**United Nations
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Cultural Organization**

Mission Report

Career Guidance in the OPT:
Mapping the Field and Ways Forward
Roland G.Sultana
On behalf of UNESCO
October 2008

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1. Introduction

1.1. The visit to the OPT started on Sunday, 31 August 2008 and was completed on Friday, 5 September 2008. It entailed **meetings** with a wide range of players from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, with a number of experts from the TVET and university sectors, as well as with representatives from various international development agencies and donors (including the Belgian Technical Cooperation, GTZ, the ILO, Save the Children, UNRWA, and the Quartet) and NGOs (such as the *Sharek* Youth Forum and the YMCA). The mission also included **visits** to the Labour Office in Ramallah, to two vocational schools and technical colleges, where focus interviews with two mixed groups totalling 40 students were held, and to the UNRWA Ramallah Men's Technical College. The mapping does not include Gaza, which, despite several efforts proved difficult to visit. While some aspects of the mapping apply to the Gaza strip as much as to the West Bank, others are context-specific, relating to both economic and political dynamics in the two sites. The **programme** of the meetings and visits—which was modified on the basis of leads suggested during interviews, and in response to opportunities that arose during the mission—is appended as Annex 1.

1.2. The programme of visits and the appointments for interviews were efficiently organised by Frosse Dabit from **UNESCO**, who also accompanied me to all the visits, provided translation services when needed, and was invaluable in helping me understand the context more fully. She also painstakingly put together a set of important background documents prior to the visit, which served to sensitize me to the issues that were likely to be relevant to the mission focus.

1.3. The mission, as outlined in the contract, required me to, in the first instance: [a] Map and examine **current initiatives** in the CG field,[1] as well as any assessment or related **CG tools and materials** in use; and [b] to explore ways to **establish a CG system** in the OPT. Sections 2 and 3 of this Report relate to the first of these tasks. On the basis of the mapping exercise, a proposal for the development of a CG system in the

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[1] An initial mapping exercise of the CG field in the OPT was carried out by Khayri Abushowayb in 2006, in the context of the regional EU-funded ETE (Education, Training and Employment) project on career guidance in the Mediterranean, co-ordinated by Mr Helmut Zelloth from the European Training Foundation. Abushowayb's work is useful, but limits itself to the CG services offered by UNRWA. That work is referred to in the present exercise, with information about CG in the relief agency updated following meetings with UNRWA staff, and a telephone interview with the Placement and CG Officer based in Jerusalem.

OPT was tabled for discussion at a stakeholder's workshop on October 14. The proposal is here presented in Section 4 of the Report, and integrates feedback and comments made at the workshop. The proposal draws on best practice in the OPT and internationally in order to present some policy options, keeping firmly in mind the many obstacles and challenges that, to a large extent, determine what is feasible. On the behest of the workshop participants, an outline of next steps indicating a possible way forward in implementing the proposals is presented in the final section of the Report.

1.4. By sheer coincidence, the UNESCO mission was preceded by a 4-day training workshop on **the role of the Labour Office**, which was organised by the ILO in Jericho between the 25th and 28th August. I was invited to lead a full-day session with 21 directors of various sections of labour offices from all over the OPT, focusing on career guidance (CG) in Public Employment Services. This provided me with a unique opportunity to understand how labour offices function, what some of the key concerns are, and the extent to which the Ministry of Labour has the required capacity to offer CG services for adults, especially those out of work. I was also able to discuss issues with the Minister of Labour and members of his entourage during two informal meetings, and with representatives from the Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions. While the focus of this mission is on CG services in the education sector, the links between the latter and the labour market sector need to be taken into account.[2] This is especially the case since interest in CG in the region is on the increase, with a number of international agencies supporting the development of CG services in labour offices.[3]

1.5. Initial discussions in preparation for the mission emphasised the role that CG could potentially play in **orienting Palestinian students—both male and female—to the TVET stream**. CG in fact officially falls under the department of vocational schools in the DG TVET section of the Ministry of Education, and the role of the head of the Vocational Guidance Division includes the implementation of different CG activities in cooperation with TVET institutions and educational district offices, the preparation of CG resources, networking with diverse partners from governmental, non-governmental and private entities, and, significantly, the preparation of studies aimed at increasing enrolment in TVET. Furthermore, CG features as an important element in the national TVET strategy which, while still awaiting implementation, does provide a carefully articulated policy framework, representing an enormous amount of effort and investment which the OPT has still

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[2] Indeed, in many countries, the Ministry of Labour has strong ties to CG by [a] collecting and disseminating labour market information, reflecting both the present employment situation and trends, as well as forecasting future skills needs in the economy; [b] providing a CG service through its Labour Offices (also known as Public Employment Services); [c] catering for the need of a range of clients—principally unemployed adults, but also those in need of a career change. In some countries, [d] some of the school-to-work curriculum is delivered by labour office staff either through school visits, or through hosting students on their premises, the assumption being that they are closer to and more knowledgeable about the world of work than teachers are or could be.

[3] The European Training Foundation commissioned a comparative study of CG in the MEDA region (see R.G. Sultana & A.G.Watts, *Career Guidance in the Mediterranean*. Turin: ETF, 2007), and a CG centre is being established in Damascus with British Council support. The ILO has had an important influence through the production of an excellent manual which looks at CG in middle- and low-income countries (E. Hansen, *Career Guidance: A Resource Handbook for Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. Geneva: ILO, 2006). Significantly, the Arab section of the ILO organised a three day training course in CG in labour office settings in Amman—which again coincidentally took place a month prior to the present mission.

to benefit from.[4] Indeed, the present policy interest in CG in the OPT is driven by its presumed usefulness in addressing some of the key economic challenges identified in the TVET strategy. Both the MoEHE and the MoL, as well as agencies active in the TVET field—including Save the Children for instance—see CG as an important tool to address the mismatch between supply and demand of skills by directing students towards vocational tracks, which suffer from a low status and are under-subscribed.[5] Together with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, they also see CG as useful in orienting female students towards the TVET sector, in order to open up more employment options from them—a goal that, thanks to a carefully planned CG education and advocacy project implemented with the support of the Norwegian government, has been attained in Hebron, despite the fact that this is one of the OPT's more conservative enclaves.[6] Many countries have invested in CG as a way to get a better match between supply and demand for skills. Most, however, try to keep a balance between **directing/orienting** on the one hand, and **supporting** personal decisions on the other, thus responding to both private interest and the public good. It appears that policy leaders in the OPT recognise the need to steer a course between both options, and to reconcile them whenever possible. They have wisely adopted—or are considering adopting—other strategies to raise the profile and attractiveness of TVET.[7] Some of these strategies contain elements of CG activities.

1.6. Subsequent discussions therefore clarified that CG services could be harnessed to fulfil a **broader remit**. They could, for instance, support students in developing a

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[4] There are plans afoot to revise and revive the national TVET strategy, with a Memorandum of Understanding being signed by TVET directors from the MoEHE and the MoL on the one hand, and the GTZ and the Belgian Technical Cooperation on the other. On their part, NGOs active in the TVET field have formed a League of TVET institutions, in the hope of delivering a package of interventions that would make TVET more market driven. For an excellent analytic overview of the TVET field and its intersections with the OPT economy, see M. Hashweh, *Human Resource Development and its Links to the Labour Market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Turin: ETF, 2006 [available at: http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/EE67B1272628EDE8C12572CF0059A3A8/$File/NOTE72T M5T.pdf].

[5] The aspiration of both male and female students is to get high enough grades at the 10th and 12th Grades to join the scientific track which, as one interviewee put it "opens up the royal road" to medicine and engineering. Those who do not make it into the scientific track prefer to take up the humanities, even though graduates from this stream are finding it extremely difficult to find jobs, or to find jobs that relate to their degree. In contrast, some vocational schools, equipped to the hilt thanks to foreign aid, nevertheless have difficulties attracting students, or recruiting high-achieving students. This is creating serious skills imbalances in the economy, with oversupply in some areas, and bottlenecks in others.

