The 'Blueprint' framework for career management skills: a critical exploration

Tristram Hooley, A.G. Watts, Ronald G. Sultana and Siobhan Neary

Abstract

This article examines the Blueprint framework for career management skills as it has been revealed across sequential implementations in the USA, Canada and Australia. It is argued that despite its lack of an empirical basis, the framework forms a useful and innovative means through which career theory, practice and policy can be connected. The framework comprises both core elements (learning areas, learning model and levels) and contextual elements (resources, community of practice, service delivery approach and policy connection). Each of these elements is explored.

Keywords: career management skills, career development, career education frameworks, career policy, career learning, career blueprints

Introduction

The 'Blueprint' framework for career management skills represents the output of a series of interlinked policy initiatives in the USA, Canada and Australia. These initiatives sought to create a competency framework that articulates the concept of career management skills for a range of audiences (careers workers, policy-makers, teachers and end users).

The Blueprint framework sets out an approach to career development which is underpinned by a learning paradigm. Its advocates reject the idea that career is just about making vocational choices and argue that in flexible and dynamic labour markets individuals need the ability to actively manage their careers. The term 'career management skills' is used to describe the skills, attributes, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need in order to do this. The task of careers work is accordingly conceived as fostering learning and personal development. The Blueprint framework thus represents an attempt to describe a set of learning outcomes which can be focused upon at different times during a life journey and to detail a developmental process through which these outcomes can be acquired.

The Blueprint framework comprises three core elements:

1. *Career learning areas* (called 'goals' or 'competences' in the existing iterations), describing the skills, attributes, attitudes and knowledge that the framework seeks to develop in individuals.

2. The *learning model*, describing the understanding of learning and skills acquisition that underpins the framework.

3. The *levels*, describing the stages of development that an individual goes through in

becoming a competent career manager.

It is important to note that, despite the influence achieved by the Blueprint framework with both practitioners and policy-makers, it cannot claim to be based on an empirically demonstrated analysis of the elements that lead an individual to career success, happiness or economic productivity. The framework is at once a theoretical proposition and, as will be argued below, a process of policy and practice development. Its elements have been developed by a number of thought leaders in the career development field through a mix of conceptual thinking and iterative consultation and development. So far, this development has not been explicitly connected to existing career theory, and its effectiveness has not been empirically tested by any substantial systematic study. Thus, although the Blueprint framework remains influential, it should not be regarded by either practitioners or governments as a fully tested approach to developing citizens' career management skills.

However, the Blueprint has been innovative in the way it has joined the core elements of the framework to a series of what can be labelled contextual elements. These elements seek to use the Blueprint as a means of creating an interface between policy-makers, practitioners and resource developers. The contextual elements can be summarised as follows:

1. Resources, describing learning materials, assessments and other tools that are created to underpin the delivery of the Blueprint.
2. Service delivery approach, describing the way in which career development organisations implement the Blueprint and use it to inform and shape their service blend.
3. Community of practice, describing the development of ways to share practice related to the Blueprint and its network of users and advocates.
4. Policy connection, describing the way in which the Blueprint is acknowledged and implemented in policy.

The Blueprint framework comprises a combination of these core and contextual elements. Each of these will be examined in detail. First, however, the history of the Blueprint will be briefly reviewed.

Brief history

The Blueprint has its origins in the USA, as the National Career Development Guidelines (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 1989). Jarvis and Keeley (2003, p. 8) relate how the development of these guidelines began in the USA in the late 1980s, resulting in publication in 1989. The guidelines were later broadened in 2003 to align with the 'No Child Left Behind' policy initiative (incorporated in a US Federal Act in 2001) and then revised in further minor ways in 2004 and 2007.

After initial publication in the US, the idea of developing guidelines for defining career management skills was adopted in 1996 in Canada, where it became the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs (National Life/Work Centre, n.d). The development of the Canadian Blueprint was supervised by a National Advisory Group of experts from across Canada, through a redrafting and piloting process that took four years and involved diverse public and private sector agencies in all provinces. The Canadian document was strongly influenced by

the National Career Development Guidelines, but made important changes, as will be discussed later.

