



on

Review of Careers Information, Advice,  
Guidance and Education (CIAGE)

15 June 2012

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. PPTA is the union representing around 18,000 teachers in state secondary, area, manual training and intermediate schools, as well as tutors in community education institutions and principals in secondary and area schools. PPTA represents the professional and industrial interests of its members, including those working in alternative education centres and activity centres.
- 1.2. More than 90% of eligible teachers choose to belong to the union, so it follows that 90% of careers advisers in secondary and area schools are likely to be PPTA members. Furthermore, careers advisers need to work with the full team of teachers in a school in order to provide effective services for all students, so careers work becomes a role for all teachers.
- 1.3. The constitutional objectives of the Association are as follows:
  - 1.3.1.1. To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular.
  - 1.3.1.2. To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively.
  - 1.3.1.3. To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi).

## 2. System overview

- 2.1 PPTA has no difficulty with the Outcome and Description at page 5 of the Discussion Paper. It sets out an ideal system. The issue is how such a system can be developed and what resourcing is needed for schools to be able to play their part in that system.
- 2.2 As the paper points out, there is a regulatory framework on schools, through the National Administration Guidelines, and there is some funding provision in the form of a Careers Information Grant (CIG) and a Careers Advisor Allowance in the STCA, but no dedicated staffing provision. It is our view that this provision has never been adequate.

- 2.3 PPTA's annual conference in 2011 called for improvements in the training of careers advisers, for an increase in the Careers Information Grant (CIG), and for the Careers Advisor Allowance to be increased from its current \$1500 per annum to the equivalent of a management unit, i.e. \$4,000 p.a.
- 2.4 The message conveyed by the current Careers Advisor Allowance is that careers advice is of far lesser importance than most of the responsibilities held by teachers, such as management of a small subject department or being a Dean. In fact, as the discussion paper acknowledges, the work of careers advice, information, guidance and education is a vital role for schools, and a Careers Advisor needs to provide much of the leadership of this work.
- 2.5 There are also insufficient controls around the use of the funding provision. The self-managing context of New Zealand schools leaves too much space for a proportion of the funding to be diverted into other areas, and PPTA has, over many years, received reports from members about that happening. The use of careers resources is not usually a major focus for Education Review Office teams on their school visits, and a lone careers advisor has little power to change matters if a principal is determined to re-direct funding.
- 2.6 The discussion paper cites ERO's contention that only 12% of secondary schools in their 2006 sample were delivering "high quality career education and guidance to their learners" (p.7), but the methodology used by ERO in arriving at that percentage is rather opaque. In fact, the figure of 12% appears only in the summary section of the report and refers to the proportion of schools that were rated as Highly Effective or Effective across all eight areas of the evaluation framework. Much higher percentages of schools were rated as either Highly Effective or Effective on the eight individual evaluation indicator areas, i.e.:
- 65% for organising the delivery of appropriate career education and guidance
  - 62% for meeting the career education and guidance needs of students
  - 70% for meeting the needs of students unprepared for transitions
  - For the various aspects of diversity, schools were meeting the career education and guidance needs of students as follows:
    - 48% for students with special needs
    - 44% for high achieving students
    - 41% for Maori students
    - 32% for Pacific students

- 70% for provision of careers information
- 62% for providing teachers responsible for career education and guidance with relevant professional development
- 59% for involving family/whanau and the community in their career education and guidance programme
- 29% for self-review.

ERO concluded that “Only one secondary school needed to improve across all of the areas included in this evaluation.”

2.7 PPTA contends that unevenness of performance is caused partly by the self-managing schools environment discussed above.

2.8 A further contributor to the uneven delivery of CIAGE is the stop-start nature of government initiatives for schools. Over the last decade or so, there has been the Designing Careers pilot, and then the CPaBL (Creating Pathways and Building Lives) project. Both of these were short-term, contestable, and never made available to anywhere near the full range of schools. Both have now disappeared from the landscape, and little remains of the learning generated by them, except as reflected in the Ministry of Education’s guidelines *Career Education and Guidance in New Zealand Schools*, published in 2009.