[6] Few girls opt for vocational streams, and those who do remain in traditional areas associated with 'feminine work', especially secretarial. The female labour force participation rate is, at 14.7%, one of the lowest in the world, and is due to traditional attitudes about the women's place as homemaker and nurturer, to the marginalization of women into a restricted number of economic sectors (clerical, agricultural, and informal), and the reluctance of employers to engage highly trained and educated women (the highest rate of unemployment is among women with 13 or more years of education). Such limited contribution to the economy by half of the Palestinian population is hard to justify in a context where the only resources available are people.

[7] A very important aspect of the national TVET strategy is the opening up of bridges between the TVET sector and universities, enabling high performing TVET students to transfer to university courses, and vice-versa. As in many other countries, OPT universities have proved reluctant to accept students with a TVET background, even when these have obtained high grades in the vocational Tawjihi examination at the end of Grade 12. Proposals mentioned by interviewees included the more effective promotion of TVET through the media, and highlighting the better chances that TVET graduates had in obtaining employment and higher salaries when compared to graduates from some university tracks. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is tabling a proposal to attract young women to follow non-traditional TVET pathways, through raising awareness through media campaigns and career guidance workshops. Some interviewees with experience in the private sector noted that incentives should be introduced by granting micro-credit to graduates of TVET institutions to help them set up a business, and by awarding tax deductions to companies that employ formally qualified skilled vocational graduates.

better understanding of the world of work, of gaining insights into the structure of employment opportunities that existed in the OPT and the region, of challenging gender-typed occupational aspirations, and of motivating disaffected young people by re-engaging them in an education or training route. CG, if adequately developed as a service, could also go beyond supporting work choices to providing students with the entrepreneurial skills needed to create their own employment. Some of these benefits could also be gained by adults within the context of services offered by labour offices. It is this broader approach to CG that informed both the mission, and this report.

1.7. Throughout the mission, the term **'career guidance' (*tawjeeh mihani*)** was preferred to 'vocational guidance'. While the latter is more frequently used in the OPT, it was sometimes confused—or associated too narrowly—with 'vocational education'. The term 'counselling' is often used in the OPT, with occasionally little clear differentiation from the term 'guidance', or indeed from social work. It is important to stabilise the meaning of each term, and to use them consistently. In this report, therefore, counselling refers to deeper psychological and therapeutic interventions which, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, are usually captured by the term 'personal counselling', and in Arabic by the term *irshad nafsi*. CG practitioners use some of the skills that are used by counsellors (e.g. listening and helping skills), but the scope of their interaction with clients focuses more specifically on issues that are linked to educational and training pathways, and the world of work. Interviewees also referred to 'academic counselling' (*irshad acadeemi*): in English this would be captured by the term 'educational guidance', which is presently less frequently used in international policy discourse since it is assumed that career guidance also includes educational guidance.

1.8. One of the goals of this mission is to place OPT practice in CG within the context of international initiatives in the field, thus facilitating learning from best practice internationally. It may therefore be important to follow the definition of CG used in the series of reviews that have been carried over the past 8 years by the OECD, the EU and the World Bank,[8] which between them covered 55 high-, medium- and low-income countries.[9] All these reviews **define career guidance** as:

> Services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. These may include services in schools, in universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in companies, in the voluntary/ community sector and in the private sector. The services may be on an individual

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[8] See OECD, *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, Paris: Author, 2004; R.G. Sultana, *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries: A Synthesis Report*, Turin: ETF, 2003; R.G. Sultana, *Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society: Trends, Challenges and Responses Across Europe*, Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP, 2004; A.G. Watts & D. Fretwell, *Public Policies for Career Development: Policy Strategies for Designing Career Information and Guidance Systems in Middle-Income and Transition Economies*, Washington: World Bank, 2004; R.G. Sultana & A.G. Watts, *Career Guidance in Europe's Public Employment Services: Trends and Challenges*, Brussels: DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities; R. Sweet, *Career Guidance in the West Balkans Region*, Turin: ETF.

[9] For a useful overview, see A.G. Watts (2008) "Lessons learned from national reviews: implications for the United States.". Paper delivered to an NCDA symposium on 'Strategic Leadership for Career Development in Public Policy: Identifying Challenges, Creating Solutions and Implementing Strategies', held in Washington, USA, on 7-8 July 2008.

or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including helplines and web-based services). They include career information (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education and career management programmes, work and course tasters, work search programmes, and transition services such as work experience and work shadowing.

2. General background regarding Career Guidance in the OPT

2.1. The situation concerning CG in the OPT is similar to that in other contexts across the region. A recent comparative study of CG in the Mediterranean region—which included 8 Arab states (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, OPT, Syria, and Tunisia) together with Israel and Turkey—indicated that **most CG services are still in their infancy**, and this for a number of inter-related economic, social, cultural and political reasons.[10] Several of these reasons—which are listed below—were echoed by interviewees during this mission, indicating their relevance to the situation in the OPT:

2.1.1. CG services depend on reliable, up-to-date, easily accessible **labour market information**: in many states in North Africa and the Middle East, however, the capacity to provide such information is limited. Even when the relevant databases exist, the information is not available in ways that facilitate and support the CG process.

2.1.2. A major reason for the lack of labour market information can be attributed to the importance of the **informal economy**, where many companies, and hence vacancies, remain unregistered. As a result, there is little incentive for individuals to go to labour market offices: not only do the latter not provide unemployment benefits (of the 8 Arab states studied, only Algeria does), but compared to information that can be obtained from friends and relatives, are slow and limited in their ability to find jobs for people. Furthermore, it is *wasta*, and who you know, that often clinch a job.

2.1.3. Most business and commercial activities take place within the context of **small or micro-enterprises**. Employers are therefore unlikely to play any major role in supporting CG, whether as providers or as contributors to CG activities organised by the education or labour market sector. In addition, since many businesses are family-owned, children—particularly males—are often expected to take up and continue in their fathers' footsteps—an expectation that is rarely challenged.

2.1.4. Family adults—especially fathers, but also key members in the extended family—often have a very strong influence on the direction children's futures will take. In many cases, therefore, individuals feel that they are not in control of their destiny, but are rather in the hands of a **higher authority, whether temporal or spiritual**. Fate (*khadar masir*)—articulated through the oft heard

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[10] R.G. Sultana & A.G. Watts, 2007, ibid.

expression *insha'Allah*—is an important and influential notion which permeates and informs life views, with individuals convinced that God has a plan for each person, and that it is God's will, rather than individual aspirations, that matter.

2.1.5. In many Arab states, the school system is geared toward the **Tawjihi exam**, and streams students rigidly into scientific, humanistic, and vocational tracks—in descending order of prestige—so that decisions about futures are made by the system on the basis of school performance, rather than by individuals in relation to personal choices.

2.1.6. Strongly embedded **cultural norms**, while greatly valuing education and learning, sometimes do not support the ultimate aim of CG, which is to expand options and to empower individuals to make choices. Rather, these norms tend to prescribe **futures**, often in strongly gender-typed ways. Choices for young women are further limited by the reluctance of their families to permit them to study in co-educational settings, or in distant institutions which require daily travel. Location, transport facilities and costs, and infrastructure determine 'choices' rather more than personal aspiration and ambition.[11]

2.2. The particular political and economic situation of the OPT adds **a greater sense of urgency** to several of these dimensions: unemployment is very high, especially in Gaza,[12] and the economy unable to perform well due to the restrictions imposed by occupation. External and internal political crises are having a disastrous impact on the business and investment climate: job opportunities are few and far between, and deepening poverty obliges individuals to do any work they can find in order to feed their families. In such a context, any notion of 'occupational choice' seems a luxury. Access to external employment opportunities—which in the past served as a safety valve when local vacancies dried up—has become increasingly difficult. Following the various uprisings and conflicts, Israel has dramatically limited employment opportunities for Palestinians on its territory, preferring to resort to labourers from other nationalities to fulfil its labour market needs.[13] In the Gulf too, opportunities have become limited following the first Gulf war. As mobility within Gaza and the West Bank becomes more and more restricted, an increasing number of people are giving up hope and see no other option than to leave, with the brain drain issue posing an especially serious challenge. All this has implications for any CG service that is developed in the OPT.