Following the publication of the Canadian Blueprint, the framework attracted considerable international interest, especially in Australia. The process of investigating the possibility of an Australian Blueprint was led by the Transition from School Taskforce of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and was undertaken by Miles Morgan Australia. An important underpinning document was produced by McMahon, Patton and Tatham (2003), which explored the theoretical, policy and practical issues that should influence its development. The Australian Blueprint was piloted in 2005, at 26 trial sites throughout Australia. As in Canada, these included public and private sector organisations such as schools, universities, training organisations and companies. In response to this pilot, MCEETYA commissioned the refinement and roll-out of the Australian Blueprint (MCEETYA, 2010).

Despite the substantial consultation process, the core of the Australian Blueprint draws very heavily on the Canadian iteration and is essentially a restatement of it, with some limited rewording. For example, the term 'positive self-image' is changed to 'positive self-concept', and the word 'understand' to 'explore'. The differences between the three iterations will be discussed in more detail later. In summary, the core elements of the Australian Blueprint were very similar to those of its predecessors, although its contextual elements, particularly the accompanying resources, were largely new.

The Blueprint framework thus offers a good example of 'policy lending and policy borrowing' (Sultana, 2009, 2011a), with the transference of 'policy learning' taking place through 'policy networks', through informal personal connections and through its discovery online. The notion of developing country-specific iterations of the Blueprint framework has now extended to the UK. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has led a project to test the Blueprint framework within an English context (LSIS, 2010). This resulted in the creation of a new Blueprint for Careers being launched in England in 2012. Parallel work has also been undertaken in Scotland. It is further worth noting that an attempt was made to develop a Blueprint in Lithuania (Sokolova, 2010), but foundered, for three reasons:

- the difficulty of agreeing on a common philosophical underpinning for the Lithuanian Blueprint;
- the difficulty of embedding the US/Canadian approach in a different educational system with a very different approach to curriculum;
- the difficulty of finding a way to deliver career management skills across different elements of the educational system (notably schools, vocational education and higher education).

Similar difficulties have hampered attempts within the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) to develop a European Blueprint (Sultana, 2012). Such difficulties point to the fact that education systems are informed by different curricular and pedagogical traditions (Alexander, 2001), and that Sadler's famous dictum, penned more than a century ago, is still relevant today: 'We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall having a living plant' (Sadler, 1900, p. 49).

Similarly, McLean (1990) argues that there are at least three curricular traditions across Europe, namely the Encyclopaedic tradition (content-oriented, and typical of France), the Humboldt tradition (humanist and process-oriented, with roots in the German notion of *Bildung*), and the Anglo-Saxon tradition (which has a strong emphasis on pastoral care, but is increasingly outcome-oriented). Any curricular innovation is shaped by these different cultures, and is understood, defined and implemented within the logic of historically embedded practices. These contexts determine the view of the learner (e.g., as active or passive, as 'tabula rasa' or as co-constructor of knowledge), the role of the state (e.g., in terms of the degree of centralised, national curricular frameworks, in contrast to an emphasis on subsidiarity), the preferred pedagogic and assessment approaches (e.g., examination-oriented systems with national *concours*, in contrast to formative and continuous assessment styles), and so on. For these reasons, the notion of a Europe-wide 'reference framework' or 'blueprint' may be considered to be highly problematic.

Core elements

As has already been discussed, the Blueprint comprises three core elements: career learning areas; learning models; and levels. Although in existing iterations of the Blueprint these elements are similar, any process that seeks to redraft or re-contextualise the Blueprint can examine the possibilities of varying one or more of these elements. The following discussion therefore seeks to describe these elements, to critically explore their conceptual basis and to propose alternatives that may be considered as part of any future revision of the Blueprint.

Career learning areas

The existing iterations of the Blueprint are organised around 11 career learning areas (called 'goals' in the USA and 'competencies' in Canada and Australia), grouped under three thematic headings. There is some slight variation of wording, but they are centred around the themes of:

1. personal management;
2. learning;
3. career.

