UNITED STATES

Population: 318,900,000 | Income Level: High-Income |Policy Decisions: All Levels|Level of Career Development Initiatives on Scale of 1-5: 5

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The information contained within this report is primarily self-reported.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

In the United States, ICT for career development is most closely associated with career information systems (also referred to as Computer Assisted Career Guidance Systems). The federal government sponsors the O*NET system which offers free access to occupational information and advanced features that allow one to search for occupations by interests and skills. In addition, some states provide their own online career exploration systems. For example in New York State, CareerZone (*careerzone.ny.gov*) provides online career exploration and planning resources that can be used by schools (grades 6-12) as well as community-based organizations, colleges, and libraries to assist individuals with career development, career planning as well as those seeking employment.

Between 1976-2000, the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) and State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees were established through federal funds as a strategy for coordinating career development programs and activities to more effectively incorporate future employment outlook information (SOICC; Flanders, 1988; Lester, Woods & Carlson, 2013). Although funding for NOICC/SOICC ended in 2000, important resources were established including: (a) occupational and career information systems, (b) the National Career Development Guidelines, and (c) the introduction of a career development "portfolio."

Top 3 Barriers for Youth Employment:

1. Lack of engagement from employers.

2. Lack of basic education skills.

3. Disconnect between jobs available and education received

As an outgrowth of these efforts, a number of non-profit and for-profit career information system vendors were established. The Alliance for Career Resource Professionals (*http://www.acrpro.org*) has established four levels of industry standards for the content and processes that should be included in online career information systems and 13 products currently meet these standards.

Many states have begun to purchase licenses that offer access to career information systems for all middle and high schools and there is increasing access being provided to college student populations and adults seeking federally supported job search assistance. The recent reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (2014) lists "technology" as an important area of future development for supporting access to quality career management and career counseling services.

Access to career information systems is an important element in recent state efforts to mandate or encourage schools to establish "individualized learning plans" (ILPs) for all students. Currently 38 states have established legislative language or strongly encourage their use (*http://www.dol.gov/odep/ilp/map/*). Essentially, ILPs involve youth in career development activities that enable them to align their course taking and post-secondary training/education pathways to self-defined career goals.

Technology supports the ability for schools, community based organizations, colleges, and job centers to engage in career and academic planning by providing access to labor market information and by organizing the wide range of occupational and career opportunities into 16 "Career Clusters" and a number of "Career Pathways" that allow one to identify the commensurate academic skills and post-secondary opportunities. The 16 Career Clusters and Career Pathways was created and maintained by the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (*http://www.careertech.org/career-clusters*).

Another way in which technology supports youth in developing ILPs is the incorporation of an electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) that enables youth to share a multimedia presentation of their interests, skills, and goals.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

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How does the use of technology connect with existing structures or provisions of career guidance?

For youth, the use of career information systems occurs generally in school settings by school counselors or career/technical education educators working with students on career development and planning. Efforts are beginning to evaluate whether and how community based organizations that support youth development could also use career information systems to support at-risk youth, transition planning and development for youth with disabilities, and youth 16-24 who are out school and work (i.e., "opportunity youth"). For example, workforce development agencies that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Labor are establishing career development programs for out of school youth.

Some states are beginning to create toolkits and curriculum models that schools can use to engage in technology as an integrated feature in a more comprehensive model of career development. Colorado, for example, has created a range of tools to support schools to engage in their state-mandated Individualized Career and Academic Plan (ICAP; *http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/icap*). Efforts occurring in many states, like the one in Colorado, rely on an ePortfolio to demonstrate that youth are achieving "college and career readiness" standards that nearly every state as adopted (*http://www.achieve.org/files/MakingCollegeandCareerReadinesstheMissionforHighSchool.pdf*).

What are the challenges your country faces related to Emerging Technologies?

Interviews with state and district officials from a number of states indicated a number of challenges facing the use of career information systems (*http://www.ncwd-youth.info/ilp/produce-college-and-career-ready-high-school-graduates*).

"Access" was one important category of concern that included a range of issues.

1. All schools to be able to afford a subscription from a system provider. There is a discrepancy among school districts that are able to afford expensive systems that offer more college planning support and those that struggle to afford a less sophisticated system. Some states are providing access to all schools (examples include Alabama, Colorado, Kentucky, Oregon, and Massachusetts). Assessment and search strategies are often not accessible for many populations including non-English speakers and youth with disabilities. Concerns among professionals serving youth with disabilities is that many of the assessments and features rely too heavily on text or are too complex.

