



**BUILDING THE TALENT PIPELINE AND
PROVIDING YOUTH
WITH
HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

2015 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

COMMUNIQUE

7th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy
Des Moines, Iowa, USA

June 15-17, 2015

Preamble:

The global community faces many challenges: demographic pressures; increasing automation; and complex and changeable labor markets. At the heart of this is the need to build the talent pipeline to enable skills to flow from education into the economy and to be deployed where they are most needed.

To address these issues, the 7th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy was held in Iowa in 2015¹. The purpose of this Symposium was to consider how governments, researchers and career development leaders could best ensure the talent pipeline and provide youth with hope for the future. The Symposium explored the economic, social and demographic issues impacting on youth under/unemployment in developed and developing countries and the policy, research and practices required to address these challenges.

The Symposium was attended by 103 policy makers, researchers and leaders in the field of career development from 20 countries and 6 international organizations². New countries joined the Symposium community for the first time, including: Egypt; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Nigeria; and Tunisia. Country Teams prepared a Country Paper prior to the event and articulated a plan for country action following the event.

Symposium Sub-themes:

1. Engaging Employers
2. The Role of Emerging Technologies
3. Why Return on Investment Matters
4. Integrated Policies: Creating Systems that Work

This Communique is a summary of the collective conclusions of those present at the Symposium.

¹ Previous events were held in Canada (1999, 2001), Australia (2006), United Kingdom (2007), New Zealand (2009) and Hungary (2011)

² European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), European Training Foundation (ETF), National Career Development Association (NCDA), European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and Asia Pacific Career Development Association (APCDA)

Key Challenges In The Youth Labor Market:

Global labor markets are extremely diverse and challenging. Issues include: significant over-qualification and underemployment of youth in some regions and youth inactivity in others, reform of social security/unemployment systems, an expansion of the informal economy and a weakening of both the traditional employer-employee relationship and organised labor often with detrimental effects on job quality and employment standards.

A substantial issue affecting all labor markets is the growth of automation which is increasingly replacing all forms of work including both routine functions and high skilled roles.

Many young people are finding that entry level positions are no longer stepping stones to career progression pathways. There is a weak alignment between education and employment. In many countries education and employment are poorly integrated and vocational education is under-developed.

Responding effectively to these changes requires significant shifts in both policy and practice.

Building the Talent Pipeline and Providing Youth With Hope for the Future:

Labor markets across and within countries are not homogeneous, cannot be conceptualized simply. This complexity is extremely challenging for young people across the globe. Some countries have responded to this by building new career development systems or strengthening existing systems to better support young people to address these challenges. However, others have reduced funding for public career services leaving young people unsupported.

Career development is a powerful tool of public policy which can nudge the way in which people act and education and employment systems function.

Recommendations to Countries:

- Career development policies, systems and services need to attend in a balanced way to both the supply and demand sides of the labor market. This has significant implications for policy related to employment practice, labor force development, the training of careers professionals and the provision of career services.
- Individuals enact their careers across their lifetime. To maximise individuals' potential and address labor market needs, countries need to develop systems and services that support individual choice while emphasizing the development of career management skills and the acquisition of skills in demand in the labor market.
- Career development policies, systems and services need to reflect labor market realities. In many countries, this means preparing people for entrepreneurship and/or helping them to access opportunity in the informal economy.
- Career development services need to be appropriately resourced to ensure that all young people can access the support that they need to be successful in a challenging labor market.

Sub-Theme #1: ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

Employer engagement is central to effective career development systems. Gaining and sustaining employer engagement in partnerships to address labor market gaps and mismatches is a global challenge. A range of incentives are being tried, including connecting career development to corporate social responsibility, quotas and tax incentives. It is important that career development is placed at the heart of such initiatives as it serves as a critical bridge between education and employment.