These three themes have been variously labelled as the framework has developed and changed across contexts. In the USA they were known as Personal Social Development, Educational Achievement and Lifelong Learning, and Career Management; in Canada as Personal Management, Learning and Work Exploration, and Life/Work Building; and in Australia as Personal Management, Learning and Work Exploration, and Career Building. Although all three cover similar ground, the different choices of vocabulary demonstrate subtle conceptual differences that can also be seen in the shifting descriptions of the learning areas themselves.

It is important to restate that these learning areas and their iterations across the three versions have not been derived from any empirical analysis of the process of career management, nor have they been tested empirically. They are simply an attempt to state a series of factors that are likely to impact on the career development of an individual and

which connect meaningfully with the ideology of career development in the countries within which they originated.

It is illuminating to examine how the learning areas have been restated or changed through the three iterations of the Blueprint, as outlined in Table 1. The development is not neatly sequential, because the US version was revised in 2003 and again in 2004 and 2007 (the 2003 version is used in Table 1) with reference to the Canadian framework. The final commentary column in Table 1 draws out some of the key differences between the three frameworks. It is based partly on our analysis, and partly on comments received from those involved in developing the Canadian and Australian versions.

Table 1. Development of learning areas across the three Blueprint iterations.			
USA	Canada	Australia	Commentary on changes across the three Blueprints
Develop understanding of yourself to build and maintain a positive self-concept	Build and maintain a positive self-image	Build and maintain a positive self-concept	*Minor changes: essentially restating the same principle*
Develop positive interpersonal skills including respect for diversity	Interact positively and effectively with others	Interact positively and effectively with others	*Mention of diversity dropped, presumably to make the concept more universal*
Integrate personal growth and change into your career development	Change and grow throughout one's life	Change and grow throughout life	*Move to talk about life rather than career (though Canada maintains this more persistently than Australia in subsequent items – see below)*
Balance personal, leisure, community, learner, family and work roles	Maintain balanced life and work roles	Maintain balanced life and work roles	*Again moving to become more universal and general and less specific*
Attain educational achievement and performance levels needed to reach your personal and career goals			*Dropped: viewed as being covered by next item, but without such emphasis on formal credentials*
Participate in ongoing, lifelong learning experiences to enhance your ability to function effectively in a diverse and changing economy	Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals	Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals	*Restated with subtle changes of meaning around the purpose of participation in lifelong learning: i.e., is it for society, for your life or for your career?*
	Secure/create and maintain work	Secure/create and maintain work	*Newly introduced into the later versions*
Create and manage a career plan that meets your career goals	Understand, engage and manage one's own	Engage in and manage the career-building	*Drops the idea of a 'plan' to move towards a focus on process; 'career'*

	life/work building process	process	*dropped in Canada but reinstated in Australia*
Use a process of decision making as one component of career development	Make life/work-enhancing decisions	Make career-enhancing decisions	*In the US framework, the outcome is learning decision making; in the later frameworks, decision making is the process and an enhanced life is the outcome*
Use accurate, current, and unbiased career information during career planning and management	Locate and effectively use life/work information	Locate and effectively use career information	*Largely similar, but the US framework is more detailed*
Master academic, occupational and general employability skills in order to obtain, create, maintain and/or advance your employment			*Dropped: viewed as requiring a separate framework*
Integrate changing employment trends, societal needs and economic conditions into your career plans	Understand the changing nature of life/work roles	Understand the changing nature of life and work roles	*Less specific in later versions, where the societal understanding is separated from personal decision making (see next item)*
	Understand the relationship between work and society/economy	Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy	*Addition of a separate principle focused on societal understanding as a goal in itself*

The distinctions are subtle, but a somewhat different philosophy seems to underpin the US version from that evident in the other iterations. The US version appears to focus rather more on the acquisition of employability-focused skills which address transition to and maintenance of employment, whereas the Canadian and Australian frameworks focus more broadly on the development of individuals in their life and work. The Canadian and Australian versions are very similar to one another, though the Australian version reinstates to some extent a focus on 'career' rather than 'life' in general. A further distinction is that the introduction into the Canadian and Australian frameworks of the final learning area (understanding the relationship between work, society and the economy) can provide space for practitioners and learners to critically challenge assumptions about the political economy and the possibility of change (cf. Sennett, 1998; Sultana, 2011b, 2012; Watts, 2000). This learning area can also encourage exploration of different views regarding the relative balance to be struck in the ways individuals approach their career development between the respective needs of the individual, of the nuclear family, of the extended family, of the local community and of the wider society (on which there can be very different views both between individuals and between cultures).