2. Lack of a universal ePortfolio means that youth are unable to transfer their career development information across vendor systems. Lack of a universal ePortfolio is especially problematic in states that use a variety of career information systems or that include access only through secondary education. In such cases, youth who move to a different district or graduate may not have access to the career development activities they have completed. For adjudicated youth, this is also a problem when an ePortfolio is created to support the transition back to one's community when the community supports team is unable to access to ePortfolio.

3. Another area of concern is that low school counselor to student ratios results in an over-reliance on technology for conducting career development with little or no time for youth to gain access to an encouraging, caring adult.

4. Finally, families who have become aware of ILPs are asking for more family engagement in career development activities.

WHY ROI MATTERS

Please describe how the value and impact of policies for workforce preparation, workforce placement, and development of young people is assessed (if at all) in your country.

A better-educated and skilled workforce that can meet the demands and challenges of the 21 Century employment landscape is critical to the economic health of the country and is essential in order for the United States to remain competitive in the global economy. Decades of research on career development and guidance interventions have demonstrated their value in preparing youth and adults to effectively meet educational and work demands. Investing in career development and guidance in K-16 school settings along with programs to address the education and skills training needs of adults, continues to offer the most sound investments in insuring that individuals receive the education, training and guidance needed to meet the workplace demands of the 21 Century and improving the lives of workers and their families.

Policies and guidelines for the provision of career guidance and employment services are established at the federal level through legislation and funding sources (e.g., Workforce Investment Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act), as well as by individual states based on the identified needs of their populations. Additional policies and guidelines are developed by individual states and various professional organizations (e.g., National Career Development Association (NCDA), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Many of these efforts, however, are not interconnected, thus making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the policies and guidelines on a national level.

Programs that are supported with federal/state funding, however, do have identified criteria for assessing effectiveness. For example, the United States workforce development and placement system is comprised of a myriad of federally funded programs (e.g., Job Corps, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program) administered through the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Grants are awarded to individual states and the states determine policies and practices for implementing these programs based on the identified needs of their populations. These programs target different adult as well and youth populations and are designed to meet the education, skills training and employment needs of youth

and adults seeking employment. Some programs are specifically aligned to prepare individuals for employment opportunities in areas of demand within a given region or state. Collectively, these programs serve approximately 30 million people each year.

For programs targeting youth, performance measures consists of 1) the attainment of a degree or certificate (e.g., diploma) after completing the program, 2) for participants who are not in school and who have basic skills deficiencies, performance is measured by the increase in one or more basic skills area and, 3) either placement in employment or the individual's participation in some type of postsecondary education or training program after completion of the specified program.

Recently, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2014) was signed into law. The WIOA supersedes the WIA of 1998 and will take effect in July 2015. This new legislation seeks to strengthen and align accountability and reporting methods, enhance delivery of services, engage employers and requires states to develop unified strategic plans. Additionally, WIOA establishes sanctions for states that do not meet their targets. It is expected that with increased attention to aligning accountability measures, these programs can be more accurately assessed and a better indicator of ROI can be obtained.

How is the value of career guidance provision in supporting such policies measured?

There are many different types of interventions that can be incorporated into career development and career guidance programs which would be determined by the program outcome goals and objectives. These in turn would guide the selection of outcome measures. Similar to the guidelines for WIA measures identified above, measures of career guidance program effectiveness can include rate of student placement in postsecondary education or training programs; retention and completion of postsecondary or training program; and improvement in skills level.

Evidence collected from various adult and youth training programs has identified several effective strategies to enhance program effectiveness (*http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/jdt/jdt.pdf*). For adults, the evidence indicates that efforts to align training with in-demand jobs and occupations show the most positive results. In addition, completion of postsecondary education or an industry-related credential results in increased worker earnings. For youth, the evidence suggests that job-related training and opportunities that provide youth with work experience contributes to positive educational outcomes. In addition, earlier exposure to career and educational information has also been related to improved postsecondary outcomes.

WHY ROI MATTERS

Continued...

What are the challenges your country faces related to measuring Return on Investment (ROI)?

Continuing economic pressures and increasing demands for accountability at the federal and local government levels and educational settings have placed a greater burden on programs to demonstrate their effectiveness. In order to demonstrate a program's value, it has been proposed that measures of return on investments (ROI) be used to demonstrate program effectiveness and value. The use of ROI, however, presents many challenges, particularly across different types of programs that may have different goals and objectives (*http://www.nawb.org/documents/ROI%20 White%20Paper.pdf*).

