving extra ICT classes. It's about mainstreaming the use of modern technology and expanding understanding of ICT in study programmes. Expanding the understanding will serve to develop the CGC fields awareness of the complex nature of combining ICT and guidance and counselling and modernisation of the services. As a mainstream strategy, the use of modern technology can be used in documenting, in supporting the self-assessment process and for the recognition of students' prior learning. Alongside of their individual learning processes, students have the possibility to bring narratives and digital artefacts into each study period and show their prior knowledge and skills. They can gather their knowledge and skills from other studies, working as counsellors, participating in projects or working as volunteers in the counselling area (Vuorinen & Lerkkanen, 2011). The goal should be to socialize the effective and reflected use of modern technology for various purposes – in combination with 'traditional' methods. Training should help students to become aware of the variation in ways of technology play in CGC field and to ponder the differences their current way of understanding and the more advanced ways of understanding that they may be, or may need to be moving towards. In other words, students should be exposed to the situations where they are challenged to reflect and see the variation in terms of potentials of technology in the context of career guidance and counselling. To support this, the architecture of using technology can be constructed in accordance with the programme modules and units: Thought should be given to the competences which students should develop regarding modern technology and ICT and should be integrated into the design of curricula, modules and individual courses.

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