The US, Canadian and Australian Blueprints are structurally very similar and overlap considerably in terms of the learning areas they identify. But since the various attempts to revise the Blueprint have all restated the learning areas in some way, it is possible to argue that the Blueprint is defined not by a particular set of learning areas, but rather by the attempt to state a series of learning areas that collectively describe career management skills. It is very likely that the learning areas which are identified as being important to career management will vary across different cultural contexts, as they are 're-territorialised' and 're-contextualised' to meet local needs, as has already been discussed in relation to the attempted development of Blueprints in Lithuania and Europe (Sultana, 2011b). Furthermore, the political economy within which the Blueprint operates is likely to change over time, as the 2003 revision of the US version demonstrates. It is likely, for example, that future versions of the Blueprint may seek to develop competences in new technologies, global awareness and cross-cultural working. As the labour market and concepts of career change, it is possible to anticipate that the learning required for career management will also change.

Learning models

The Blueprint framework does not just set out what is to be learnt; it also conceptualises how the learning is anticipated to happen. The existing iterations of the Blueprint have derived their learning model from Bloom's taxonomy (1956). The US framework sees these skills as being developed through three stages: knowledge, application and reflection. The Canadian framework reworks these stages into four, by adding the idea that the learner ultimately needs not only to understand but also to act. The four stages are: acquisition, application, personalisation and actualisation. These stages are not mapped on to educational or developmental levels, and it is recognised that learners will move through these learning stages many times. However, the Canadian framework then goes on to introduce the idea of 'levels', which create a progression that is tied to age and educational stage (see the section on 'Levels' below). The Australian framework restates the Canadian approach more pithily as: acquire, apply, personalise and act.

These learning taxonomies are designed to create a model for learning that will aid the Blueprint's conceptualisation of how career management skills are acquired. However, it is possible to identify alternative models that could be used in this respect. For example, Kolb's (1984) learning cycle offers a more cyclical vision, where learning is built up through an individual's experiences, their reflections on those experiences, their ability to develop conceptual understanding from their reflections, and their ability to use their understanding to experiment with new approaches to their world. Kolb's cycle differs from Bloom's in that it is non-hierarchical and suggests that learning is ongoing rather than a process of achieving mastery.

Another alternative conceptualisation of learning is Law's career learning approach (1996, 1999) which seeks to specifically describe the process of learning in the context of career. Law sees this as comprising four interrelated career learning capacities – understanding, focusing, sifting and sensing – each of which describes a different approach to thinking and learning about career.

There would be value in exploring these and other learning models in future iterations of the Blueprint. It is important to note that the adoption of Bloom's learning model does not seem to have been supported by this kind of critical engagement in existing iterations of the Blueprint.

As with the learning areas, the Blueprint's distinctive contribution is not that it defines a particular learning model, but rather that it joins the question of 'what should be learnt?' to the question of 'how is it learnt?' The question of how we learn is a political and pedagogic question that different cultures and approaches to guidance are likely to conceptualise differently, depending on whether they situate the aims of the Blueprint as conservative, liberal, progressive or radical (Watts, 1996). For example, a more radical set of objectives for career development might lead towards the adoption of a social constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and the development of a learning model that situates learning within a social or community context. It is therefore possible to be critical of the Bloom-derived learning model without undermining the overarching framework that the Blueprint offers.

Levels

The third core element of the Blueprint framework is the idea of levels of learning, which broadly correspond to other age- and stage-related educational levels. The US framework does not seek to identify when, in terms of age and stage of life, an individual should have become competent in career management. However, the two subsequent iterations conceive a career management skills progression that broadly corresponds to age and educational levels. In these cases, the Blueprint framework yokes together the question of 'what should be learnt?' with 'how is it learnt?' and 'when should it be learnt?'