Conducting ROI assessments requires a great deal of data, careful analysis, and qualified professionals to conduct these analyses that can result in an increase cost to programs. In addition, though the use of ROI models can provide valuable information on some important key indicators of program success (e.g., employment numbers, increased earnings, completion of degrees), they are limited in their ability to assess benefits accrued that are not easily quantifiable (e.g., increased quality of life, standard of living). Efforts to incorporate program evaluation measures indicative of the long-term impact on individuals and society and efforts to disaggregate data by different group populations can provide more precise information on the impact of a program's effectiveness.

Major Challenges:

1. Lack of alignment between federal and state policies.

2. Unequal access to quality education and career development services.

3. Lack of a nationally coordinated system for the preparation of continued career and professional development.

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

Please describe the formal and informal roles and mechanisms that employers play/participate in to support workforce preparation, workforce placement, and development of young people in your country.

The employment sector has been engaged in the conversation around workforce development for a number of years. The Secretary's Commission Addressing Necessary Skills in 1991, Partnership for 21st Century Skills in 2002, College and Career Readiness in 2008 are examples of the business sector leading the conversation on youth focused career and workforce development concerns.
Work-based learning opportunities are considered a key career development strategy. Apprenticeship opportunities in Wisconsin, for example, provide businesses with guidelines and documentation tools to verify the range of workforce readiness skills youth develop in their employment setting (*http:// dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/*). Massachusetts' state department developed a work-based learning evaluation system for employers to indicate the on the job skills youth develop as well (*http://www.doe.mass. edu/connect/*).

Most career information systems include a feature that allows employers to upload information about the range of work-based learning opportunities they provide. This allows youth to search for job related opportunities that are commensurate with their interests, skills and values. Minnesota state officials created a work-based learning guide that showcases the range in which employers can intersect with learning opportunities for youth (*https://www.iseek.org/ education/training.html*).

In addition, there has been an increase in collaborations between community colleges and business and industry to work together to ensure that individuals are acquiring the education and skills that will enable them to attain employment in a given industry. Through these collaborations, prospective employers can communicate to educational and training institutions information on the skills and knowledge they are seeking for in demand jobs thus helping to effectively prepare individuals for these employment opportunities.

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

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What policies exist, if any, to support employer engagement? Please refer to occupational and labor market information, work experience, interventions in education and training institutions, and career guidance.

The Workforce Investment Act has a Youth Program that allocates over $800 million to states in support of youth age 14-21 who are deemed at-risk for a number of reasons in addition to programs for adults. Generally these funds go to workforce investment boards that link youth to work-based learning opportunities as part of a comprehensive program of support services.

Through the Carl D. Perkins Act, the U.S. Department of Education encourages business and industry to be involved in the design of career and technical education career pathways.

What are the challenges your country faces related to Engaging Employers?

A 50-state review of career development programming, found that among the 483 career and workforce development programs that could be identified, only 78 programs were found that specifically listed work-based learning as one of their services (vanBruinswaardt, et al., 2014).

For schools, one challenge to engaging employers is coordination of such efforts. While states like Wisconsin and Massachusetts have established resources to support employer engagement, it often falls to schools to develop their own connections with employers. At one time, the School to Work Opportunities Act created funding to support these efforts and once the funding ended most school-business partnerships ended.

For communities, the challenge is how to organize the business community involvement and once involved, how to engage school personnel and youth serving organizations to actively work with the business community to ensure that youth are receiving access to the work-based learning opportunities as they become available. For youth with disabilities, one key challenge to access is lack of transportation to and from the work-based setting.

INTEGRATED POLICIES: CREATING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

Please describe how policies for workforce preparation (including entrepreneurship) and workforce placement are integrated or coordinated, if at all, in your country. Who and/or what is driving the integration or coordination? How are local communities and public service users involved, if at all, in those policies?

Until the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was established in 1998, career development policies at the federal level were being conducted by two sources – the National and State Occupational Informational Coordinating Councils (NOICC/SOICC) was coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor, and an office of Career Education was established in the U.S. Department of Education. Within the Department of Labor, the authorization of WIA ended NOICC/SOICC and three federal agencies were tasked with taking the lead on career resources. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) continues to provide the occupational and labor market information that is used in most career information systems, and the Employment and

Training Administration (ETA) which manages O*Net, provides states with funding to provide access to career development services, most notably one-stop centers in each state, and administers the Vocational Rehabilitation Act that provides states with funds to support the workforce transitions among youth and adults with disabilities. Finally, within the Department of Education, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) administers funding for career, vocational, and technical education through the Carl D. Perkins Act.

