# CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR TARGET GROUPS: POLICY ISSUES FOR EUROPE

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*Abstract*

*This paper reports on the learning that took place within the context of activities organised by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). A key focus for the ELGPN throughout its existence between 2007 and 2015 concerned the development of Career Management Skills (CMS) programmes, with a view to facilitating transitions from education and training to work, as well as from one employment or self-employment activity to another. Network members gave special consideration to the specific needs of target groups, with the understanding that while CMS are likely to be important and useful to all citizens, some groups have different needs due to their particular life circumstances. This paper considers some of the main insights generated by the peer learning community, as well as by the relevant international literature, in order to contribute further reflection concerning the identification of target groups requiring specific policy attention, the positioning of CMS in the overall policy field, and the way diversity has implications for the way CMS is conceived and delivered.*

*Key words: career management skills, special target groups, career learning, career guidance and special needs*

## Introduction

This paper pulls together and synthesises the funds of knowledge generated during several activities organised within the context of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), including discussions, seminars, workshops and peer learning events that took place between 2007 and 2015.1 It also draws on the outcomes of a survey on Career Management Skills (CMS)2 for Target Groups that I carried out in my capacity as academic consultant to the ELGPN, where my role was to bring together evidence, arguments and theoretical frameworks in support of critical reflection on policy matters by network members. The survey provided background material and case studies that informed the network about the state of CMS for special target groups in the education sector and, to a lesser extent, in the labour market sector as well. Examples of how different countries – most notably the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and UK-Scotland – have developed CMS programmes for a diverse set of target groups were collected and analysed, with the understanding that while CMS are likely to be important and useful to all citizens, some groups – including persons with disability, looked-after children, minorities (such as

travellers/gypsies/Roma), 'at risk' youth, and children with challenging behaviour – have different needs due to their particular life circumstances. Such circumstances might call for specific and more appropriate CMS as well as modes of delivery, including pedagogies, that were more fit for purpose.

All the insights generated as a result of these ELGPN experiences and activities helped raise a whole host of issues concerning the way 'target groups' are defined and talked about, who decides what the CMS 'needs' of such target groups are, how such 'needs' are to be catered for, and the role that specific client groups should have not just in designing but also in delivering their own services. The rich ELGPN programme of activities also contributed to the on-going efforts that the career guidance policy community across Europe has been making over the past decade in defining CMS, in articulating the rationale underpinning the implementation of CMS programmes, and in exploring how, when and by whom career management competences are to be taught and assessed.

This paper builds on those efforts (inter alia Sultana, 2012; 2013a; Gravina & Lovšin, 2012; Thomsen, 2014) by more specifically considering the policy issues that surround the provision of CMS to special target groups. This exercise entails:

1.  the identification of target groups requiring specific policy attention;
2.  the positioning of CMS in the overall policy field;
3.  a consideration of diversity and the notions and values implicit in CMS; and
4.  the acknowledgement of the policy development challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure that specific target groups have access to the career management skills that they need.

While these various policy issues are inter-related, and are by no means exhaustive, each is nevertheless addressed in turn in order facilitate deeper reflection about them.

**The identification of specific target groups for policy attention**

The mapping survey referred to earlier indicated that most if not all EU member states do pay special policy attention to specific target groups in a number of policy-related areas such as education, health, transition to work, and career development. 'Target groups' are generally defined in terms of that group's vulnerability due to life circumstances such as disability, due to their minority status (e.g. ethnic, or life style), and due to social discrimination, such as that based on gender. Most responses to the survey also referred to a whole range of categories of persons that were considered to be 'at risk of social exclusion', including long-term unemployed, immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, ex-inmates, fostered children, young offenders, victims of family violence, the homeless, those suffering from substance abuse, aging workers, and persons living in remote and hard-to-reach regions. In a few cases, other non-vulnerable categories of 'special target groups' who were considered to require a customised

CMS service were mentioned, such as gifted children. By and large, however, the survey clearly showed that the term 'special needs' is primarily seen in relation to some form or other of physical and/or social vulnerability, which warrants the provision of specialised guidance and counselling services as well as bespoke provision of CMS. In most cases, the overarching goal is expressed in terms of 'reintegration', 'employability', and/or 'social inclusion' (Sultana, 2010). The emphasis is generally laid on job placement as the short-term goal, rather than on supporting career management and progression. Measurable outcomes – such as how quickly/how many individuals with particular characteristics find employment – are important for policy-makers, especially in a resource-impoverished environment where tough decisions have to be made when choosing which initiatives to fund. However, there are other outcomes of CMS that are more difficult to measure – such as learning, behavioural and longer-term outcomes – which should also be prized (OECD, 2004).