In the Canadian Blueprint, four levels are identified:

Level One   Elementary schools

Level Two   Middle/junior high schools

Level Three   High schools

Level Four   Adult populations

The Australian framework sets out a similar series of levels (renamed 'phases') but also suggests that practitioners should exercise some caution when relating the phases to ages:

Although the career management competencies are listed sequentially in the Blueprint, learning and experience do not proceed in such a linear manner. Career development is an ongoing, lifetime process of interaction between the individual and the environment that surrounds them. These interactions will shape people's learning requirements and their levels of mastery of the career competencies in different ways and at different times in their lives. (MCEETYA, 2010, p. 23)

The development of these levels is helpful in providing practitioners and policy-makers with a starting point for the implementation of career development programmes and other

interventions. However, it is necessarily reductive and risks creating an imagined journey of development that does not have a strong empirical basis. In particular, the decision to conflate all adults together into a single level is problematic. A further concern might be that it is potentially demotivating for learners if the prescribed levels are either too easy or too hard to attain. An additional question relating to the development of these levels is whether the four-level approach is sufficient. In the UK, the existing qualification levels (from Entry to Level 8) could provide an alternative taxonomy for adults, while the school years or key stages could provide an alternative structure for children and young people.

An alternative approach to these questions might be to move away from the question of 'when should it be learnt?' and to refocus on that of 'where are career management skills learnt?' An approach that examined the context of learning rather than the level would offer a different way of breaking down the development of career management skills and would be able to recognise, for example, that learning about career at school, in the workplace or during a period of unemployment are all different but do not necessary imply a hierarchy of competence. However, this kind of change would move the Blueprint away from its roots as a competency framework by creating a career development framework that is more contingent and contextual, and hence with closer affinities to a Vygotskian, social constructivist approach.

Existing Blueprint frameworks therefore seek both to break learners down into sub-groups and to identify a progressive path through which career management skills are acquired. The fact that the US framework handles these issues in a different way suggests that it might be possible to explore alternative approaches to the issue of levels within the Blueprint structure. Possibilities include increasing the number of levels or uncoupling the framework from age and stage concepts.

Contextual elements

As has already been suggested, the core elements of the Blueprint do not fully describe the framework. The Blueprint is not merely an approach to career guidance or to curriculum development (although it is both of these); it is also a framework for national policy and a common language for career development activity across sectors and contexts. Most obviously, the core elements of the Blueprint are backed up with a range of resources for the delivery of career development activity and further resources to support programme development and service design. Furthermore, the Blueprint implementations have sought to actively embed the concept in both a community of practice and a broader policy framework. Taken together, these contextual elements are as central to the notion of a Blueprint as any of the core elements.

Resources

Each of the frameworks provides a range of resources that are designed to help career educators implement the framework. The US website provides a range of teaching activities (DTI Associates, 2003a) and a handbook for its implementation with post-secondary learners (DTI Associates, 2003b). Similarly, the Canadian Blueprint offers a 391-page overview document (Haché, Redekopp, & Jarvis, 2006) alongside a 243-page implementation guide (Haché & de Schiffart, 2002), both of which provide a wide range of resources to support the Blueprint's use. Finally, the Australian iteration offers an online toolkit (MCEETYA, n.d.),

which includes guidance for practitioners working with young people and adults, alongside learning resources, case studies and advice about promoting the Blueprint.

In all of these cases, the Blueprint was rolled out not just as a framework but also as a package of resources and ideas that were designed to support practitioners in its implementation. This process of developing tools and resources that can translate a conceptual framework into an actual activity or intervention has clearly been a critical part of the Blueprints. However, questions remain as to how effective each of the Blueprint implementations were in placing the resources in the hands of practitioners and how far and how enthusiastically practitioners engaged with the resources of which they were aware.

Service delivery approach

The Blueprint framework was not presented as a resource that would merely rework the practice of existing career development practitioners (although, as has already been argued, it provided a new conceptual framework and supporting resources for this group). Rather, the implementations of the Blueprint sought to radically enlarge the space within which career development could operate. This meant that the documentation accompanying the Blueprint implementations pushed towards new types of career development service delivered by an enlarged group of practitioners and organisations.