2.3. The internal political situation in the OPT is, not surprisingly, negatively impacting on **governance issues** as well. In CG as well as in other fields such as TVET, there are several initiatives by individuals, by ministries, by development partners and

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[11] The issue of accessibility is particularly germane to the OPT. The daily toll on mental well-being that is caused by the stress when crossing Israeli check-points restricts mobility, particularly for women, who report all sorts of harassment at the hands of soldiers.

[12] Unemployment rates in Gaza have reached 28.2% for males, and 39.3% for females, creating what is effectively a distinct economic micro-climate that requires a separate study to itself. Recent political events reinforce the distinct nature of Gaza for other reasons as well. The corresponding unemployment rates for the West Bank are 19.9% and 15%.

[13] Israeli jobs pay significantly higher salaries, and ironically offer better conditions of employment in terms of vacation leave, health insurance, and worker rights. Labour offices have a special section dealing with processing permits to Palestinian workers who cross over to Israel for work, and to follow them up to ensure that their rights are respected.

NGOs, but a lot of these are fragmented, dispersed, uncoordinated, and neither institutionalised nor linked to an approved policy strategy. Their impact is therefore weakened, and their longevity in doubt. Projects materialise when donors invest funds, and disappear as soon as donors leave the scene.[14] Knowledge about each others' initiatives is limited at best, with issues of duplication of efforts and of overlap becoming a serious threat to rational policy-making and optimal use of scarce financial and human resources. Given the lack of a clear policy steer, development partners end up taking the initiative to move things along, but end up competing for influence, presence, and impact. The process of mapping the CG field in the OPT therefore proved to be particularly challenging, since practically each interview or visit revealed fresh information about initiatives, unknown by previous interviewees. It consequently became difficult to make a judgement as to the extent to which the collection of data had reached saturation.

2.4. Having said that, it must also be strongly emphasised that, despite all these obstacles and challenges, and despite an economic, social and political environment that is all but disabling, we were able to note **a number of CG initiatives that deserve to be showcased**. That they are present at all is a testimony to the resilience of the Palestinian community as it tries to find a way forward, against all odds.

3. Mapping current Career Guidance initiatives in the OPT

3.1. CG can involve **a number of activities** that support knowledge about careers, as well as career choice, career development, and career management. Typically, such activities include one or more of the following: informing, advising, assessing, teaching, enabling, advocating, networking, managing, feeding back, systems change, signposting, mentoring, and exposure to work experience and to learning tasters. It is not uncommon for schools and organisations to feature such activities without necessarily being aware that in many countries these elements that contribute to a CG service. In some ways, this is the case with the OPT.

3.2. The range of CG activities identified above can be organised around 5 main categories, namely [a] **career information** [b] **career education** [c] **career counselling** [d] **employment counselling** and [e] **job placement**. There is considerable overlap between activities in each category, but we will adopt this typology in the following sections in order to both capture what is happening and to more readily identify some of the more important gaps. The way the mapping is structured thus foreshadows some of the policy options that will be presented at the end of the report. In each case, and as far as it is possible, we will also consider the **mode of delivery**, the **resources** used, as well as the **entities** and **staff** involved in delivering the service.

3.3. *Career information:*

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[14] Among these projects we can refer to the TVET student tracer studies funded by UNESCO, and GTZ efforts to establish a career guidance unit, as well as to provide training in the accreditation of prior learning.

3.3.1. Career information is the foundation of CG, and CG services can only function properly if they provide **information that is valid, reliable, timely and up-to-date** about the range of occupations available, the skills that these require, the career and educational pathways on offer, labour market trends, and so on. In the best systems, the data that is needed by an individual to make informed choices is available from one access point. This requires consolidation of data bases that are often put together by different ministries (notably of education, higher education, labour, planning), and entities (e.g. the statistics division)—with *Al Manar* in Jordan being an example of this in the region.[15] Increasingly, career information is made available not only in print, but also—or almost exclusively—in digital format and through the internet. In the best of cases, a user sits at a computer, accesses a CG platform, and can complete all or most of the CG process, i.e. he or she clarifies career aspirations through a self-assessment tool, links information about self to an occupation or group of occupations, and learns about these (what the job entails, what it qualifications are required, likely salary, employment trends in that area, promotion structures, and so on). Information about where one can obtain the qualification needed can be downloaded, with links to the training institutions made available. In some cases, graduate evaluations of the courses and institutions are also available, so that a user can make an informed choice about which of the competing institutions that offer the same course s/he should apply to. If necessary, the user can ask for a CG interview in order to supplement the self-help process.[16] The interview with a trained CG counsellor can take place on line, through a telephone help line or, if necessary, face to face.

3.3.2. Career information in Palestine is either **missing, or fragmented**, thus **limiting its transparency, accessibility and usefulness for CG purposes**. The Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) does produce reliable datasets which could serve the CG process, but it appears that their use for this purpose rarely happens, if it ever takes place as all. Moreover, as many interviewees repeatedly pointed out, information about the labour market is difficult to put together, since many enterprises are not registered, and therefore do not report vacancies to the labour offices. In Ramallah, for instance, only around 500 companies out of at least 15,000 are formally registered, with the greatest disincentive being the requirement to follow labour laws, including those that safeguard workers' rights, which are seen to be costly to the enterprise (such as maternity leave, for instance). It is moreover difficult to forecast skills needs given the vulnerability of the Palestinian economy and its dependency on external forces over which it has little, if any, control. Data about labour market trends, which would help individuals make informed choices about likely sectors that they should invest in, is therefore difficult to generate. However, even the LM data that is entered at the level of local labour offices is apparently only shared with the central MoL, and does not show up on the databases of other labour offices elsewhere.

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[15] Ironically, the Jordanian *Al Manar* project, which enjoys quite a reputation in the region, and which was identified as an example of good practice in the ILO career guidance handbook (see f.n.3), inspired itself from earlier CG initiatives that had been planned by the expert team developing the national TVET strategy.

[16] A good example of this kind of web-based career guidance service is available at www.myfuture.edu.au

This naturally restricts the flow of vital information, so that individuals in search of employment can only learn about what is available in their area.

3.3.3. An important effort was made in the recent past by the national TVET strategy expert team, with a system developed to capture information about LM trends, and to enter LM information in a database. In addition, several brochures with information about a broad range of occupations were published, inspired by the model used in Germany by the BIZ centres. The plan was to have these **occupational profiles** easily accessible on the internet. Despite the resources and research that went into this major project, there is unfortunately little to show for it at the present moment. There is no LM information system. The occupational brochures are made available on demand in Vocational Training Centres, Labour Offices, and in UNRWA and some other schools, but few seem to know about them. They are not available on the internet, and have moreover not been developed further or updated. In principle, the updating of the occupational profiles is listed as one of the responsibilities of the Vocational Guidance Division in DG TVET at the Ministry of Education.

3.3.4. This does not mean that the OPT does not have the expertise or capacity to develop information systems. The MoEHE's Education Management Information System (EMIS) is an impressive tool that has been developed over the past decade, and can stand its own with the best available internationally.[17] A **Labour Market Information System** (LMIS) that, despite the odds, reaches this standard, would be another impressive achievement. Both the ILO and GTZ have an interest in supporting the MoL to develop such a system—a most challenging task since it requires parallel developments in the legal framework concerning labour, and close co-ordination between several partners. The availability of sound information about labour market realities and trends would lay one of the more important foundation stones of a CG system in the OPT.

3.3.5. CG services also require **information about educational and training pathways and opportunities**, in order to support client decision-making. Information about the academic education routes is available in hard copy and on the MoEHE website, and is updated annually. However, this information is not linked to the database on vocational training routes reflecting the divide there is between general and vocational education which, in principle, the system wishes to remove or at least mitigate. For information about the TVET offer, students have to obtain the latest edition of the directory on vocational courses, which was published by the MoL in 1999 and which has not been updated since. It is therefore not surprising that students reportedly rely more on family and friends than on the institutions for information they need about education and training opportunities.