One challenge that surfaced among the various federally sponsored avenues for career and workforce development was the wide variation in accountability indicators. The result was that at the state level, agencies often found it difficult to coordinate services and resources. The 2014 reauthorization of WIA as the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act is a major step forward by attempting to align different federally sponsored career and workforce development

INTEGRATED POLICIES: CREATING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

programs from the U.S. Department of Labor with a common set of evaluation rubrics. This legislation is remarkable in other ways by clearly specifying the need to create comprehensive career development systems such that youth and adults have access to career planning, career counseling and career pathways support throughout the lifespan.

At the state level, "college and career readiness" has emerged from the business and Governors concerns that youth were not leaving secondary education with the talent and career readiness skills needed to enter and succeed in post-secondary training/education programs or to enter the world of work. Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) have been established in the majority of states as a college and career readiness strategy that enables youth to become aware of the relevance of academic learning opportunities and post-secondary training/education pathways to helping them achieve their career and life goals. Some of the efforts resulting from the need to increase the workforce readiness skills of youth is the creation of dual-enrollment opportunities that enable youth to complete college courses while in secondary education and efforts to establish occupation-based credentials. Exactly how WIOA will integrate with state efforts to improve workforce quality is a work in progress. In March, WIOA will share plans for how the funding can be used with a window of time for states to offer feedback and comment. In July 2015, it is expected that the new legislation will be implemented.

In addition, the current administration's goal to increase the number of U.S. college graduates by the year 2020 has led to a number of collaborations and initiatives. An outcome of this goal has been First Lady, Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative to encourage more youth to complete high school and pursue postsecondary education. Focusing on the role of the school counselor in supporting students in becoming college and career ready, this initiative has brought together varied stake holders throughout the country to address policies and practices in school counseling and the preparation of school counselors. This initiative has also brought together representatives of professional organizations, community based organizations, and policy makers in an effort to create systemic and long-term efforts to address the preparation needs of young people.

To what extent do these sectors coordinate such policy or program initiatives? To what extent do they include career guidance/advice/information provision? How useful and efficient are these to support the policy initiatives?

WIOA clearly addresses a number of state concerns about how career development services are being coordinated across populations and age groups. Important elements of WIOA include the specific language and definitions regarding the need to provide access to career management and career counseling services throughout the lifespan and the need to further develop technology resources to support these efforts.

What are the challenges your country faces related to Integrated Policies: Creating Systems that work?

While federal funding offers a template for the types of career development services that could be provided by states, there is tremendous latitude in how states will use their funds. The loss of NOICC/SOICC funding makes it difficult to share best practices and coordinate efforts across state lines. Hopefully, something similar to the European Lifelong Guidance Partners Network will be established in the future to allow for better communication and dissemination efforts.

Currently, the method used to provide communication about best practice strategies are technical assistance resource centers have been established through both the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to provide resources to states interested in career development. States, school districts, workforce investment agencies and community-based agencies are generally able to access these resources.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Are there any other unique challenges within your country to which you would like to draw attention?

The lack of alignment between federal and state policies and the coordination and selection of different products to /product of different vendors that provide tools. In addition, the unequal access to quality education and career development services throughout the country. Another challenge is the lack of a national, coordinated system for the preparation of and continued professional development of career development professionals.

Are there any additional examples of successful programs or policies you would like to share? Please provide references or links to any key reports that have discussed career development in your country.

A comprehensive list of innovative career and workforce development strategies can be found at *http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies*. A list of resources related to individualized learning plans can be found at: *http://www.ncwd-youth.info/ILP.* Career and workforce development for youth with disabilities can also be found at *http://www.nsttac.org.*

What is the extent and nature of government funding to support these developments? From which sources and for what purposes (distinguishing system development, system maintenance, and service delivery)? Where possible, please quantify the government funding provided.

States vary in support of career development activities. Some states pay for access to online career information systems but high student to school counselor ratios diminishes their ability to provide access to comprehensive career development services.
WIOA promises to expand career management and counseling services to youth populations but the regulations and plans for spending have not been determined at the time of this submission.

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