Attention to the different needs of specific target groups reinforces the notion that one cannot adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to the design and delivery of CMS. Rather, frameworks need to be adapted to provide 'tailored support' for disadvantaged groups. The focus on diverse modalities has important policy implications when it comes to elaborating a national or European response to the 2004 and 2008 EU Council Resolution's invitation to refocus career guidance in ways that promote career management skills (Council of the European Union, 2004, 2008). There are good examples of interesting practice across Europe where governments – or more often, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – have developed resources that provide aspects of CMS to such special target groups as persons with disability, ex-inmates, refugees, early school-leavers, Roma people, and aging workers (Clayton, 1999; CEDEFOP 2016). Some of these resources were generated in the context of EU initiatives, which were discontinued once project funding ended. They deserve greater visibility and support. Most of the resources address guidance issues in a generic manner, often looking at particular aspects of CMS. Generally, however, they do not articulate these in relation to a broad, overarching CMS framework which looks at a whole range of competences that provide structured ways to gather, analyse and synthesise information about self, about education, and about occupations, with the aim of developing resources to better manage one's life course, and to engage in advocacy measures that give them access to their rights as citizens and as human beings.

An important issue relating to the identification of specific target groups concerns the policy usefulness or otherwise of categorising groups of citizens in particular ways (e.g. as 'persons with disability'), when, from the perspective of some service providers, it is 'individual stories' that matter most. The focus on individuals and their efforts to overcome challenges in transitioning from school or unemployment to work, and then to manage their lives as citizens and workers in an environment which is increasingly characterised by insecurity (Bauman, 2017; Sultana, 2013b), seems to be largely linked to an effort, on the part of those who provide a service, to respond to personal difficulties presented by clients. In many of the case studies explored by the ELGPN, service providers seem to have a background in psychology and/or

social work, which tends to privilege an approach that focuses on the individual person. It is important to stress that there are some strengths in such a client-centred approach – including that of raising awareness that there are important differences between people who are lumped together indiscriminately in the same 'category' (e.g. those who have been born with disabilities, and those that develop disabilities later in life; first generation migrants, and third or fourth generation migrants).

However, it is equally important to note that there are also dangers in locating the roots of a problem within individuals—an emphasis and an orientation that also comes through in the way most programmes reported in the ELGPN survey use Individual Learning Plans or Individual Action Planning as their key method of intervention. A policy focus on groups, and not just individuals, alerts us to the impact of the surrounding environment on people who share similar life circumstances. For instance, while each person with special needs has his or her own story to tell, many have to face a similar set of obstacles when they attempt to transition to the work place, and to manage their career once they do find employment. A focus on these shared circumstances is important in policy terms, as it more easily leads to an acknowledgement of generalised rather than merely individual discriminatory practices, and is thus more likely to generate systemic policies that counteract prejudice (Hooley et al., 2018). A 'group' approach is also more likely to be politically empowering and enabling, given that people who share similar life circumstances, and who are conscientised to locate the source of their frustrations in deficits in the surrounding environment rather than in themselves, are more likely to exercise an influence on policy (Grech, 2015). The history of the women's as well as the gays' liberation movements provide good examples of the power of linking individual with group perspectives in ways that connect the personal to the political.

The language that is used to identify special 'target groups' is therefore particularly important, given that it can easily lead to deficit views of the clients that career guidance services aim to support. Policies regarding service provision for target groups need to be sensitive to the way language and terms position clients, service providers and the general public in ways that either empower or pathologise groups (Fairclough, 2001). There are significant and important differences in referring to persons with disability as 'disabled' or as 'handicapped'. All these terms blur the focus on persons, and reductively define an individual in terms of his or her disability or handicap. In many countries, therefore, there has been a shift in emphasis, with the strengths, abilities and potential of persons being foregrounded rather than their 'special needs' (Ginevra et al., 2018). Increasingly, therefore, there is a stress on embracing difference, seeking out the strengths and positives – such as the ability of clients with dyslexia to think creatively, the exceptional listening skills many hearing impaired clients develop, and the adherence to rules, attention to detail and focus that some people with Asperger's can offer – all of which are valuable qualities across a range of occupational situations.

