

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY
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THEME2 : STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

1. INTRODUCTION

Malta, a small island in the centre of the Mediterranean with a population of 400,000, has had career guidance services since the late sixties, with a guidance unit for the education sector being set up soon after political independence from Britain in 1964 (Degiovanni, 1997; Sammut, 1997; Camilleri, 2005). Many of the structures and practices in Malta's educational system were directly inherited from the UK, including a pastoral care orientation at secondary school level which involved guidance staff in both career guidance and personal counselling work. The fledgling service, which started off with a core team of staff being trained in UK universities (Keele and Reading in the main), developed over the years, ensuring that a guidance counsellor was available for every 300 students at the secondary school level. A diploma in career guidance and counselling started being offered at the University of Malta, but with time, this diploma dropped the dual focus on guidance and counselling, leading to a situation where few 'guidance teachers' had training in career guidance.

2. A RENEWED FOCUS

A European Training Foundation-commissioned review of guidance services in the countries that were aspiring to join the EU led to a report being published in 2003 that helped to place the issue of career guidance on the policy agenda (Sultana, 2003a, 2003b). The report highlighted the lack of strategic leadership in the area, noting that, for a variety of reasons, personal counselling had elbowed out career guidance within schools at all levels, including the post-compulsory education sector. This policy vacuum was creating a disconnect between the overall economic and human resource development goals of the country, and the actual practice in schools in relation to getting a better fit between the demand and supply of skills. The lack of development in career guidance services was in stark contrast to the goals and objectives articulated within the draft Lifelong Learning strategy, which had clearly identified career guidance as an important feature within the network of services that should be available to the citizen.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment publicly acknowledged the need for policy development in the area of career guidance, and commissioned a national report, requesting structured advice regarding the revitalization of the service in line with the benchmarks and best practice available across the EU and beyond.

In addition, a National Guidance Forum was established as a non-governmental body in order to support the deliberations that were taking place, and to encourage all interested parties to propose further agendas for career guidance in the country. The following sections provide some brief information about these two initiatives.

3. THE MALTA NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORM

The Malta National Guidance Forum aims at bringing together all the relevant actors concerned with the development of systems and practices for lifelong guidance in Malta. The forum, launched in December 2004, serves as a platform for ideas and a springboard for the implementation of guidance initiatives within the structures of the relevant actors. It holds a representation of the Ministry of Education, the guidance practitioners, the workforce, the employers and the training institutions. The development of this forum gives all the actors a voice in the development of a co-ordinated system that will serve citizens in different life and work roles over their lifetime.

The main objectives of the National Guidance Forum are:

- creating awareness for career guidance among all the social partners, facilitating collaboration between the actors in the sector
- acting as a melting pot of ideas and suggestions which provides the input for policy steering
- promoting a career guidance service that is available more broadly and is differentiated responding to specific needs
- promoting career guidance as a lifelong seamless process
- promoting on-going training for career guidance staff
- participating in networks of career guidance fora and thus gaining expertise from European partners in the sector.

The Forum established a work programme in order to attain these objectives, as follows:

Gap / Weakness identified	Action to address Gap / weakness	What has been achieved
Lack of clear policy steering	- Development of Lifelong guidance policy framework	Draft finished and presented to Ministry in November 2006; currently integrating feedback from Ministry before being placed in the public domain for discussion.
Lack of input by the social partners, NGOs, and community organisations	- Each entity/sector to appoint a person responsible for career guidance	Done: representatives attend NGF
The pre- and in-service training of guidance staff requires further investment	- Organisation of separate and joint in-service training programme	Post-Graduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development launched: 16 careers guidance staff from the PES and the Education sector receiving joint training.