Haché *et al.* (2006) saw the Blueprint as underpinning activity in the following places: adult training programmes/centres; career and one-stop centres; career development programmes; co-operative education programmes; correctional institutions; curriculum development units; elementary/early education schools; employability programmes; employment programmes; human resource departments; middle years/junior high schools; military second-career programmes; post-secondary institutions; secondary/senior years schools; vocational rehabilitation and workers' compensation settings; and work experience programmes. Critically, this list includes human resource departments, as well as a broad interpretation of the education and training system. In other words, career development is being conceived as a process that occurs within the context of work as well as of formal learning. In this, and in further discussion about the role of the Blueprint in organisations, Haché et al. (2006) attempted to use the Blueprint to lay the groundwork for a new kind of career development system in which career development is a lifelong, societal endeavour. In addition, they saw the Blueprint as placing career development on a more intentional footing, where outcomes are more transparent and learning programmes are designed to deliver these outcomes.

The Australian Blueprint picks up many of the same messages, adding parents and employers to the list of people whose practice it is supposed to inform, before going on to carefully set out a process of learning outcome-driven service design. A key element of the approach set out in the Australian Blueprint is engagement with assessment and measurability (MCEETYA, 2010). Assessment serves a number of functions in learning, such as informing learners about their progress, informing other interested parties (such as parents and employers), providing credentials and encouraging engagement and motivation. The Australian Blueprint creates a strong relationship between career management skills and formal assessment, whether in school or in the workplace, by the development of testable learning outcomes for each principle. The issue of assessment in relation to career management skills needs to be tackled sensitively. The implications of 'passing' or 'failing'

career management are arguably quite different from those of 'passing' or 'failing' a mainstream curriculum area which has a less direct connection to an individual's self-concept and relationship with their future. Nonetheless, the implications of this kind of embedded approach to career development are considerable, since it reframes the expertise required by careers work as essentially one of curriculum or instructional design rather than counselling (though the framework can also be used by counsellors).

Community of practice

The Blueprint framework offers a tool for renegotiating the conceptual basis of career development and conducting a societal campaign for career development. In order to achieve these aims, the Blueprint implementations have developed communities of practice to support both practice development and engagement of other practitioners. Lave and Wenger (1991) note that a community of practice does not require co-presence or a specific group, but rather something that describes a particular type of interaction. The Blueprint implementations meet Wenger, McDermott and Snyder's (2002) criteria, with the Blueprint idea serving as the 'domain' which creates common ground for the community of practice. The conferences, training programmes and various forms of online interaction that have accompanied the Blueprint implementations offer space for 'community' and the interaction with the framework and development of resources to deliver it form the 'practice' itself.

The Canadian implementation of the Blueprint was the one that sought most consciously to maximise a community of practice around the Blueprint. The National Life/Work Centre placed itself at the centre of this community by co-ordinating national meetings, a provincial network of contacts and a resource-sharing database known as the Blueprinter. A conscious attempt was made to encourage community ownership of the Blueprint and to allow its organic development. Haché and de Schiffart (2002) describe the creation of the implementation guide as follows:

> *A collaborative effort has gone into creating the content found within these pages and the authors look forward to continued participation from the career development field in developing this Blueprint Implementation Guide even further. (p. 6)*

The Blueprint framework is not a resource that can be downloaded and immediately utilised in career development activities. Rather, it represents an attempt to move the field of career development in a more intentional and learning-centred direction and to engage a wider community in the idea of career development. This contributes to an inclusive ownership by a wider range of stakeholders in supporting the development of individual career management skills. The implementation of the Blueprint framework requires practitioners to make conceptual shifts and to find ways to express them through their professional practice. The implementation is at once an individual and collective learning experience, and one that requires a dialectic to form between individual practice, collective understanding and social and professional structures. Given this, the development of a community of practice is likely to be essential for successful implementation and sustainability of a Blueprint framework.