For much the same reason, some countries prefer to refer to early school leavers as having 'disengaged' from schooling rather than as having 'dropped out'. This term better captures the idea that, firstly, disenchantment with schooling is a long-running, interactive process that needs to be seen in a life-course perspective and not as a singular event marked by finality. Secondly, it also signals the fact that 'décrochage' involves cumulative acts of mutual rejection by both individual and institution. The 'disengagement' metaphor also helps us understand that the process is potentially reversible. In other words, if the two-toothed gear-wheels (i.e. student and school) have grown apart over time, there may very well be ways of getting them to mesh together again, so that the motion of one is passed on to the other (Kelly & Gaskell, 1996; Kelly, 1997). Language influences perception, and perception influences what is identified as a 'problem', what is causing it, and what choices are considered relevant and legitimate from among policy options (Bacchi, 2009).

Attention to language in policy discourse is thus not merely a case of being superficially 'politically correct'. The terms used serve to introduce or reinforce particular perspectives regarding groups of citizens, seeing them either as persons with problems, or as persons with resources. The former approach tends to lead to deficit perspectives regarding individuals and groups, who are considered to lack skills and competences to manage their lives when in fact many of the difficulties they encounter arise from the surrounding environment, which fails to acknowledge the specificity of their life circumstances, or may even be hostile to the form of diversity they represent. Policies informed by an individualistic approach will tend to adopt a 'social work' and 'medical' orientation. Service providers are moreover construed to be the 'experts' who understand what the client's problems are, and how to address them. Within this mode, services are generally designed to 'compensate' for the 'deficiencies' that others are considered to have (Brunila, 2013).

In contrast, policies informed by an acceptance and even celebration of diversity are more circumspect when it comes to claiming that 'experts' have 'the' answers. They will tend to be more open to different approaches to life and career, and consequently more willing to question and reform systems, rather than individuals. Countries with an advanced understanding of the needs of persons with disability attempt to operationalize a social/systemic/empowering approach by focusing on people's resources and their life circumstances. Their services work closely with clients in order to co-define a personal rehabilitation project, one that takes into account a whole range of issues that include career planning and employment, legal and financial matters, psychological and physical health, socialization and personal self-esteem (Learning Skills Council, 2004; Hawthorn & Alloway, 2009; Doleac, 2016). There is also an advanced understanding of the manner in which the multiple difficulties of persons with disabilities are compounded by deleterious environmental conditions, such as poor economic growth and high unemployment. This awareness guards against the dangers mentioned earlier, where the promotion of CMS can lead to 'responsibilisation' and a 'blame-the-victim' approach which locates the reasons for failure and social exclusion in the individual (Sultana, 2018). In contrast, empowerment-based models

emphasise the need not only for increased access to information and improved levels of education and training, but also for guaranteed access, for all citizens, to a good standard of living which comes with increased levels of employment for all (Chronister, 2006). In this model, care is taken to ensure that the personal is not divorced from the political.

## Locating CMS in the policy field

The approach to CMS offered to diverse target groups as represented in different countries across Europe needs to be firmly located within the broader policy response to 'diversity'. Despite the homogenising influence of globalisation, contemporary societies are marked by an increase in diversity in the make-up of their populations. Such diversity is evident in the increasing flows of people, which is in part a result of the 'need' of capital for mobile human resources, as well as the outcome of colonial and post-colonial histories that drive groups of people towards 'metropole' countries in search for work and improved life chances (Bauman, 2016). Diversity also makes itself visible as previously subordinate/subaltern groups claim a visible presence in the public sphere, with persons with disability, persons with alternative lifestyles and sexual orientations, and persons from ethnic and faith minorities, demanding equal citizen rights, and a right to be 'different'. This necessarily involves an engagement with the way policies regarding diversity are articulated (Launikari & Puukari, 2005; Arulmani, 2011; Sultana, 2017a).