2.9 Careers NZ has sought to fill the gap, but does not have the resources to work intensively within schools to improve practice. Its recent project to develop benchmarks that describe levels of quality of careers provision may be useful, but only if the benchmarks are used proactively by school leadership teams to self-review and consider priorities for development.

### 3. Careers education

3.1. In a highly devolved system like New Zealand’s schooling system, uneven quality of provision is inevitable without greatly improved provision of professional learning and development (PLD) for school leaders and for careers practitioners including ongoing support. In the new “fully contestable” context for PLD which has seen the demise of School Support Services (who did provide some careers support) this would require the Ministry of Education to advertise a contract specifically targeting PLD for careers education. No such contract was advertised

in the 2011 round that established the framework for PLD provision in 2012 and 2013 in secondary schools.

- 3.2. Currently there is no requirement on schools to provide any time whatever to their careers advisor, although it is understood in most schools that the NAG requirement to provide careers education implies that some time must be allocated for this work. How much time, however, varies enormously. There needs to be a targeted staffing allocation for careers advisors, based on the school roll and decile level, which is required to be used for careers work and nothing else.
- 3.3. PPTA agrees with Careers NZ that career education in schools requires a team approach. This team needs to involve all teachers in various ways, led by the school's senior leadership team and using the expertise of the appointed careers advisor. PPTA supports the Careers NZ position that:

Schools should not delegate this important work to the career development staff alone. It is important that schools task a member of their senior leadership to oversee and coordinate career education across the school to support specialist staff. To locate effective career development practice at the heart of teaching and learning, school leaders need to play active roles.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.4. The careers advisor in a school should be a trained teacher who has the experience and skills to be able to work effectively with young adults, not a contracted "expert" from outside the school. If careers advice is to be built into the whole fabric of the school's work, it cannot be left to an outsider who visits from time to time but is not part of the teaching team. The message of that would be that careers education is an "add-on", not an integral part of the school's curriculum.
- 3.5. Careers education should, like any other part of the school curriculum, be differentiated to the needs of individual learners and culturally responsive. This should be a focus area of PLD for school leadership and careers advisors. In particular, schools need advice and information about effective ways of engaging with families and whanau, especially in contexts where families' career knowledge and competencies are low.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www2.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/planning/career-education-benchmarks/benchmarks/>

3.6. To our knowledge, there are no tools available for the New Zealand context to assess whether learners are developing career management competencies, except the section of Careers NZ's benchmarks which describe two levels (Competent and Highly Competent) for students' Career Management Competencies across four dimensions. On their own these benchmarks are useful descriptors, but they are not an assessment tool.

#### 4. Careers information

4.1. There is no shortage of careers information available, in fact there is probably too much information, but the key question is how well the information is packaged to meet the needs of learners and their families/whanau, especially those who are not already well informed. Quality assurance of the information to ensure that students are not misinformed is vital, and different levels and types of mediation of the information are necessary depending on student needs. Key question 2 identifies some of those target groups: learners with special education needs, at risk learners, and families/whanau.

4.2. This raises the question of who should be responsible for quality assurance of careers information. Careers NZ is a trusted source of information, but not all information is conveyed through them, with universities, industry training organisations, business organisations, etc all publishing information about careers in one form or another.

4.3. Research shows that young people use their families/whanau as a major source of careers information, and this can be problematic, especially when there is only limited experience and knowledge of career options within the family/whanau.

4.4. Subject teachers are also a source of careers information for students, and this can be problematic if they have not had opportunities to update their knowledge about career opportunities relevant to their subject area.

4.5. Young people who are engaged with education and motivated to research career opportunities will use online information, pamphlets, etc to supplement what they learn through face to face situations. The young people about whom we need to be most concerned are those who are disengaged from learning, lack the skills to conduct their own research, and/or lack the motivation to explore opportunities.