Policy connection

Finally, it is important to note that the Blueprint framework makes a conscious connection to the policy environment. Blueprint documentation typically states its rationale in policy terms, identifying need in a changing political economy and justifying its value in terms of increased

productivity, prosperity and empowerment. Again, the nature of the rhetoric has shifted across the versions, influenced by both the different contexts and the different positions and perspectives of the authors. In the USA this was couched in terms of the high-performance workplace, in Canada in terms of community prosperity and in Australia in terms of globalisation and other shifts in the political economy:

USA

> *The demands of a high performance workplace require workers to engage in lifelong learning to continually improve their academic, occupational and career management skills. (Guideline Framework Revision Team, n.d)*

Canada

> *A community's prosperity is the sum of the prosperity of each and every citizen. When a person can't find or loses a job, the negative effects ripple through the community, as when a stone is thrown into a pond. The corollary also holds. When one person gains employment, the positive effects ripple through the entire community. When many people secure good jobs, increased prosperity is shared by all. (Haché et al., 2006, p. 9)*

Australia

> *Over the last decade it has become evident that the way we live and work has been dramatically altered by factors such as globalisation, the rapid increases in information and communications technology and significant demographic shifts … In an environment where individuals are likely to transition between a variety of life, learning and work roles, they need to be empowered to design and manage their careers. (MCEETYA, 2010, p. 8)*

All three implementations received government funding to aid their development. This enabled them to be conceived as national initiatives rather than activities internal to the career development field. For example, in Canada the Blueprint was funded and supported by Human Resources Canada, and has been influential on a number of provincial governments, most notably in Manitoba where it has become a component of the Successful Futures initiative (Manitoba Education, 2011). An important question that is outside the scope of this article is how far the three existing Blueprint frameworks have been embedded into the policies and practices of the countries in which they emerged. However, the implementation documents articulate an aspiration that the framework should describe a citizen entitlement to career management competence; they also view it as having implications for a wide range of policy areas including secondary and tertiary education, employment and social welfare.

The advocates of the Blueprint have made efforts to engage government in the development and propagation of the Blueprint framework. For example, in Australia the space for the Blueprint was opened up by the publication of the Footprints to the Future report (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001) and the implementation was sustained through MCEETYA. However, the Blueprint frameworks were always intended to be flexible and

multi-level, and as such sought to deliver change both by transforming the practice of different stakeholders (including education and employers, public and private sectors, career development professionals, teachers and human resource specialists) and by providing a common language through which to communicate the concept of career development. Again, it would be interesting to explore further how far this rhetoric of social transformation and stakeholder engagement has been manifested in practice in each of the countries.

The Blueprint framework was consciously conceived as an intervention in the policy debate and this remains one of its most distinctive elements. The ability to connect conceptual developments with national policy on education and economic development means that the Blueprint needs to be understood as both a theoretical and political intervention.

Conclusions

This article has argued that the Blueprint framework makes an important and distinctive contribution to the field of career development. Its unique value lies in the way that it articulates a flexible conceptual framework through its three core elements (learning areas, learning model and levels) and articulates these through the four contextual elements (resources, service delivery approach, community of practice and policy connection). The Blueprint needs to be understood as the sum of these conceptual and contextual parts.

The article has explored the development of the Blueprint and has examined the elements that comprise it. There are now three iterations of this model; further implementations look likely in the future. Yet, to date, no systematic work has been done on the lessons from the various implementations, or on the impacts of these implementations. If the model is to influence policy-makers in a sustained way, it is important that this kind of empirical work is undertaken.

Links to Blueprint versions

- US (2007 revision): http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3384/ncdguidelines2007.pdf
- Canada: http://www.blueprint4life.ca/blueprint/home.cfm/lang/1
- Australia: http://www.blueprint.edu.au/

About the authors

Tristram Hooley is the Head of the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. He is involved in researching and teaching career development. He has particular interests in how conceptual frameworks can support career development, the use of technology in career development and the role of social capital in career.

Tony Watts is a Visiting Professor at the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby, and also at Canterbury Christ Church University. He has written extensively on theory, policy and practice in the field of career development, and has carried out many international comparative studies for organisations including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission.

Ronald Sultana is Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research at the University of Malta. He has carried out comparative studies of career guidance policy development in both education and labour market sectors across Europe and in the Arab states.

Siobhan Neary is Principal Research Fellow: Career Development at the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. She leads the Centre's academic portfolio and is Pathway Leader for the MA Education: Guidance Studies. Her research interests focus on professional identity of careers professionals and developing practice.