Two broad responses can be identified. The first is often termed 'assimilationist': this is a 'melting-pot' model which embraces different groups only inasmuch as they are willing to submerge their identity with that of the collective, as this is defined by the state. This is therefore not 'apartheid' – which is the overt rejection of diversity – but rather acceptance and merging on the terms of those who have the power to define the 'norm'. As some indigenous groups in western societies have noted, people from diverse groups have the right to enter the melting pot, as long as 'they melt white'. This ultimately amounts to a covert rejection of diversity, and to a reassertion of neo-colonialist mind-sets (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Sultana, 2011).

In contrast to this is another policy response to diversity, often referred to as the 'multicultural' (Taylor, 2012; Modood, 2015) or 'salad bowl' model. There are both liberal and radical versions of the latter approach, which is characterised by an attempt to 'tolerate', preserve and even encourage diversity and difference, seeing it both as a 'right' and as a 'resource'. States whose policies are inspired by multiculturalism conceptualise themselves as a house with many rooms, some of which are shared spaces, common to all citizens, and others which are private spaces, where groups converse in their own 'language'. The space occupied by the common and private 'rooms', the permeability between them, and the status afforded them defines the extent to which the state adopts liberal or more radical forms of multiculturalism.

Where diversity is seen as a problem (as in the assimilationist model), CMS will tend to be articulated in compensatory terms, with special target groups being seen as having deficits that

need to be worked on. Such a deficit approach is captured well by the following definition of Roma children in one of the responses to the mapping survey: "A Roma child/pupil comes from a socially disadvantaged environment…where social, family, economic and cultural conditions insufficiently encourage the development of mental abilities, motivation, emotional qualities and socialization, and do not offer adequate incentives for development of his/her personality".

The focus in such deficit-oriented views of diversity would thus be on changing people, and of 'normalising' them in relation to the expectations one has of 'mainstream' groups. Such CMS provision is akin to 'monocultural' and 'integrative' guidance, where key concerns are helping persons to cope with life situations, to adapt to life circumstances, and to be 'realistic' in terms of their choices and decisions: in short, to fit into the system as it is, and cause it least disturbance possible, not to challenge it and the injustices it gives rise to (Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012).

In contrast are other approaches to CMS, which mirror the movement in 'multicultural' or 'intercultural' guidance, where key concepts are acknowledgement of (and respect towards) different realities and value systems, the privileging of 'minority'/subaltern voices, and working with clients towards system change through conscientisation and advocacy (Irving & Malik, 2004; Sultana, 2014a,b,c; Hooley et al., 2018). Such an approach to guidance and to CMS is also more likely to have a deeper understanding of the notion of 'culture', not in terms of essentialised, reified, stable and fixed identities, but rather as a cultivation of a sense of a 'polyphonic' and 'hybrid' self within broadening circles of overlapping communities (Dobbernack & Modood, 2011).

The way CMS for specific target groups is conceptualised in policy terms and within the policy field is therefore important, since a CMS programme or framework is a 'condensate' of a particular world view, which positions and defines the 'target group' in particular ways. Needless to say, however, policy-making, like politics, is 'the art of the possible', and the policy field is littered with initiatives which set out to be progressive and enabling, but which ultimately end up working against the interests of those very groups that the new policies aspired to help. The conceptual discussion around CMS for special target groups remains important, therefore, but it ought not to paralyse policy-makers when it came to decide "what to do on Monday morning". As an internationally renowned policy analyst has noted, most policies are in fact "ramshackle, compromise, hit-and-miss affairs that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and ultimately, recreation in contexts of practice" (Ball, 1998, p.126). The ideal should be that of striving for what works in the best interests of those we seek to serve, where 'best interests' are defined collaboratively in informed and critical discussions with client groups. Every policy enactment can only be an approximation towards an ideal, though what theoretical and practical deliberation can lead to is to the 'unpacking' of the ideals for CMS that are often taken for granted and remain unchallenged. It is to a consideration of this that we now turn.

**Diversity and the notions and values implicit in CMS**

CMS training – as much as career guidance – represents a social practice that is deeply embedded in particular world views. Key among the latter are a set of assumptions that are taken for granted in mainstream society such as:

- the notion that work is central to life, to identity, and to one's understanding of oneself ;
- the notion that there is such an entity as the 'self', which is self-contained, identifiable, unique, and which needs to be cultivated through increased 'self'-awareness and through making the 'right' decisions;
- the notion that work is an expression of that 'self', and helps the 'self' attain fulfilment;
- the notion that one has the right and the duty (to oneself and to others) to know oneself and to strive for self-fulfilment and self-determination, irrespective of the wishes of the family or primary group one belongs to;
- the notion that one should 'edit' oneself in ways that make it easier to obtain employment (through specific training in self-presentation skills and in sitting for job interviews, for instance)—thus legitimising the notion of the 'selling' of oneself to maintain 'use value' in society.

