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ABSTRACT
        Guidance strategies play an important role in reintegrating
young people who have dropped out of the formal education, training, and
employment system and must include support for nonformal guidance agents in
the community. A European program has explored three strategies for linking
formal and nonformal guidance structures to provide social support for and
reintegrate the target group into the formal system: help nonformal guidance
agents act as referral points for linking the target group to the formal
guidance system; help them be initial deliverers of guidance; and help the
formal guidance providers develop new methods for working with the nonformal
guidance providers and target group. Issues raised by national projects
designed to provide training for nonformal guidance agents include the
following: levels of formality; voluntary versus paraprofessional roles;
progression and certification; gender issues; links with formal guidance
providers; other agendas; sustainability; evaluation; and replication and
dissemination. Within a proposed model, the European Commission and national
government departments responsible for the formal system have a concern about
the young people who have fallen out of this system or are at risk. They look
to the formal guidance services to help the target group remain in or be
reintegrated into the formal system. The services look to nonformal guidance
agents, intermediaries, or methods to develop effective ways of working with
the young people. (YLB)

NCGE NICEC
Briefing

Community-Based Guidance and Social Exclusion

The goals of the European Commission's LEONARDO DA
VINCI programme are to improve the quality of vocational
training systems and their capacity for innovation through
transnational collaboration.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education is a an agency
of the Department of Education and Science in Ireland. Its role
is to support and develop guidance services in formal and non-
formal education settings. It collaborates in projects with other
EU Member-States.

NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling
is a network organisation initiated and supported by the
Careers Research and Advisory Centre in the UK. It conducts
applied research and development work related to guidance in
educatrional institutions and in work and community settings.
Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance
practice through staff development, organisation development,
development, consultancy and research.

Across Europe, there is much concern about young people
who have dropped out of the formal education, training and
employment system. Guidance strategies have an important
role to play in reintegrating such young people. These
strategies need to include support for non-formal guidance
agents within the community.

This Briefing:

⬛ identifies possible strategies for linking formal and
non-formal guidance systems;

⬛ examines the experience of a range of national
projects designed to provide training for non-formal
guidance agents;

⬛ explores the issues raised by these projects.

The Briefing is based on a project covering four countries,
funded under the European Commission's LEONARDO
programme. It has been written by Tony Watts of NICEC
(the project consultant/evaluator) and by John McCarthy
of NCGE (the project manager).

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THE PROJECTS

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

There is currently much policy concern throughout the European Union about the social exclusion of young people. In particular, there is concern about the large numbers of young people who have fallen out of the education, training and employment system: the social institutions which have conventionally structured young people's lives and integrated them into the formal social fabric. The fear is that many of these youngsters may become alienated from such social institutions altogether, and move into anti-social forms of activity – drugs, crime, etc. – which will have destructive long-term effects both for them and for the wider society.

GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

Many programmes have accordingly been developed to try to provide social support for such young people and to reintegrate them into the formal education, training and employment system. Career guidance services potentially have an important role to play within such programmes, supporting the young people in finding opportunities suited to their needs and abilities. But many of these young people do not have ready access to such services, and may distrust them as part of their general distrust of official structures.

Attention is therefore being given to developing more flexible ways in which the formal guidance services can work with existing or potential non-formal guidance agents within the community. These include:

- Youth and community workers who are accustomed to working with disaffected young people but have no specific experience in career guidance.
- Significant adults, peers and parents who have ongoing relationships with the young people in question or might be able to form such relationships on an informal basis.

A project under the European Commission's PETRA programme, covering six countries (Belgium, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK), explored three possible strategies for linking formal and non-formal guidance structures:

- To help non-formal guidance agents to act as *referral points* for accessing the target-group to the formal guidance system.
- To help the non-formal guidance agencies to be initial *deliverers* of guidance to this target-group.
- To help the formal guidance providers to develop *new methods* for working with the non-formal guidance providers and with the target-group itself.

