Digital-first strategies and guidance: Implications for job and competence profiles of Public Employment Services’ counsellors

Susanne Kraatz
WAPES Secretariat

Cedefop CareersNet • Conference: Rethinking professionalism of career practitioners in the digital context
Fourth CareersNet annual meeting, 8-9.10.2020
A click away from employment ... (and career development)

What about the role of guidance?
Structure

1. Concept: Career guidance in PES
2. Setting: Digital transformation and digital first
3. Job profiles: the evolving role of employment counsellors
4. Competences: The European Competence Profile for PES counsellors
5. HR Management: Benchlearning concept and PES Network practice
6. Conclusions
1. Concept: Career guidance in Public Employment Services (PES)
Acquisition of career management skills as objective

PES Network vision 2020 and beyond

“Bridging career transitions is first of all a matter of empowerment. Jobseekers and job changers need to be enabled to **build bridges** themselves, to take control of their own careers. However, they - especially vulnerable groups - need to be supported ...”

“A shift from the traditional role of job matching to a relationship with a customer that consists of facilitating, **coaching**, [...] and co-producing of new PES services drawing upon customer insight.”

Going beyond the usual paradigm of activation
Clear focus on active support, empowering, and user involvement
1. Concept: Career guidance in PES – standards set by the framework for quality management (quantitative + qualitative performance assessment)
1. Concept: Standards include career guidance for employment
   The basis for a guidance-oriented job and competence profile
   ... coherent with current policy paradigm

**Employment counselling**

- Resource-oriented assessment of employment potential, but no focus on career management skills
- Collaborative preparation of an individual action plan (placement into a job, more intensive support – ALMP measures)
- Follow-up, further support (but also, in line with activation paradigm – mutual obligation, monitoring – sanctions)

**Segmentation**

Underlying management concept

- Grouping by intensity of support needed – e.g. job ready, need for training, more comprehensive support
- Profiling methods: 1 employment counsellor, 2 in-depth assessment by external service, 3 statistical profiling

**Tailoring support – ALMP measures**

- In-house or external career guidance / case management
- More intensive job search assistance
- Testing – in-house, external service
- Work experience
- Short occupational training for a vacancy
- Qualification - e.g. VET
- Combined training measures – training social skills, social assistance
- Wage subsidies
- Health and social services, NGOs etc.
- Post-placement support
3. Offering career management portals and using YouTube – PES France
3. Increasingly web-based including chats - PES - Sweden
2. Changing setting: Trends in digital transformation and digital first

An increasing offer of online, self-help tools and interactive communication pushed by COVID19

- **Digital first**: National and European multi-functional platforms (including Europass Platform for career management) as first access point

- **Self-help tools**: Job search, creating CV, how to apply, skills profilling, automated matching, jobs with similar skills profiles / transferable skills, identification of skills gaps -> training needs (big data analysis), mobile apps

- **Interactive tools** including chats, bots, videocounselling

- **Targeted digital-first strategies**: Profiling tools using AI to identify job-ready jobseekers capable to use digital tools (learning lessons: – example NL - online tools only do not work for all)

- **From blended services to omni-channelling as future integrated service concept**: customer choice – seamless switch
3. Virtual events, interactive LMI and video-guidance - PES Estonia

Online Job and Career Fair
29. September - 2. October
toomess.ee

Occupational barometer
3. Using social media for outreach – Belgium VDAB

En alles beweegt

285.708 Aufrufe • vor 1 Jahr

Solliciteren, werken, bijscholen. Zet elke stap met VDAB. En alles beweegt.
3. Job profile: The evolving role of employment counsellors

- **Former core tasks will be increasingly automated, e.g.**
  - Placement into a job
  - Identification of skills gaps (incl. digital skills)
  - Identification of training measures needed
  - Routine administration

- **Employment counselling will become more demanding**
  - Support for more complex job search (e.g. other job with partially overlapping profile, job below former job level)
  - Stronger focus on vulnerable groups with more complex needs
  - Mitigating the digital divide among clients
  - Working with more channels, tools and platforms