One can refer to this as the deep 'Language' of CMS, and in trying to cater for the 'needs' of special target groups, one has to be aware of the fact that different groups might have a very different set of values, as well as different understanding of the self. In some cultures, for instance, work is less central to one's life than in others, and not as deeply imbued with the 'salvific' ethic (i.e. that work expresses and fulfils the self, and contributes to the narrative of progress of the self and of the world) which dominant western culture takes for granted. Nor might the division of labour, with its differential and specialised training and hierarchy of rewards, be seen as either necessary or even commendable. In other cultures, the 'self' remains subordinate to the needs of the family, and making decisions that further one's interests but not those of the primary group to which one belongs is seen not only as selfish, but as immature – thus implicitly overturning some of our deeply held beliefs about career maturity indicators as articulated in US career development theories (Sultana, 2017b, c).

Reference to 'cultures' here need not necessarily imply 'ethnic' diversity: class cultures are also important to take into account, and can have major implications for our understanding of CMS and career guidance more generally (Willis, 1977; Greenbank, 1999). In traditional, working-class communities, for instance, educational and career decision-making is often premised on the fear of economic insecurity, with individuals being more likely to grab a promising employment opportunity that presents itself (and to engage in work-based training and climb up the ladder within that job), than to invest in long-term schooling in the hope that something better materialises along the way. While 'class' is a complex and contested notion, and there is some danger when professional groups set out to represent the needs of those from different socio-economic backgrounds, there is value in considering how diverse groups may have different

understanding of what a 'career' is, and which 'management skills' are needed to 'enact careers' and to live lives which, from their perspective, are meaningful and fulfilling. The challenge for those of us working in the field, and for policy-makers, is not to assume that, in the encounter with the 'Other', and in the process of culturally translating other lifeworlds, our own certainty about how the world should proceed can remain stable.

**Delivering relevant CMS appropriately to specific target groups: challenges for policy development**

Taking the above reflections on how best to cater for the career development needs of specific target groups into account leads to the articulation of a series of principles and issues that are relevant to policy-making in the area of CMS. In what follows below, I briefly outline seven of these in ways that I hope will provoke further reflection and research.

A first issue arises from the complexities around the challenge of diversity for societies. It is crucial for any policy development in the area of CMS and lifelong career guidance to adequately conceptualise the task at hand, and to take seriously the range of debates on multiculturalism and 'difference' that have developed in and across various disciplines. Approaching CMS and lifelong career guidance without such a deeper appreciation of what is at stake risks the development of monocultural and 'monovocal' policies that work against the interests of those groups we most wish to serve.

Second, it is worth highlighting the fact that in many cases, CMS development does not seem to be sufficiently articulated as a goal or framework that binds services together. As a result, the development of CMS policies and frameworks tends to be viewed in isolation rather than as part and parcel of a broad range of policies and approaches that are informed by a similar philosophy and sets of values when it comes to relating to diversity. 'Joined-up' policies require an alternative approach, one in which national frameworks are put into place, potentially helping to give a direction to CMS. Integrated policy-making facilitates a strategic approach that is cumulative and organic, rather than fragmented and 'ad hoc'. This overarching policy approach also raises important and difficult issues regarding the balance that needs to be found between catering for the specific needs of target groups, and providing services to the so-called 'mainstream' majority group/s.

A third principle and set of issues arises from the acknowledgement of the fact that groups of people – identifiable by such social markers as gender, class, ethnicity, religious and cultural affiliation, sexual orientation, and lifestyle – experience the life course in distinctly diverse ways. It then follows that great care must be taken when it comes to defining CMS, and articulating a 'blueprint' or framework for career management skills that are broadly applicable to 'all'. Different groups are likely to require different sets of CMS, delivered differently. However, different modalities of delivering CMS and guidance require service provision to be transparent to the user, with clear signposting to citizens as to where, when and how to access support.