3.3.6. Despite the general lack of reliable and easily accessible information to support the career decision-making process, a number of non-governmental entities have

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[17] See R.G. Sultana (2002) 'An EMIS for Palestine: The Education Management Information System in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.' *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol.7(2), pp.61-92.

succeeded in making some headway in this area, and their efforts deserve to be highlighted. **UNRWA**,[18] for instance, carries out regular **surveys of the labour market** in order to both guide its vocational students in their choices, and to make informed decisions about which vocational courses to open and which to close, depending on the skills needs declared by employers. While UNRWA's feasibility studies are limited in scope and in scientific rigour, they provide important insights regarding trends. These insights are strengthened through other strategies which bring UNRWA vocational institutions closer to the labour market. One of the more important of these strategies includes the employment of a trained Placement and CG officer who networks closely with employers in the OPT and in the region. Open Days are organised by the vocational institutions, enabling employers to see first-hand the training on offer, and to communicate with training providers. Knowledge of employer needs is further reinforced through close contact with the enterprises which receive UNRWA vocational students during their practicum, and through tracer studies which track graduates from UNRWA TVET institutions for 12 months.

3.3.7. Another important initiative is that organised by the **_Sharek_ Youth Forum**.[19] This impressive youth organisation, which employs 40 staff spread in 24 centres in WB and Gaza, has become a key provider of career information and CG services to youths, particularly in universities and colleges. Its _Step Forward_ programme, whose main aim is to prepare young people to enter the challenging labour market thus reducing unemployment among youth, has several components that contain CG elements. These include career counselling, educational guidance, on-the-job training opportunities and work experience, work simulation (e.g. setting up a model court for law students to learn about practice in an experiential manner), Career Fairs, and training and support in setting up a business. We will be referring to these in different sections of this mission report. In relation to the provision of labour market information to support career decision-making, _Sharek_ has made a start by cooperating with the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) to measure the level of correspondence between the competences of Palestinian higher education graduates and the needs of the labour market in the WB and Gaza.[20] _Sharek_ has furthermore ensured better career information availability for higher education students by organising Career Days and Job Fairs in universities and colleges, with the first ever National Job Fair being launched in collaboration with private sector partners in June this year. Most importantly, it has set up career information centres in four universities, and is planning to expand this initiative to include all tertiary level institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. One of the

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[18] UNRWA schools cater for Palestinian children in refugee camps from Grades 1 to 9. It moreover has three vocational institutions in which 600 male and 600 female students are registered. The vocational trade school in Kalandja receives lower-achieving students at the end of Grade 10. The two vocational schools in Ramallah—one for males and the other for females—receive high-achieving students who successfully complete the Tawjihi examination. The demand for places in the Ramallah schools outstrips supply by 4 to 1.

[19] Sharek was established in 2004, is a voluntary youth organization without any political or religious affiliation. It generates resources through fund-raising activities and through partnerships with private industries and such donors as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). For further information see www.sharek.ps

[20] See M. Al-Jafari & D. Lafi (2006) _Matching Higher Education Graduates with Market Needs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip._ Ramallah: Sharek Youth Forum.

tasks of the career centres is to maintain a database with details of freshly-graduated students, in order to enhance the job matching process.

3.3.8. Similar sets of initiatives are in the pipeline at the **Birzeit University Centre for Continuing Education**, where the *Stepping Stones* project seeks to facilitate the transition of university graduates into the local, regional and global employment market, targeting in particular knowledge-based industries. The latter are particularly relevant to the OPT situation, given that they are based in virtual space, thus overcoming the oppressive mobility restrictions in the territory. The project sets out to identify skills needs through market studies and networking, supporting the development of the skills profiles required, building networks with regional and global companies to identify clients willing to open up business opportunities for Palestinian graduates or companies, and providing support to existing companies and start-ups seeking to engage in knowledge-based economies. The programme sets out to facilitate the generation and application of labour market information within a specific field and for a target clientele, and mobilises networks to overcome the obstacle of limited data that is accessible to enterprising graduates.

3.3.9. Many countries pay a great deal of attention not only to producing and disseminating reliable information that supports the CG process, but also to ensuring that such information follows certain **standards**. An important concern here is to ensure that the information does not reproduce gender or racial stereotypes, for instance, or that it fails to be sensitive to the special needs of persons with disability. Concerns have been expressed by some interviewees that there is a tendency for the labour market information that is available in the OPT to be **gender-biased**. Staff from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, for instance, are asking for a review of the new curriculum from a gender perspective, which in some cases represents women in traditional roles, reinforcing stereotypes. They also feel the need for widespread training targeting school personnel, including counsellors, in regard to gender issues. A start had been made in 2005 in this regard, thanks to a 2-week programme offered by the MoEHE and MoL with the support of GTZ. One of the components of the *Step Forward* programme organised by the Youth Forum *Sharek* includes a series of activities with women in rural areas in Jenin, Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Gaza, where information about labour market trends and skill needs helps re-direct women away from traditional employment routes towards training that enhances their employment prospects.

3.4. *Career education:*

3.4.1. Career education is generally offered in educational institutions, and entails helping young people develop a critical understanding of the world of work, of the education and training pathways that lead to different types of employment, of the nature and likely availability of different jobs, and so on. Career education can be a **separate subject** in the curriculum—often at secondary level, but sometimes in higher education institutions as well—and can be either **compulsory** or offered as an **elective**. In some countries, the topic 'work'

features **across the curriculum**, as a theme in several subjects, including, for instance, civics education (e.g. teaching about rights and responsibilities of workers), language (e.g. teaching how to write a c.v.), drama (e.g. role playing a job interview), religion (e.g. values related to work), and history (e.g. how the nature of work has evolved over time). Some of the best practices support student learning by inviting them to keep a 'school-to-work' log book or portfolio, where they reflect on what they learn about work in the different subjects. This portfolio is discussed with a member of staff, who draws on the material in the log book in order to support the career exploration of students, individually or in a group. Often, a similar strategy is used in a different context with apprentices. Career education can also be delivered through **extra-curricular activities**, such as CG workshops (often offered at key transition points, such as in Grade 10 and Grade 12), and the hosting of alumni (peer-to-peer guidance), workers, and entrepreneurs from the community, who share their experiences of working life with students. Some of the more effective career education initiatives include experiential learning activities such as workplace visits, work shadowing, work experience and 'job tasting'.

3.4.2. The **staff** that are usually involved in delivering the career education curriculum are often teachers who have received special in-service training in the area, and/or career guidance staff that are either based at the school, or in an external agency (such as the labour office). In many cases, regular teachers work closely with CG specialists in order to benefit from each other's strengths. A wide variety of **career education materials** are available on the international market, including textbooks, portfolios (print-based or electronic), games (e.g. *The Real Game*)[21], DVDs about different occupations, and so on.

3.4.3. Few of these career education activities were reported by the interviewees during this mission. The new OPT curriculum has introduced **technological literacy** (*thaqafeh el techanieh*) as a compulsory subject at Grade 10 to 12, with a view to familiarising all students with aspects of technology and the world of work. The subject is allocated one hour per week, and is certainly a promising space where aspects of the 'school-to-work' or the 'transition' curriculum can be delivered, though teachers would require some training to be able to do this well. Initial inquiries with experts who were involved in the development of the new OPT curriculum suggests that there are few other subjects where the topic 'work' is formally and specifically addressed, though this would need to be verified through a thorough content analysis.