- **... in a context of an increasing mandate for PES**
  - Early intervention (e.g. contacting youth in education)
  - Prevention of unemployment (e.g. workers threatened by unemployment)
4. Competences: The European Competence Profile for PES and EURES counsellors (2014) includes both, guidance and digital (PES survey, working group, other frameworks, expert input)

- Set of competences: career guidance for labour market integration
- In line with the PES Network vision and other guidance competence frameworks (foundational, counselling, supporting competences)
- … including competences for blended service delivery

Digital transformation – Rethinking the competence profile?

Need for updating, specifying + mainstreaming digital competences + adding AI knowledge (general understanding of underlying process; risks including private career management platforms)

(PES survey, working group, other frameworks, expert input)

**Foundational competences**
e.g. Professional conduct and ethical aspects, client orientation, dealing with pressure, change)

**Client interaction competences** – dealing with jobseekers and employers

*Core part, most competences* e.g. Counselling, individual action planning – promoting career management skills, motivation, resource-oriented assessment, problem-solving skills, justified referrals, facilitating placement

**Supporting competences**
System competences, e.g. knowledge of labour market, vulnerable groups, networking and partnerships

*Technical competences* = ICT skills and ability to work in a context of blended service delivery, Information management skills

Supporting competences – Technical competences

- **ICT skills and ability to work in a context of blended service delivery**
  
  e.g. competences to use basic and service-specific ICT equipment and software, work with internet and online resources, to provide blended service delivery, to use of recruitment tools, telephone or online information and assistance

- **Information management**
  
  e.g. assist clients to access and use information on job opportunities and training

**Rethinking the competence profile? Rather Update+**

- Specific or transversal approach to integrate ICT? Both
- Need for update of the specific competence areas
  
  e.g. big-data and AI incl. potential issues (e.g. profiling, suggestions)
- Need for transversal integration (e.g. counselling skills section)
5. HR Management: Benchlearning concept and PES Network practice

- Benchlearning HRM concept includes
  - Competence profiles
  - Initial training
  - Continuous professional development
  - Career development
  - Strategic HRM

- PES Network practice so far

  Focus on strategic HRM (e.g. attracting and retaining talent, staff motivation and leadership)

  … partial implementation, room for further development
5. HR Management: Benchlearning concept and PES Network practice

**Benchlearning HRM concept in detail**

- **Benchlearning concept**
  
  Shift in the role of PES towards services focused on facilitation of transitions: strengthening of counselling and guidance elements in the job of employment counsellors

- **Standards for HR strategy**
  
  - Definition and description of qualifications and competences profiles for all functions at all organisational levels
  - Profiles should be made accessible to all employees
  - Initial training plan for new employees upon entry (taking account of different competences due to different entry qualifications), use of mentoring and coaching programs
  - A further training and career development plan (competency based, life-cycle approach)
  - Training for implementation of blended services should be part of HRM strategy (From section G – Design of operational processes)
6. Conclusions

- **Filling the gap** – research and mutual exchange on staff competences and competence profiles

- **Pooling resources** - Identifying common training needs for the digital context and develop open-source online training modules and concepts

- **Continuous professional development and resilience** - approaches for peer learning and online communities of practice including problem-solving (using the knowledge from the project EmployID)

- **Evidence-based use of channels for information and guidance** - Research involving users and counsellors to gain more knowledge which interactive channel serves best for which purpose and client including face-to-face guidance
“PES biggest asset is its staff”

(Pôle Emploi; in Sienkiewicz 2018: 17)

One of the advanced PES including (digital) innovation

Or, to put it into a broader context:

Competent staff to support the supply side compensating for social disadvantage is the main added value of public employment services.
Sources:
EU Network of Public Employment Services Strategy to 2020 and beyond
EmployID – MOOC for HR. https://employid.eu
European Commission