	Identification of study visit / work shadowing opportunities abroad	Several guidance staff from both education and labour market sectors have visited guidance services abroad, including Ireland, Scotland, Estonia...
	Bring in foreign expertise to address local knowledge/skills gaps	Several key experts invited from the UK, Ireland, Slovenia, the OECD, and Finland.
	Developing a Masters to create pool of specialists	5 have finished Masters in CG with UK universities (Derby, East London).
Occupational information systems need to be developed (print and/or ICT-based) - internet in schools	- Develop template for occupational descriptors	100 occupational descriptors are being developed with EU funding in a project to which are contributing the PES, Euroguidance, the Education Division and the University of Malta.
European dimension missing	- Training in Ploteus, Eures	Done
Lack of career guidance resources (tests, games...) - guidance rooms in schools	- Explore and evaluate what is available on the market, and recommend investment	Planned for in the National Policy Framework, and waiting for resources from the Ministry
Formalised quality auditing procedures not in place	- Research and develop quality standards - Implementation of quality indicators in schools	Planned for in the National Policy Framework
Impact of guidance service needs to be evaluated	- National study to be carried out	Planned for in the National Policy Framework

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Cross-sectoral collaboration needs to be developed	- Regular joint seminars, workshops, conferences - Tri-annual cross-sectoral meeting for heads of career guidance services to be organised	Key seminar and conference on career guidance for persons with disability held in 2006.
School guidance staff need to have improved understanding of labour market	- Training programme directed at career guidance staff (e.g. ETC's Employment Barometer)	No action taken yet
Career guidance in higher education sector is weak	- Joint action committee with one guidance representative from each sector to carry out needs assessment, and develop a cross-sectoral plan	This is currently the subject of a Masters' degree level dissertation.

<p>This is currently the subject of a Masters' degree level dissertation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of a cross-curricular school guidance programme - Model plan for guidance provision in a school as part of SDP 	<p>Research carried out and integrated in the National Policy Framework</p>
<p>Guidance services for employed adults need to be developed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of tiered service model - Opening up of guidance services in HE sector - Unions, enterprises, network of micro-enterprises 	<p>Little development has been achieved in this area.</p>
<p>There are no guidance services / specialists to cater for specific client groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research the specific client groups that may need targeted career guidance - Special focus: early school leavers, gender equity, special needs... 	<p>Focus in 2006 has been on career guidance services for persons with disability.</p>

The Malta Guidance Forum was a partner in a project funded by the European Commission Joint Actions Programme, together with Estonia, Denmark, Slovenia, the UK, and Ireland. The project, entitled 'Developing national fora for guidance in six member states' aimed to identify different models of national fora and to exchange good practices. Malta's contribution was to the project included the publication of a research report on the specific challenges that career guidance services face in the context of small states (Sultana, 2006).

4. A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CAREER GUIDANCE IN MALTA

The strategy document (Debono et al., 2006) focuses on career guidance in the compulsory education sector, and therefore, while integrating a lifelong guidance perspective, does not propose an all-age service as is available in Scotland, Wales or New Zealand. The national strategy document, which is now in its final drafting stages before it is placed in the public domain for discussion prior to implementation, proposes a range of actions and initiatives, including:

- the establishment of a career guidance framework which clarifies the role of career guidance. Among others, it introduces the basic concepts and language of the discipline in order to ensure that there is national consensus around the understanding of terms. The working definitions highlight the differences that exist between guidance, career guidance and counselling.
- the identification of the basic professional competencies needed in career guidance practice. It gives prominence to quality assurance to ensure that career services are delivered effectively.
- the re-structuring of the present organisational delivery-service setup. It proposes the development of tools and services to enhance the guidance practice and the development of stronger links between the educational sector and the social partners.
- the complementing of the other reforms currently being carried out by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, and to thus to serve as a catalyst for the formulation of a national strategy for lifelong learning.

The draft strategy for the development of career guidance services in Malta proposes new roles for Service Manager of Career Guidance, for Career Coordinators, for Career Advisors, for Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) teachers, as well as for school counsellors and guidance teachers. It proposes the separation of the personal counselling role from that of the career guidance role, with each function being addressed by specialised staff through a distinct but linked service.

The draft strategy also proposes a career education curriculum for primary and secondary schools, ensuring a stronger emphasis on career education issues within the Personal and Social Development (PSD) programme. It also recommends the introduction of work experience to all students in the higher forms. All schools are to be equipped with a guidance suite having the necessary office equipment and materials related to guidance, such as career tests, career books, CD-ROMS, etc.

Finally, the draft strategy places a great deal of importance on standards of service delivery, which are to be maintained through the regular updating of career guidance practitioner skills, and through making available training routes and opportunities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Quality is to be assured through the monitoring of career-related training, the establishment of a code of ethics for career guidance practitioners, the drawing up a set of guidelines for career information, the development of a quality assessment system, and the implementation of an annual review of school career education and guidance.

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