3.4.4. Other activities that would fall under the 'career education' umbrella are organised by individual institutions or organisations, generally on an **ad hoc basis**. only CG specialist at the MoL (see para. 3.5.3.) occasionally runs CG education workshops with young people and parents together. Private schools regularly invite the YMCA guidance counsellors in Bethlehem and Ramallah to give talks about the world of work to their students—an activity which seems to be very popular with students and their parents alike. Some schools reportedly

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[21] See http://www.realgame.com/

organise orientation visits to vocational institutions as well as to enterprises, and use this as a basis for discussions about educational and occupation futures.

3.4.5. Some of these activities have become somewhat more **institutionalised**. UNRWA schools, for instance, have a particularly well-organised career education programme which started off as a placement service in the 1960s, but which, with the drying up of opportunities for work in the region, has become more oriented towards career education and guidance. Driven by need, therefore, rather than by policy, the relief agency has, over the years, established a set-up that delivers career education and guidance to the students under its care. It has a trained Placement and CG officer in Jerusalem who supports teacher and school counsellors in offering planned curricular and extra-curricular activities linked to working life, including the writing of c.v.'s, self-presentation skills during a job interview and the setting up of one's own business. Teacher counsellors are to be found in all UNRWA schools, and these spend some of their time teaching, and the rest of the time counselling. Together with schools counsellors—of whom there are 6, two each for UNRWA schools in the north, in the middle and in the south of the OPT—and under the supervision of the Placement and Career Guidance Officer, they provide elements of personal, educational and career guidance on the basis of specialised if short-term training offered by UNRWA HQ in Amman.

3.4.6. The **YMCA**'s Women's Training Programme also deserves to be highlighted, given that its **Career Counselling Programme** has been running since 1993. The Programme, which operates in different governorates in the West Bank through an agreement with the Ministry of Education, provides career-counselling activities for groups of young people at schools and youth institutions, addressing several important issues such as marriage and work, self-awareness and self-assertiveness, changing attitudes towards TVET, skills development in decision-making, and so on. The programme reaches around 300 students annually, 60% of whom are female, and includes not only direct career education work, but also career field trips, summer camps, and family workshops. The latter are especially important because they target parents, helping them understand better the need to respect children's right to choose their futures, in the light of available opportunities. They also challenge gender-typed career aspirations that parents tend to have for their daughters.

3.4.7. The *Sharek* **Youth Forum** is another example of a provider of career education activities which are on the way of becoming institutionalised given the success they have registered. *Sharek* has been especially successful in organising career education courses in tertiary education institutions, providing a package of 12 interactive training sessions on such topics cv-writing, communication skills, job-interview skills, creative thinking, labour law and so on. Launched at Birzeit University as part of the *Step Forward* programme, the career education curriculum has now expanded to 11 universities, and has proved so popular that in the first semester of 2008, 1500 students benefited from the programme in Ramallah alone. Furthermore, *Sharek* provides micro-credit in support of business start-up projects, but only on condition that applicants successfully

follow a career education programme that includes such issues as entrepreneurship, business planning, management, business counselling, and marketing. The learning from this programme has to be integrated in the business plan they submit to the loan approval committee.[22] Some of this learning is reinforced and rendered more powerful through work experience in industries related to the area they wish to develop.

3.4.8. **Save the Children** is also making an important contribution to career education through its *Injaz* programme. This is the Arabic regional version of *Junior Achievement*, which has been implemented in several countries internationally, including Jordan and Egypt, and which sets out to stimulate entrepreneurship among young people, often under the mentorship of business leaders from the community. In the OPT, it has started in some schools and is now being introduced to universities. In addition, Save the Children also has an interest in further developing a lifeskills approach to school-to-career programmes, which it hopes to implement in Grades 9 to 11, following its experience with piloting them in Jordan in 2006. It could thus make use of the training kit that was developed, as well as of the ToT programme for school counsellors.

3.4.9. Some career education services are offered by the **MoSA** to around a thousand 13 to 16 year-old students who drop out of the education system,[23] and who are recuperated in one of 13 vocational centres (8 in WB, and 5 in Gaza) together with 2 rehabilitation centres for young offenders. Information about each student is captured so that depending on his or her family circumstances, background, ability, interests, health and physique, he or she is directed towards the appropriate level in one of a number of vocational courses in order to improve their chances of reintegration in society. Much of the service offered in this parallel education system or 'second chance' schooling sector revolves around psychological and social counselling as well as behaviour modification, and the educational and vocational orientation is done by social counsellors (*murshid ijtima'i*) who have no specific training in career guidance, and without the use of any assessment tools (whether aptitude, ability, or vocational). Having said that, counsellors see themselves as 'defendants', and mentors of these students, follow them closely to see that they are well-integrated in the school, and checks up on their attitudes and behaviour in different contexts. Counsellors—of which there is one in each centre—are involved in challenging the pre-conceived ideas that students come with as to which work they would like to do, and encourage them to explore vocational options they had not previously considered. Part of the induction process therefore involves visits to different workshops in order to be exposed to different vocational courses ('course tasting'). They organise group and individual counselling sessions focusing largely on values, health and life issues and skills more generally. Students spend the last four months in an enterprise, and counsellors develop

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[22] The emphasis is therefore not on the fulfilment of loan criteria which are normally set by banks—such as collateral, down payments, and work experience—which young people find particularly difficult to meet.
[23] One of the reasons given for disengagement from schooling is the automatic promotion of students from grade to grade, without ensuring that the foundations have been acquired. In some countries, this aspect of educational guidance, counselling and support is also carried out by CG counsellors.

close contacts with employers, facilitating a smoother transition from school to work for these 'at risk' students. They also monitor the students during their first year of work. MoSA people we interviewed (including both the section Director and deputy director, as well as the head of one of the centres) felt the need to have more capacity in delivering career education and guidance, and wish to establish a 'vocational diagnosis unit'. One of their plans is to partner with the MoL to use their vocational assessment tools.

3.5. *Career counselling:*

3.5.1. Career counselling works at a deeper level with individuals or small groups in order to **support the process of self-understanding**, and of clarifying one's aims and aspirations in relation to interests, abilities and aptitudes. While in the past, such counselling was provided to young people in the main, the rapid changes in the labour market is leading individuals to plan for career changes at different points of their lives, so that career counselling is nowadays offered not only in educational institutions, but also by public and private Employment Services. Career counselling is generally delivered by persons who have a background in psychology, and who have been licensed to use a variety of assessment tools that support the self-discovery process, and the matching of the results with educational, training and occupational opportunities. Career counsellors are also aware of the social, gender, ethnic and other forces that shape identities and aspirations, and are trained to intervene in ways that empower individuals to make decisions and choices that work in their own interests.

3.5.2. We did not come across much in the way of career counselling services during the mission in OPT. Most educational institutions, including vocational ones) have university-trained counsellors (one counsellor for every two or three schools, depending on the institutions' student population), but interviewees generally agreed that counsellors' activities **focused exclusively on personal counselling issues**, such as relationships, behaviour modification, and coping with stress and anxiety—and dealt with 'social cases'. This is an important matter to consider, given that the official job description of the school counsellor includes responsibilities for developing the students' capacities in preparation for the world of work, as well as for assisting them in discovering their aptitudes and achieving their future goals. The use of **career assessment tools** seems to be largely restricted to the YMCA, with the branch in Bethlehem using an adapted version of the Holland Self-Directed Search as well as some home-made career exploration tests, and the Women's Training Programme using the Valpar test with about 100 students annually.

3.5.3. The **MoEHE** has directorates for Student Affairs, for Student Activities, and for School Health, but none deal with career guidance, and there are no specialists in the area. The **MoL** has a unit dedicated to career guidance and

counselling,[24] but the most experienced person, who has adapted Holland's Self-Directed Search for an OPT context, has an IT background, is largely self-taught, (with some training through *Amideast*, a placement in Tunisia's employment services, and an occasional workshop in the region). He is furthermore involved in administration rather than in service provision. Labour officers have not received training in career counselling psychology, and are not involved in career counselling sessions with young people and adults. The software that is used in labour offices includes a category titled 'career guidance and counselling', but when we visited the Ramallah section, we were told that this element in the computer programme was not operational.[25]

3.5.4. An important initiative currently being piloted by the EMIS team may have important consequences for career (and personal) counselling in the future. Currently the EMIS in integrating a very detailed template which captures **cumulative data about individual students** as they progress through the educational pathway. Information includes grades, health records, hobbies and interests, birth order in the family, parental occupations, and other relevant data. There are confidentiality issues that still need to be sorted out, but access to such information would certainly support a career counselling interview. The data could also support the plans by the Student Affairs department at the MoEHE to track student progress and flows through educational pathways.