For these young people, high quality face to face contact with people who have the necessary knowledge and skills is essential. This is a very time-consuming activity, and is normally one that only the school's career advisor(s) can do effectively.

- 4.6. This adds weight to our argument (see 3.2 above) that there must be some kind of targeted careers staffing, so that there is adequate time available for this work to be done.

## 5. Careers Advice

- 5.1. The discussion paper suggests that more consistent delivery of high quality advice would be achieved by providing "clear expectations" and having a stronger focus in ERO reviews on career advice. The Careers NZ benchmarks provide some clear expectations of schools, but experience indicates that without closer monitoring of schools' delivery on these expectations alongside excellent PLD for senior leaders and careers advisors, there will still be patchy delivery.

- 5.2. Many schools seek to work closely with employers, through Gateway and other work experience programmes, and through careers expos and other such activities. However, the context within which the school operates can greatly influence the effectiveness of this. In small towns where there are just one or two secondary schools and a limited range of employers, it is not so hard to establish these contacts. In cities where there are many schools and many employers, this is much harder. Again, the highly devolved context of New Zealand schools adds to the difficulties, as there is no overarching organisation to bring employers and schools together.

- 5.3. In Australia, there is a federal initiative entitled School Business Community Partnership Brokers Programme, whose purpose is described as follows:

The program is designed to foster a strategic, whole of community approach to improving education and transition outcomes for all young people. This is achieved through a national network of Partnership Brokers that create new partnerships and enhance existing partnerships between and among four key stakeholder groups:

- Education and training providers
- Business and industry

- Parents and families
- Community groups.<sup>2</sup>

5.4. According to the outcomes reports published on the website, this programme is highly successful, especially for improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners in Australia. We suggest that something of this kind in New Zealand could greatly assist careers work.

## 6. Career Guidance

6.1. Schools with high quality approaches to CIAGE are well aware of the problem that the students who need career guidance most are often the ones less likely to seek out that guidance, and that programmes need to target those students.

6.2. On the other hand, PPTA would be opposed to any suggestion that criteria be developed to target funded career guidance to at risk students only. Defining “at risk” students, in relation to career guidance, would be fraught with difficulties and simply cause confusion and an extra layer of bureaucracy to attempt to meet such a requirement.

6.3. As with every other aspect of CIAGE, the answer lies with PLD so that school leaders and careers advisors are knowledgeable about effective ways to target the students who are currently less well served.

6.4. PPTA opposes contracting out of career guidance to private providers who are not part of the school community. Career guidance is a fundamental part of a school’s duty to its students, and needs to be properly resourced and supported so that schools can perform it effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/SBCPB.aspx>



7. One size does not fit all

- 7.1. It is PPTA's view that policy on CIAGE needs to take into consideration the needs of the different kinds of schools. One size does not fit all, and there are three groups of schools which have particularly high needs: smaller rural schools, schools with high refugee and migrant populations, and low decile schools. (There is some crossover between these last two groups.)
- 7.2. Smaller rural schools, especially those with a high level of isolation, do not have the numbers to easily attract tertiary providers to visit them and talk to students and their families/whanau about what they offer. Conversely, as isolation increases it becomes more costly for students and their families/whanau to visit the tertiary institutions. Smaller rural schools also have less time and resources to allocate to CIAGE. Students in these schools also have relatively limited exposure to a range of careers, and are more likely to be limited in their thinking to what they and their family/whanau are familiar with, e.g. farming, forestry and rural servicing. There is a basic core of work, mostly administrative in nature, that all careers advisors must do regardless of the size of the school roll, e.g. reports to the principal and BOT, processing incoming mail and keeping up to date with employment opportunities, courses and training. This has a disproportionate impact in smaller schools, using up time that is even scarcer than in a larger school.