Recommendations to Countries:

- A cross-sectoral partnership approach to employer engagement is needed nationally, regionally and locally.
- Career development systems need to include an infrastructure for brokerage and partnership building between education and employment.
- Career development policies, systems and services need to support young people to access work-related learning from an early age. Work-related learning should be a core part of the education system for all young people and include learning about entrepreneurship and social enterprise.
- Work-related learning needs to be supported by clearly articulated quality standards

Sub-Theme #2: THE ROLE OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The use of technology in career development systems and services has increased dramatically in recent years. Although ICT access and infrastructures have improved considerably, many regions and populations continue to have limited digital access. However, for many young people using new technologies is central to their lives. It is critical that a clear distinction is made between being tech dependent and being tech savvy and that policy and practice supports the latter.

Technology has the potential to strategically enhance services, but not if it is seen simply as a cost-saving measure. Online systems and services will be most effective when coordinated, cohesive and streamlined.

Recommendations to Countries:

- National coordination of ICT-based career information and services is essential to avoid fragmentation and promote ease of access. Ministries need to share responsibility for this coordination.
- Governments need to establish and support the acquisition of a baseline of digital literacy for all citizens. This should include digital *career* literacy which provides people with the skills they need to build their careers in the digital world.
- Governments need to treat ICT in career development as part of wider national e-Governance mechanisms.
- Technology-driven career tools, games and apps need to be co-developed by career development and technology experts.

- Training for career professionals in the use of ICT in the delivery of career services is a priority.
- Codes of Ethics must be developed and/or expanded to guide effective and ethical uses of ICT in career development systems and services.

Sub-Theme #3: WHY RETURN ON INVESTMENTS MATTERS

Quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of career interventions on individuals, employers and society is critical to informing policy and practice. The use of well-conceived and validated quality assurance frameworks and evaluation instruments helps to ensure that ROI is not based on what is easy to measure, but rather on what is meaningful and important to measure. Several challenges exist in establishing ROI for career development interventions: inadequate measures; inadequate data; difficulty in linking interventions to outcomes; unfair assessments of career interventions; inadequate resources for the complexity of the task; and inconsistent use of existing evidence. Despite these challenges, considerable progress has been made internationally in advancing the evidence base for career development.

Recommendations to Countries:

- Existing evidence should be carefully reviewed to ensure that policy and practice reflects research findings.
- Given the complexity of current labor markets, governments are encouraged to move beyond reliance on blunt employment and training outcome measures and adopt more nuanced indicators of effective career development.
- Governments are also encouraged to articulate the baseline for acceptable evidence to support accountability and include evaluation as a routine part of service delivery.
- Governments should align research funding with their evidence requirements. If the long-term impacts of career development need to be established, longitudinal research should be funded.
- Collaborative partnerships between researchers, career professionals and developers of career resources should be encouraged.

Sub-Theme #4:

INTEGRATED POLICIES: CREATING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

Career development should be a major part of government strategies to ensure the talent pipeline. However, because career development is lifelong, related policies are often poorly coordinated across multiple government departments and agencies, resulting in fragmented and inadequate systems and services. A national strategy is a mechanism to break down silos, meet citizen needs and support the progression of youth from education to work. Systemic and sustainable policy solutions that entitle citizens to adequate career development support are needed to solve systemic labor force challenges.

Recommendations to Countries:

- Countries should develop national career development strategies with associated resourcing to ensure policy and service cohesion.
- Strategies should aim to provide national coordination, benchmarks and evaluation, while respecting the need for regional/local tailoring.

International Collaboration:

The Symposium is a vital opportunity for international co-operation around career development policy. There are substantial benefits for all participants in participating in this kind of community of practice and having opportunities for knowledge exchange and policy lending and borrowing.

Recommendations:

- Countries should complete templates profiling innovative and promising practices and publish them on the ICCDPP website.
- ICCDPP should provide regular email updates, briefings and invitations to contribute to all countries represented at this and previous Symposia.
- The ICCDPP should continue to coordinate and support the International Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice.
- The ICCDPP should leverage technology, including social media, in actively engaging, supporting and connecting the career development community in policy exchange.
- The ICCDPP should aim to organise the next Symposium in 2017.

Annex:

The Communique from the 2011 Symposium (Hungary) included an Annex highlighting the need for consistent and coherent language and branding in the career development sector. This issue was raised again in 2015, with specific reference to engaging employers. Language and branding continue to be a significant challenge.