3.6. *Employment counselling:*

3.6.1. Employment counselling is about helping young people and adults in **clarifying their immediate employment goals**, and on the basis of that develop a personal action plan (PAP) in order to make sure that the transition to employment is swift and successful. The PAP can include identifying and following training or re-training courses, learning job search and job getting skills (e.g. cv writing, interview skills), and so on. Increasingly, employment counselling includes elements of the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), which involves specially trained CG staff drawing up a profile of the skills that clients have learnt through life, which are accredited and topped up with a view to increasing their employability. In many countries, employment counselling is offered in public (and more rarely, private) employment services,[26] either by specialised staff who have been trained in counselling psychology, or more often by regular labour office staff who have had some in-service training in some of the skills required to offer personalised services. Occasionally, employment counselling is also offered by trade unions, or by specialised staff in HRD departments in enterprises. While many higher education institutions offer some of these services through their student advisory offices, others outsource the task to public employment services or private companies. Labour office staff

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[24] The unit is small and under-resourced, and staff look back at the Centre for Guidance and Counselling that had been set up in 2001 with GTZ support, and which functioned for 2 years until the Intifadah. The lack of such a Centre is an obstacle to the development of career guidance services at the MoL.

[25] The template ensured the capture of the details of the client and supervisor, the main issues raised during the counselling session, the key decisions and outcomes, and any relevant documentation.

[26] See R.G. Sultana & A.G. Watts, 2006, ibid.

in many countries are active in visiting educational institutions, supporting school-based career guidance staff in their work, as they are often considered to be better informed about the labour market.

3.6.2. As has already been noted, **labour offices** in the OPT have not developed this service yet, though there was some interest expressed at the ILO training workshop referred to in para. 1.4 above. A select group of officers from the labour offices and from the MoL's Vocational Training Centres (VTC) were trained between 2003 and 2005 with GTZ support in the use of Holland's test, but many have since changed their position in the organisation, and the few that are left have not been able to make effective use of the tool, as they do not have the skills to interpret the test and to support the user in follow-up activities. Contact between labour office staff with the public in fact seems to be rare: if the experience we had in the Ramallah office is typical, only 3 to 4 clients per month visit the office for a personalised service, though the volume tends to increases seasonally (e.g. at the end of an academic year when graduates hit the market). The majority of clients go to the labour office to register as unemployed, to get permits to work in Israel, or to access health insurance benefits. Labour office staff do not, generally speaking, visit schools or give talks to students to orient them about the world of work, nor do they receive groups of students in order to familiarise them with the services they offer. However, the head of section for guidance and counselling at the MoL delivers 2-hour workshops to parents and students on the invitation of schools and youth associations, which seem to fulfil an important need and are much sought after.

3.7. *Job placement:*

3.7.1. Job placement can sometimes have **a career guidance element embedded in it**, since it entails matching labour supply with the demand for skills. It requires a good knowledge of vacancies in the labour market, which in most countries is achieved through legal provisions that require employers to register vacancies with the Public Employment Services. In many cases, the rate of actual vacancy registration is quite low, with information about opportunities being disseminated through newspaper adverts, or through family and personal networks. Higher education institutions often have influential course-related professional networks, and support their graduates in the job search and placement process through referrals. Some of these processes take place at faculty level, while others are organised through a Student Advisory Service.

3.7.2. In the labour offices, there are **field officers** whose specific role it is to visit companies in order to get to know about vacancies. Their work, however, is hampered by a number of factors, including understaffing: to take the example of Ramallah again—which we were told was typical—there was only one field officer to network with around 15,000 companies in the area he was responsible for. In a small territory, where people know each other and where family networks are immensely important, many therefore end up relying on personal recommendations, *wasta*, and nepotism to learn about vacancies, and to clinch a job. Despite such constraints, the labour offices do have a computerised

matching system, whereby individuals bring in their cv's, and on the basis of that try to find suitable employment on the database. Vacancies are entered in a template, using Access software in a system developed for the Ministry in 2004. However, as noted earlier, data about vacancies is entered at each local labour office and is limited to jobs available in the area that the office is responsible for. The data is shared with the central Ministry, but not with other offices.

4. Considering some policy options for Career Guidance

4.1.   Having mapped the CG activities and initiatives, as well as the human and material resources available for the delivery of CG services, it is now important to consider some **policy options** with a view to making progress in the development of a CG system that is both responsive to needs and feasible, given the circumstances. The second part of the Report flows logically from the first: it is by mapping current practice and benchmarking it to some of the key trends internationally that we can build on what there already is, thus avoiding the common error of always starting from scratch. Ignoring preceding efforts is not only demotivating for those who have already invested much hard work in the field, but is also costly, both financially and in terms of the squandered opportunities to learn from experience. As with the first part of the Report, the focus is on CG in the education sector. However, references to the service in the labour market sector are also occasionally made as when CG is seen from a lifelong and lifecycle perspective, this becomes inevitable.[27] Furthermore, and as has already been noted several times in this report, **no CG system can operate without access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information**, and the best way to achieve this is through a more holistic and systems-wide approach to service design and delivery.

4.2.   *Leadership and administrative structures:*

4.2.1. If CG is to become a well-organised service, then a **unit** needs to be established, led by competent staff who have had specialised training in the field. Their first task would be to articulate an underpinning rationale and philosophy for CG in the OPT, on the basis of which goals and targets set, strategies planned, and resources developed or acquired. The unit would have to make sure that, in devising a **National Career Guidance Action Plan** for the OPT, it has consulted all the relevant ministries (e.g. MoEHE, MoL, MoSA), social partners, already existing service providers, governmental and non-governmental entities and organisations that have an interest in the field, or that can make an important contribution towards the development of a CG system (e.g. PCBS), as well as any groups that are likely to have a stake in the development of the

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[27] Most countries have realised that they need to link together the different sub-systems offering CG in schools, the labour market, in work places and in society, so that there is a seamless offer to citizens through an all-age, integrated and comprehensive CG system. This is a major challenge that only three service providers have so far met, namely those in Scotland, in Wales, and in New Zealand. In many other countries, citizens often need to get guidance as to where to go to for CG, given that the services are not branded or marketed in ways that facilitate access throughout life, when and where needed.

service, (e.g. representatives from parent and student associations). Ideally, the National Action Plan would have a broad vision for the field, adopting a lifelong perspective of CG so that it addresses services that are offered not only to students, but to adults as well. At the heart of the Action Plan would be a well-reasoned, empirically justified claim as to why CG should be considered a priority for the OPT, despite—or *because*—of the extremely challenging employment situation which it has to face. Sustainability of effort and of resourcing can only be ensured if there is an understanding of the contribution that CG can make to the national effort, while acknowledging that CG is not a panacea for all ills.

4.2.2. There are a number of options as to where the Unit could be **located**. It could form part of the already existing administrative structure at the MoEHE, given that there is a Vocational Guidance Division in the department of vocational schools in the DG TVET section of the Ministry. The problem with this is that it associates CG too narrowly with TVET, when its remit should be broader. The other option is to include CG services within the responsibility of the School Counselling section, so that CG and counselling would become part of a range of student services that are offered within schools. There are some advantages with this. Counsellors have already been trained in helping skills that CG draws upon, particularly when it comes to individual and group interviews. It may be possible, with some in-service training, to extend their role in schools to cover not just personal counselling, but educational and career guidance as well—which, as we have already noted, is actually part of their formal job description. An advantage with this option is that student services are seen in a more comprehensive manner, catering for student needs in a more integrated way. A possible problem—one that many countries that have brought together the personal and career counselling roles have experienced—is that counselling will continue to elbow out career guidance, with counsellors preferring to engage in the first activity, and less so in the second.