Four of the participants in the PETRA project (Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, UK) have followed through this work under the LEONARDO programme, focusing on training initiatives related to these three strategies:

- In *Ireland*, there have been two projects: one in a rural area (Conamara); the other in an urban area (Cork). In Conamara, a training programme comprising a series of week-end or day sessions was run for 12 youth club leaders, sports leaders, and people in local community groups. In Cork, a programme covering 100 contact teaching hours was run under the auspices of University College Cork for 17 adults working in a volunteer capacity with young people at risk. A National Advisory Group was set up by the National Centre for Guidance in Education to co-ordinate the two projects.
- In the *Netherlands*, a 4-day programme was run for 6 people working with youth guarantee brokering organisations in the north of the country. It focused particularly on working with ethnic-minority young people.
- In *Portugal*, a 60-hour programme was run in Almada (a large suburb of Lisbon) for 20 young people aged 17-27 regarded as potential role models for young people at risk. The programme was managed by a partnership of public and voluntary bodies, each of which nominated some of the participants.
- In the *UK*, a 3-day programme was run in Bradford by the local Careers Service for 8 participants nominated by social services and by local community centres.

ISSUES

LEVELS OF FORMALITY

Within the projects, the concepts of "informal guidance", "non-formal guidance" and "community-based guidance" have all been used. The terms cover a range of different concepts:

- Guidance offered within existing relationships by parents, peers, etc.
- Guidance offered by volunteers.
- Guidance offered by professionals in other fields (e.g. youth and community workers).
- Formal guidance workers working *through* these non-formal guidance agents.
- Formal guidance workers working in non-formal settings with clients.

The concept of "informal" or "non-formal" may apply to the *role* in general (e.g. peers and volunteers), and/or to the status of the *guidance element* within it (the first three categories above), and/or to the *settings* in which the guidance is provided (all of these categories).

In these terms, the two Irish projects and the Portuguese project are focusing mainly on the first two categories, with the Portuguese project focusing more on peers and young volunteers, and the Irish project more on older "significant adults", within these categories. The Netherlands and UK projects, by contrast, are concentrating mainly on the third category.

An important issue is how far the projects are concerned to formalise the non-formal, or to value its non-formality. The very notion of a training programme on non-formal guidance is in some respects a contradiction in terms, particularly if it incorporates selection of participants and is certificated (as in Cork). The process of formalisation is accentuated if the group sustains its existence beyond the end of the training programme and/or is harnessed as a resource – e.g. by staffing a helpline service for young people or being allocated by official agencies as mentors to young people at risk.

The issue of formalising the non-formal is particularly significant in the Cork project, because many of the participants are volunteers working outside specified settings. In the Conamara and Portuguese projects, it remains an issue but is less acute because most of the participants are already working (as volunteers) in structured youth-work or community-work settings where sustained support is easier to provide. In the Netherlands and UK projects, the issue is a different one, because most of the participants already have a professional role: the

question is the level of formality with which a guidance element is to be added to this role.

VOLUNTARY V. PARAPROFESSIONAL ROLES

The relationship between voluntary and paid work is an important issue in the Irish and Portuguese projects. Most of the participants are unpaid volunteers. Yet some are unemployed themselves. There are important ethical and political questions about asking such people to perform socially-valuable voluntary roles without payment.

There is also a "mirroring" issue here. One of the purposes of the project is to help young people back into the formal education and training system, on the grounds that this will increase their employment opportunities, and will be more generally worthwhile than moving into an alternative lifestyle of drugs and crime. Some young people might rationally argue that this is not necessarily the case. If they see that the adults who have been trained to support them are not being paid for their efforts, could the discrepancy between the medium and the message reduce the credibility of the message?

This raises the question of whether at least some roles in this area of work might be given a paid paraprofessional status – as has been done in the case of other community projects. This would add to the costs. It might also erode the benefits which stem from the voluntary ethos: for example, it could be argued that, especially in the case of particularly disaffected young people, unpaid adults may find it easier to secure the young people's trust than adults paid by the state. It would however provide more resource substance to community-based guidance strategies, as well as providing a clearer framework for accountability.

PROGRESSION AND CERTIFICATION

A further merit of introducing a paid paraprofessional status is that it could provide a basis for progression, for those who wish to take advantage of it, from volunteer to paraprofessional to professional roles. Some of the participants in the Irish and Portuguese projects have already been using, or thinking of using, the training courses as a first step towards a professional qualification in youth and community work or related fields. Certification is important in this respect, and may also be valuable more generally in providing a concrete reward for participation in the courses.