Fourth, given the challenge of understanding other groups' lifeworlds, and their way of making sense of everyday life and the meaning they give to their actions, it follows that policy-makers need to resist the facile strategy of filtering diversity through their own lens/es, thus risking misunderstanding the clients they mean to serve, or, worse still, 'domesticating' them by either ignoring or stamping out their difference. It is therefore important, strategically, for target groups to identify their own needs, on their own terms, and to be prime actors not only in the development of CMS programmes, but in their delivery as well. For the same reason, policy documents should be written in a language that is accessible to the clients that they purport to serve (Hill, 2006).

Fifth, it should be noted that in many countries, the state – burdened as it is enabled by its bureaucratic machinery – tends to be too slow in responding to the diverse needs of its citizens. State institutions find themselves challenged when required to 'reach out' to clients by providing services where and when needed, in a way that is compatible with the lifestyle of the citizens targeted. Indeed, it is significant that most of the case studies examined within the context of the ELGPN activities in the area of CMS showcased NGOs, rather than state institutions, taking the initiative of working with minority groups. This does not exonerate the state from its responsibilities, and indeed, outreach programmes organised by state institutions may enjoy some advantages, including scalability and longevity (Samoff et al., 2005). Nevertheless, NGOs tend to be ahead of the state when it comes to being closer to their client groups, and also to responding to needs more quickly – not least because their very existence depends on project funding from a variety of sources. Issues arise, however, when it comes to ensuring standards in service delivery, with some NGOs having little if any accountability, while others become unsustainable given their heavy dependence on external financial support. In policy terms, therefore, the state should not renege on its responsibilities, which include quality assurance, and ensuring continuity of service provision. Outsourcing should therefore be done within a framework that establishes and monitors quality standards. One important dimension of these standards is the adequate training of service providers, given that beyond good will there is a need for a deeper understanding of the complex issues that are involved in catering for special target groups, as highlighted throughout this paper. A variant of outsourcing is a partnership approach that serves to stimulate NGO activity, with the support and mentoring of the state.

Sixth, special target groups are likely to require advocacy in addition to provision of CMS. This suggests that, irrespective of the location and modality in which the CMS programme is delivered  - i.e. in or through school curricula, by Public Employment Services or by community-based NGOs – an enabling approach to the challenges faced by specific target groups in managing educational and career progression requires an understanding of the systemic obstacles they find in their path – a point that has been consistently emphasised throughout this paper.

Finally, one aspect of diversity that is not often thought of is that arising from what could be called 'internal diversity', i.e. the changing and evolving CMS needs experienced by the same person over his or her life course. One can therefore speak of 'latent needs', i.e. those career management and life skills needed as one moves through life, changes place of residence, occupations as well as life circumstances. This entails seeing CMS in a lifelong/lifecourse perspective (Mortimer & Shanahan, 2003), opening up possibilities of identifying and responding to needs as they evolve – such as, for instance, with persons who develop a disability or an infirmity, who are likely to need a different set of CMS than those who were born with a disability.

**Conclusion**

This paper has drawn on the learning achieved in the course of activities organised by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, as well as on the relevant international literature, in order to propose a number of reflections concerning the identification of target groups requiring specific policy attention, the positioning of CMS in the overall policy field, and the way diversity has implications for the way CMS is conceived and delivered. This paper then highlighted some of the issues and principles that should be considered when developing a policy regarding the provision of career management skills programmes to target groups that have specific needs. Much work remains to be done in this area. Hopefully these deliberations have provided a further stimulus for the development of career guidance practices that more effectively and sensitively serve the interests of a wider range of citizens.

**Notes**

1. See http://www.elgpn.eu/ for information about the network, including access to the resources it produced.
2. By Career Management Skills (CMS) we are referring to a series of organised activities that intervene in the lives of individuals and groups in order to invite them to think more systematically about their future as independent adults. This kind of activity invites young people and adults to learn to know more about themselves, and about the employment or self-employment opportunities available. It also entails developing the skills to make sound choices and decisions as to what one could aspire to do and to become, as well as the know-how required to make successful transitions – be these from school or unemployment to work, from one occupation to another, or from work to education, training, leisure, retirement or voluntary/unpaid activity. Most CMS curricula – which are also variously referred to as 'career learning', 'career development', 'career education', or 'transition' programmes – are thus underpinned by a focus on decision-making, opportunity awareness, transition skills, and self-awareness – what is commonly referred to as the 'DOTS' approach (Law & Watts, 1977; Law, 1999).

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