4.2.3. A third option is to have the CG unit established outside of the MoEHE, as an **independent service** that has strong links with the relevant ministries, particularly those of education, labour, and social affairs. There are several advantages with this option: first, the CG centre's distance from the MoEHE would signal clearly that its remit is not just education, but rather that it is concerned with bridging education and the world of work. Second, it can also more practically serve the needs of other ministries, including those of labour and of social development. Third, as a unit that is not closely tied to the MoEHE, it may be in a better position to facilitate the cross-sectoral collaboration that is needed in order to provide comprehensive CG services. Fourth, it may be a relatively easy task to find donors who are ready to fund the setting up of such a Centre, and to resource it.

4.2.4. The OPT already has a proposal for the establishment of such a national centre, and that proposal contains several important recommendations.[28] My main critical comment would be that the Centre is not enough: it needs to be complemented by a CG service within schools, as well as some kind of CG provision in labour offices. There are several countries that have set up such a **National Career Guidance Centre**. Typically, such a Centre is led by a Board made up of representatives from the social partners and different stakeholders. The operational elements are entrusted to a Director, under whose responsibility would fall a number of units, each of which is led by a Manager. These units or operational branches could focus on **career information** (with responsibilities for setting up a call centre and email guidance service, facilitating and monitoring visits to education and training institutions as well as work places, providing technical assistance on career resources, organising conferences, meetings and Job Fairs, hosting a careers library, and so on), on **research** (with responsibilities for carrying out and disseminating career-related research, transforming labour market data into user-friendly material that supports career decision-making, developing and maintaining a CG website, publishing online career information databases, purchase, develop, and adapt career assessment instruments, develop gender-sensitive CG manual), and on **quality auditing** (with responsibilities for ensuring the effective running of the Centre, assisting in the development and monitoring of the government's CG policy, developing national standards for CG material, ensuring that CG services are reaching specific target groups, and that regular review and planning arrangements are in place). If a decision is made to establish a National Career Guidance Centre, careful consideration should be given to its location in order to enhance access in a situation where mobility is often restricted. While many services can be delivered by distance and on-line, the digital divide between different groups raises equity issues which need to be taken into account, and having one or more networked outreach offices—especially in Gaza—would be helpful, and probably necessary. These outreach offices could be mobile, moving from one location to another according to a fixed schedule, much in the same way as mobile libraries do. One of the Centre's tasks would be to network with other similar Centres that are being established in the region (e.g. in Syria and UAE, and possibly Jordan and Egypt) and beyond. Support for technical and capacity-building purposes could be sought from international organisations.[29]

4.2.5. Needless to say, there are **capacity building** implications for whichever of the options that the OPT decides to go for, given that policy leadership requires the input of persons who have specialist knowledge in the field. An investment could be made in some of the persons who have already shown a commitment

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[28] Proposal for the Establishment of a National Center for Vocational Counseling and Guidance (NCVCG), Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Directorate General of TVET, Proposal code: TVET.SG/GRL/Ss,TCs/05.0024.(02)

[29] A potential source of support is the European Training Foundation which, as a European Union agency, and thanks to its Mediterranean Education, Training and Employment initiative, has built up knowledge and expertise in the field of CG. It has managed a network of CG providers in the MEDA region, and has worked closely with several EU member state CG providers, and with European and international CG organizations. For further information, project outcomes and reports, see www.meda-ete.net

to the field, but who have had few if any opportunities to obtain the required training. A small group of 3 to 5 persons, for instance, could be sent to study overseas on scholarship—possibly including a placement period in a CG service—so that within a year they will have obtained the necessary background that is needed to run a CG unit, wherever the OPT decides to place it. Another option would be to engage a consultant to work with one or possibly more universities, so that they develop the necessary training to serve the needs of both the central unit, and those delivering CG in schools and labour offices. A key issue here would be to develop the profile of competences that CG workers would need to master.[30]

4.3. *Career Guidance services in education settings:*

4.3.1. An important preamble here is that the school system as it presently operates is **hostile to the notion of choice**, and is therefore not supportive of CG, or of a fundamental principle underlying CG, namely that of opening up options for young people. The education system is based on rigid tracking, with students being channelled within and between institutions according to results in academic examinations. There is little if any possibility of transfer between pathways, so that students quickly find themselves locked into subject and course routes that they have not necessarily chosen. Not only are choices made *for* the individual by the way the system operates, but options are also determined by family influence and pressure, and by what is considered to be gender-appropriate culturally. If CG is to have a meaningful place in schools in the OPT, the project has to be addressed **systemically**, i.e. it needs to take into account the way the service is supported (or obstructed) by wider institutional structures and cultures, and to reform them accordingly.

4.3.2. While the role of the Career Guidance Centre would be to provide policy vision and leadership, to develop the information, materials and resources in support of CG service delivery, and to organise training, **specialised CG staff** would be working in schools at all levels in order to support students. Such support can be given in and through the curriculum, through extra-curricular activities, and through individual and group interviews, as indicated in Part One of this report. A series of key decisions from among a number of alternatives would need to be made here. First, there is the option of having CG services within schools delivered by **counsellors**. This would entail a revision of their current role description in order to strengthen the CG element, and would also require counsellors to receive further specialised training. Depending on resources and policy preferences, a separate CG worker category could be established, following a pre-set ratio (e.g. 1 CG consultant for each 300 students). The role description of the **CG adviser** or **CG consultant** could include teaching or co-teaching the school-to-work curriculum in the range of subjects that this features in, running CG seminars with students and parents, holding CG sessions with individuals and groups, organising visits to educational institutions and work

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[30] An example of a comprehensive list of such competences is the one developed by the *International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance* (IAEVG). See http://www.iaevg.org/iaevg/nav.cfm?lang=2&menu=1&submenu=5

places, as well as work shadowing and work experience schemes, liaising and networking with employers, inviting alumni and employers to the school, carrying out tracer studies, working with employers and NGOs in running such entrepreneurship schemes as Young Achievement, and so on. The CG consultant would be a fully-fledged member of the school staff team, working closely with all colleagues, and especially with those delivering other student services. He or she would provide services throughout the student's passage through school, identifying key transition points that would deserve more focused and specialised attention. CG consultants would also have an important role to play in working with students who are at risk of disengaging with schooling.

4.3.3. The CG curriculum—which can be taught separately or in an integrated manner—needs to be clearly identified for the different levels and ages of students. There is no need to start from scratch here, since the range of key learning goals in relation to **career management skills** has been developed by several countries. The Canadian Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, for instance, together with the resource pack that goes along with it, is particularly helpful as a guide to the OPT, though it would of course have to be modified and adapted in response to local realities and needs. England has also developed a National Framework for careers education and guidance for those aged 11-19, as has Ireland. [31]

4.3.4. Ideally, each school would have a **CG resource room**, which would have career-related information on display, and at least one computer terminal that is linked to the CG Centre, providing access to resources that are pre-packaged by the team at the Centre or that are readily available through the internet. The layout and furniture in the room would facilitate both individual and group guidance sessions, and students would have been familiarised with the services on offer through an orientation visit, where they would also learn how individual or group appointments can be made with the CG consultant.

4.3.5. As far as possible, **regular teachers** should also be enrolled in delivering the school-to-work curriculum, as well as curricular elements of CG. This can be done in different ways, through a number of curricular areas. The main issue here is that such teachers need to work closely with the CG consultant/s in the school, possibly inviting him or her into the classroom for specific sessions, and working collaboratively in the development of curricular material. If this option is adopted, then teachers should receive some training in this area either through a short course introduced at the initial training period, or offered as a module through in-service training.