References.

Alexander, R. 2001. *Culture and pedagogy: International comparisons in primary education*, London: Routledge.

Bloom, B.S. 1956. *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*, New York: Longman.

DTI Associates 2003a. NCDG activities. Retrieved from http://acrn.ovae.org/ncdg/ncdg_activities.htm

DTI Associates 2003b . NCDG handbook – Postsecondary. Retrieved from http://acrn.ovae.org/ncdg/ncdg_handbook.htm

Guideline Framework Revision Team (n.d.). What is NCDG? Retrieved from http://acrn.ovae.org/ncdg/ncdg_what.htm

Haché, L. and de Schiffart, C. 2002. *Blueprint implementation guide*, Memramcook, New Brunswick: National Life/Work Centre.

Haché, L., Redekopp, D.E. and Jarvis, P. 2006. *Blueprint for life/work designs*, Memramcook, New Brunswick: National Life/Work Centre.

Jarvis, P. and Keeley, E. 2003. *From vocational decision making to career building: Blueprint, real games, and school counseling*, Ottawa, Ontario: National Life/Work Centre.

Kolb, D. 1984. *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Law, B. 1996. "A career-learning theory". In *Rethinking careers education and guidance: Theory, policy and practice*, Edited by: Watts, A.G., Law, B., Killeen, J., Kidd, J.M. and Hawthorn, R. 46–71. London: Routledge.

12. Law , B. 1999 . Career-learning space: New-DOTS thinking for careers education. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 27 , 35 – 54 . doi: 10.1080/03069889908259714

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) 2010 . Career learning for the 21st century: The career blueprint: Supporting an all-age guidance strategy. Coventry : LSIS.

Manitoba Education 2011. *Successful futures for all students: A guide to career development programming for Manitoba school leaders*. Winnipeg : Manitoba Education.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2010. *Australian blueprint for career development*. Canberra: MCEETYA .

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (n.d.). The toolkit . Retrieved from http://www.blueprint.edu.au/TheToolkit.aspx.

McLean, M. 1990. *Britain and a single market Europe: Prospects for a common school curriculum*, London: Kogan Page/Institute of Education, University of London.

McMahon, M., Patton, W. and Tatham, P. 2003. *Managing life, learning and work in the 21st century*, Subiaco, WA: Miles Morgan Australia Pty Ltd.

National Life/Work Centre (n.d.) . *Blueprint for life/work designs*. Ottawa, Ontario : National Life/Work Centre . Retrieved from http://206.191.51.163/blueprint/home.cfm/lang/1

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee 1989. *National career development guidelines*. Washington , DC : NOICC.

Sadler , M. 1900 . How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education? Address of 20 October. In: J.H. Higginson (1979), *Selections from Michael Sadler* 48 – 51. Liverpool : Dejall & Meyorre.

Sennett, R. 1998. *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*, New York: Norton.

Sokolova , A. 2010. Paper prepared for European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network . Unpublished manuscript .

Sultana, R.G. 2009. *Career guidance policies: Global dynamics, local resonances*, Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Sultana , R.G. 2011a . On being a 'boundary person': Mediating between the local and the global in career guidance policy learning. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9 , 265 – 283 . doi: 10.1080/14767724.2011.577326

Sultana , R.G. 2011b . Lifelong guidance, citizen rights and the state: Reclaiming the social contract . *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 39 , 179 – 186 . doi: 10.1080/03069885.2010.547055

Sultana , R.G. 2012. Learning career management skills in Europe: A critical review . *Journal of Education and Work*, 25 2 , 225 – 248 . doi: 10.1080/13639080.2010.547846

Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes, 14th ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Watts, A.G. 1996. "Socio-political ideologies in guidance". In *Rethinking careers education and guidance*, Edited by: Watts, A.G., Law, B., Killeen, J., Kidd, J.M. and Hawthorn, R. 351–365. London: Routledge.

Watts, A.G. 2000. "The new career and public policy". In *The future of career*, Edited by: Collin, A. and Young, R.A. 259–275. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R. and Snyder, W. 2002. *Cultivating communities of practice*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001. *Footprints to the future*. Canberra: AusInfo.