GENDER ISSUES

An important issue which has arisen in two projects is the significant gender imbalance in the trainees: 15 of the 17 Cork participants, and 17 of the 20 Portuguese participants, were female. This is likely to make it more difficult for disaffected young males to regard the participants as role-models – one of the avowed aims of the projects.

It is perhaps significant that this has arisen as an issue in the two urban projects based on volunteers. It may be linked to the feminisation of communities in many urban areas affected by high unemployment, with unemployed men finding it difficult to establish viable new roles both in the family and in the community. It is also interesting that it has not emerged as an issue in the two projects based on paid workers. It may be that a more equal gender balance will only be likely in urban areas where courses in non-formal guidance are linked to paid paraprofessional roles.

LINKS WITH FORMAL GUIDANCE PROVIDERS

One of the main aims of the programme is to establish stronger linkages between formal and non-formal guidance providers. This is a strong feature of the UK project, which is managed by a formal guidance agency. Much of the emphasis here has so far been on non-formal guidance providers offering some front-line *information* delivery and then knowing how and when to *refer* young people to the formal guidance agency, rather than providing more extensive *guidance* delivery themselves; it may however be moving towards a model in which more front-line guidance is offered, with mentoring support.

In the other projects, links with formal guidance providers are less prominent. In Ireland and Portugal, the fact that the main formal guidance provision is education-based makes it more difficult for such services to play a wider community role.

The lack of effective links with formal guidance providers has weakened the distinctive guidance elements of some of the projects. In Cork and Netherlands, a strong guidance element has been included through influential professional inputs in the design of the training programme. In Conamara, however, the emphasis on negotiating the content of the programme with the participants has meant that there has been a tendency for counselling and group-work elements to dominate the programme, at the expense of more specific guidance elements – including, for example, how to access information on educational and vocational opportunities. Similarly, the Portuguese project has tended to focus on personal and social rather than on educational and vocational matters.

Relationship-building skills, and attention to personal and social matters, provide the essential base on which attention to educational and vocational guidance matters can be built. The balance between the two must be carefully struck.

OTHER AGENDAS

The focus on guidance has had to be reconciled with other agendas. In the Conamara project, community development tends to be the main basepoint for the project, rather than the labour market or career guidance issues *per se*. In the Portuguese project, the emphasis placed on forging institutional partnerships between the participating agencies has tended to determine the design of the programme, to some extent at the expense of negotiation with the trainees themselves. The emphasis on institutional partnerships has also been strong in the case of the Cork and UK projects, but less so in the Conamara and Netherlands projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

With volunteers, sustainability cannot be guaranteed: it can be facilitated, but the impetus must come from the volunteers themselves. A sustained role for the participants beyond the end of the course tends to formalise it, so eroding its non-formality. Yet unless there is some such follow-up, the impact of the training programme on the ultimate target-group of young people may be restricted – and much more difficult to evaluate.

EVALUATION

A model developed for defining success criteria for the projects distinguished six categories:

	For guidance systems	For young people
Outputs	1	4
Intermediate outcomes	2	5
Ultimate outcomes	3	6

For guidance services, an *output* (1) might be a training event for non-formal guidance providers; an *intermediate outcome* (2) might be more effective networking between formal and non-formal guidance providers; an *ultimate outcome* (3) might be more effective referral between such providers. For young people, an *output* (4) might be establishing contact with a non-formal guidance agent; an *intermediate outcome* (5) might be developing more structured approaches to time management; an *ultimate outcome* (6) might be entry to a training course or employment.

One of the merits of this model is that it addresses attention to whether there should be entries in all or most of the categories, instead of making only one or two categories explicit and regarding the others as implicit. This leaves open the issue of which are to be *measured*, and which might be regarded as *proxies* for others (i.e. suggesting that if they are met, the others are likely to be met too).

REPLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Among the key rationales for development projects in this area are the *resource-intensive* nature of this kind of work and its *fragility*: much time has to be spent on work which is based on delicate relationships. A key question is whether similar levels of staff resourcing would be required for future projects based on the same principles, or whether – in the light of the projects' experience – some economies could be made.
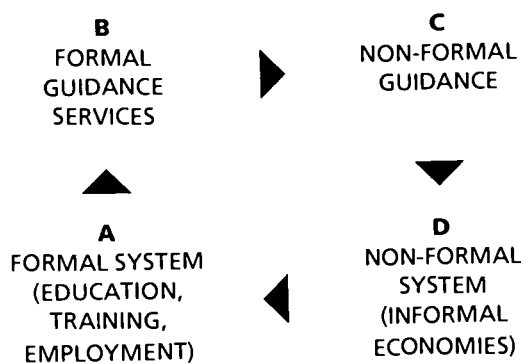
In some cases, it may be that the projects lead not to replication but to a more general sensitising of formal guidance services to the importance of non-formal guidance providers, and to more diverse forms of support for such providers. Arguably this needs more attention in initial and in-service training courses for guidance professionals.

For more information on the individual national projects, contact:

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FORMAL V. NON-FORMAL: A MODEL

A useful model for framing some of the similarities and differences between the projects, and some of the issues confronting them, is as follows:

B FORMAL GUIDANCE SERVICES	▶	**C** NON-FORMAL GUIDANCE
▲		▼
A FORMAL SYSTEM (EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT)	◀	**D** NON-FORMAL SYSTEM (INFORMAL ECONOMIES)

Within this model, the European Commission and national government departments responsible for the formal system (A) have a concern about the number of young people who have fallen out of this system into the non-formal system (D), or are at risk of doing so. They look to the formal guidance services (B) to help these young people to remain in, or be reintegrated into, the formal system. These guidance services tend, however, to have a knowledge-base confined to the formal system, and to lack contact and/or credibility with the young people, partly because the services know little about the non-formal system which is the immediate point of reference for many of the young people concerned. The services accordingly look to non-formal guidance agents, "intermediaries" or methods (C) to develop effective ways of working with the young people concerned. The aim remains, however, to support the young people in retaining or regaining access to the formal system.

In practice, the methods adopted vary between the different projects. Some are concerned to help the formal guidance services to adopt non-formal methods; some, on the other hand, by-pass the formal guidance services altogether, either because they are limited in nature or because they are considered too inflexible. Others adopt various forms of "partnership" approaches between formal guidance services and non-formal guidance agents and intermediaries.

The non-formal system (D) is varied in nature: it ranges from criminal activities, through money-earning activities to earn money which are not declared for tax purposes, to "unpaid" work in the household and community. Some of the activities are socially destructive (e.g. drug-dealing); some are socially valuable (e.g. child-rearing). Some of the young people may be "inactive" in all these respects, and yet have no role in the formal system either. Some may have a tenuous hold on the formal system, e.g. through casual jobs.

For those who have fallen out of the formal system, the notion of reintegration into it may be problematic, for two reasons: (a) because there may not be capacity for them within the formal system, and/or (b) because they may not wish, for the present at least, to re-enter it. This presents the projects with a dilemma in seeking to meet the formal purpose for which they have been set up.

This suggests that it may be more appropriate for the projects to define their purposes in broader terms, which *include* – but are not limited to – supports for young people to achieve viable and socially legitimate lifestyles outside the formal system. This would produce a broader concept of citizenship and social inclusion, so avoiding the criticism that current official definitions of social exclusion devalue unpaid work. Such a definition would also resolve the contradiction within the current projects stemming from the use of unemployed volunteers as participants in the training programme: that a broad definition of social inclusion is being applied to them but not to the young people with whom they are working.

A further argument for such a broader concept of social inclusion is that some young people will need to move into the formal system in *graded steps*. It is also arguable, however, that *all* the young people in question should be helped to take steps which will give them *access* to the formal system as and when they wish, and are in a position, to re-enter it.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The findings summarised here are reported in full in:

Watts, A.G. and McCarthy, J. (1996). *Non-Formal Guidance for Young People at Risk*. Dublin: National Centre for Guidance in Education.

Watts, A.G. and McCarthy, J. (1998). *Training in Community-Based Guidance*. Dublin: National Centre for Guidance in Education.

Both are available free from the National Centre for Guidance and Education, Avoca House, 189/193 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, Ireland (website: //www.iol.ie/ncge).

Further copies of this Briefing are available from NCGE or from NICEC (Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX, tel. 01223 460277) on receipt of an A4 stamped (20p for one or two copies, 31p for up to four copies, 38p for up to six copies) and addressed envelope.

May 1998

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