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POLICY IN SCOTLAND: THE OUTCOMES OF THE 'CAREER REVIEW' PROCESS



PETE ROBERTSON

The Scottish Government produces many policy documents and initiatives that have some bearing on the work of career services. The employment, education and skills policy landscape is complex. Policy that directly and specifically addresses the role of career development services is less common.

In 2011 the Scottish Government published *Career information, advice and guidance in Scotland: A Framework for service redesign and improvement*. This took a bold position in advocating for a major shift towards online services. This shaped the evolution of Scotland's national career service – Skills Development Scotland (SDS) - and its extensive reliance on online services to provide a universal service. Although this policy was intended to apply to all providers of career services in Scotland, in practice it influenced only SDS.

In contrast, the publication in 2020 of *Scotland's Careers Strategy: Moving Forward (2020)* appears to have had no impact on practice at all. This is partly because some of its recommendations were unclear. Also, the timing of its publication immediately prior to the COVID pandemic meant that it was swamped by major events. Nothing was implemented as attention became focused on steps to contain youth unemployment, notably through the 'Youth Guarantee.' Following a suggestion in a review of the Youth Guarantee (Begbie, 2020), SDS was asked to undertake a review of career service provision on behalf of Scottish Government.

The Career Review Process

Grahame Smith (An SDS board member) was appointed to chair the Review. A 'Programme Board' was appointed with representatives from different sectors, although surprisingly few career development professionals. SDS staff managed the process and run a consultation exercise with stakeholders and members of the public. In addition, consultancy reports were commissioned by SDS, most usefully a review of guidance provision in Scotland in different sectors. Together this was an 'evidence based' review but restricted to services for young people.

In February, Skills Development Scotland published the outcomes of the Career Review process: *Careers by design: Report of the Career Review Programme Board* (SDS, 2022). The Scottish Government has also published its response to the document, essentially accepting all the recommendations.

The CDI was not permitted to join the Programme Board but was given occasional briefings on the progress of the review. The CDI gave strong feedback on the draft

recommendations, and we were pleased to see that the final version included much stronger emphasis on issues of equality and diversity, and a reaffirmation of the Scottish Government's commitment to all age guidance.

Recommendations of the Career Review

1	A new career development model
2	Developing skills and habits essential for the future world of work
3	Creating person centred career services
4	Experiential career education
5	Community based services
6	Exposure to fair work
7	Digital enablement, empowerment and engagement
8	Clear roles for the delivery of career services
9	Strengthening evaluation and continuous improvement
10	Creating a career services coalition

Some highlights of the Career Review

The economic investment in career services

A unique feature of the report is the inclusion of an analysis of the amount of public money spent on career services in Scotland. This is derived from estimates made in research commissioned for the Review (Hooley, Percy & Alexander, 2021). No explicit recommendations are offered in relation to funding going forward, presumably beyond the Review's remit. It seems that post-school, those who do not attend university get career services with weaker levels of funding, which raises questions of equality.

A new model

A key recommendation is to develop a new model – but a model of what? The document does not make clear if this will be a model of individual guidance, a way of designing

services, or a framework for the outcomes of career learning. The latter seems most likely as the proposal appears strikingly similar to Law & Watts' (1977) DOTS model, as this comparison demonstrates:

Career development model prototype

I understand myself

I understand the world of work

I can make decisions

I can take action

DOTS model

Self-awareness

Opportunity awareness

Decisions

Transitions

DOTS was hugely influential in shaping career education programmes in UK and Europe for many years, its simplicity facilitating the training of school staff. Some would see this 45 year old model as simplistic: in its original formulation it does not address the processes of learning or progression, and more sophisticated frameworks are available.

The prototype is work in progress and something more novel may emerge, but without some clarity as to the purpose that it serves it is unlikely to have an impact beyond SDS.

Career-related learning

There is clearly an aspiration to strengthen career-related learning and employer links in educational institutions, and to shift some resources to input to earlier years.

Cross-sectoral co-ordination

There is an aspiration in the report to better co-ordinate the work of different agencies in the Scottish CEIAG landscape. The recommendations are not detailed and specific. Much is left to a 'career service coalition': a cross-sectoral body to be set up, based on the Programme Review Board. A related aspiration is to develop shared evaluation and outcome measurement approaches.

Going forward

The Career Review process was led and managed by SDS, and its product draws heavily on SDS branding and marketing. Some of its key recommendations pre-date any evidence gathering. In one sense it can be understood as an exercise to legitimise SDS plans for guidance services and preferred relations with other agencies, through seeking the support of Scottish Government, and through public relations. That said, any attempt to use

evidence in planning career services is to be applauded, and any document that reinforces the value of investing in career services to government has got to be a good thing.

The wider landscape in Scottish education is in flux, with structural reforms to curriculum and inspection arrangements expected as the Scottish Government responds to the issues raised in the OECD's (2021) review of Curriculum for Excellence. As such the timing may not be ideal to impact on the fine details of career education, particularly in schools.

Going forward, it remains to be seen if the SDS vision has traction beyond the organisation, what the new model will look like, and whether the structures put in place for governance and evaluation are truly independent.

References

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Professor Pete Robertson is Professor of Career Guidance at Edinburgh Napier University