4.3.6. A special note needs to be made about the importance of CG consultants developing a programme for **parents**. The latter clearly have a great deal of

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[31] For details regarding the Canadian initiative, see http://www.blueprint4life.ca/ The English CG national frameworks can be accessed at http://www.cegnet.co.uk/resource/content/files/317.doc For the Irish Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland, see www.nationalguidancefourm.ie

influence on the choices that students make, and indeed the pressure they place on their children is often overwhelming and not necessarily beneficial. It is therefore critical that CG staff work closely with parents, helping them better understand the range of educational and occupational options that are available, as well as learn how they can support their children in making the right choices. Much here can be learnt from the experience that the YMCA has in running family workshops through its Women's Training Programme.

4.3.7. In principle, many of these structures, processes and programmes can be adapted to other educational institutions in the **higher education sector**. There is now much experience internationally in the setting up of **Student Advisory Services** in universities and vocational/community colleges, and several models that can be tested for their relevance for the OPT context. Key issues here would be integrating, supporting and consolidating the good work that has already been done by the likes of *Sharek*, and ensuring that such initiatives become sustainable through institutionalisation. Decisions would have to be made as to which roles are best handled by the National Guidance Centre (e.g. data collection, tracer studies, dissemination of information, occupational profiles, etc), and which are best left to individual or groups of higher education institutions (e.g. graduate e-portfolios with cv's that can be accessed by employers). One could easily imagine synergies between higher education Career Centres, for instance, with joint programme development in a range of areas. Such cooperation would facilitate the desire that many have expressed in the OPT for a more flexible higher education system that supports student transfer between vocational and university routes.

4.3.8. CG consultants at all levels of the system would need to receive **specialised training** in order to fulfil all these roles. Ideally, higher education institutions would be encouraged to submit a proposal to the government for funding that would help them develop a tailor-made course for CG consultants. The government can then choose the most suitable offer on the basis of competitive bidding, and fund capacity building within the selected institutional department so that quality training is on offer, on either part-time or full-time basis, or both. One of the criteria in choosing from among the offers would be the ability that the higher education institution has on drawing and building on previous training efforts, including those that took place within the context of the YMCA's Women's Training Programme. The OECD review of CG has suggested that there is much to be gained if all those who provide CG services—whether in the education or labour market sector—follow the same course of studies, which would be organised in such a way as to have a compulsory core set of modules, with elective specialised modules depending on the sector that the graduates intend to work in. In the OPT, this would mean that staff from the MoEHE, MoL, the MoSA, the various youth organisations and civil societies, and persons from HRD departments in industry, would be enrolled in the same course and qualify for the same certificate, thus facilitating the development of more seamless services and improved cross-sectoral collaboration. Some of these electives could also focus on the skills needed to deliver CG to special target groups, such as persons with disability, long-term

unemployed, those seeking employment outside of the OPT, and so on. Overall, the emphasis would be on finding flexible and innovative ways of delivering services to reflect the different needs and circumstances of diverse groups. The research and innovation activities carried out in this area, as in others, could support and contribute to the work done by the research section of the National Career Guidance Centre, with whom the higher educational institution would work closely. Trainee projects could similarly respond to some of the research needs of the Centre.

4.4. *Career Guidance services in labour offices:*

4.4.1. A most positive and promising factor here is the increasing interest of the Ministry of Labour in the possibility of offering more personalised services to the unemployed in the OPT. There are some resources here, but the initiatives are few and far between, and it would seem to me that much is to be gained if the relevant MoL department or unit collaborates closely with the MoEHE and other players with experience in CG service delivery in order to draw inspiration and sustenance from already-existing efforts, and to develop on these within the context of a strong partnership under the auspices of the National Career Guidance Centre. **Priorities for the MoL** are a clear sense of vision and direction about the relevance or otherwise of CG as part of a set of services offered by labour offices, capacity-building, and a commitment to being part of a CG system that delivers CG services as a coordinated network. There are a number of key areas in CG that could be spear-headed by the MoL, including the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). This is a particularly promising role given that several Palestinians have developed competences through their engagement in the informal labour market, and that if these skills could be certified, the opportunities for employment in the formal sector could be substantially increased.

4.5. *Career guidance in other settings:*

4.5.1. In many ways, the **NGO sector**—through the activities of such organisations as the YMCA and *Sharek*—have been at the forefront of innovation and service provision in the OPT. Their initiatives should be acknowledged, encouraged and supported, and their competence and experience drawn upon in the development and extension of services. Care must be taken so that government and development partner initiatives do not undermine the good work already being done by NGO's, but rather that they ensure that the latter's efforts are rendered more sustainable. One of the ways this could be done is through **outsourcing** aspects of the CG services to NGO's. This not only gives the government reprieve from having to develop several aspects of a service in a short period of time, but in addition it draws on the strengths of those who have already been active in the field and who have built up a solid reputation with client groups. NGO's are often more grass-roots based, closer to the communities that they operate in, and can be more flexible and more innovative in responding to their needs. The *Sharek* approach is a case in point, with youths developing services that have the look, feel, and image that render their CG programmes attractive to young people. Needless to say, any public money that

is given to NGO's has to be audited in relation to agreed-to plans and outcomes that fit in within the overall goals articulated in the national CG Action Plan.

5. Next steps

5.1. There are of course many ways in which to embark on the next steps, both in choosing from among the policy options indicated above, and in implementing them. Much depends on the extent to which the different Ministries consider CG to be an important part of the overall strategy for their respective sectors. Much also depends on the commitment that the different parties have to working together in order to pool resources, to learn from each others' experiences, and to **develop a CG system that is holistic, integrated, and responsive** to the specific needs of Palestinians as they make their way through the various available pathways in education, training and employment at various stages of their life. In this context, it seems to me to be appropriate to highlight the **first two steps** that, if embarked on, can stimulate the development of a system of provision over the coming 2 to 3 years.

5.2. The first important step is the establishment of a **National Task Force for Career Guidance** (NTFCG) that brings together one key representative from the relevant ministries (notably the MoEHE, the MoL, but possibly also the MoSA and the MoWA), together with representatives from the social partners, from the NGO sector active in the CG field (e.g. YMCA, Sharek), from UNRWA, from the donor community that has a special interest in the field (e.g. UNECSO, ILO, GTZ, Save the Children), and from the higher education sector. The challenge here would be to have a group that is both representative of the relevant stakeholders and key players, while remaining small enough to be effective. Institutionally, the NTFCG would stand *outside* the Ministries, but would be *accountable* to them, reporting progress achieved at regular intervals. At this stage, two key resources should be foreseen: a **secretariat** and a **CG specialist**. The latter should possibly be from the region, and would attend meetings to provide the technical capacity that may be missing and the advice which would be critically needed when making strategic decisions about the field. Depending on the number of people involved in the Task Force, a decision could be made to have a **rotating chairperson**, in order to better acknowledge the fact that CG is a cross-sectoral service.

The Task Force would have between 6 to 12 months in which to:

5.2.1. Carefully **examine the policy options** presented in this Report, and consider others that its members may wish to propose. It is crucial that in this exercise, CG is not considered separately from the overall strategies that have been developed or are being developed in the education, training and labour market sectors, as otherwise contradictions between different elements of the system will arise. As has been noted in this Report, one cannot, for instance, introduce CG without also paying attention to designing flexible flows through pathways in education and training in ways that increase choices and open up options for individuals. Neither can one encourage entrepreneurship through CG programmes, when the environment is hostile to the setting up of micro-

enterprises, or when banks impose credit conditions that most young people find impossible to meet.

5.2.2. Decide which of the options proposed in this Report are **the most feasible** in the OPT context. Costs are obviously an issue, though there are many initiatives that can be undertaken with minimal funding—including, for instance, improving the career education component in schools. A number of strategic decisions will have to be made, including whether the Task Force should initially focus solely on CG in the education and TVET sector, or whether it should include the development of CG services for unemployed youths and adults as well. Other strategic decisions are likely to be needed in order to provide the **appropriate policy framework** on the basis of which a specific action plan can be articulated. Needless to say, the Task Force's policy recommendations will have to be approved by the relevant Ministries. However, the Task Force can take a leading role in identifying the **key principles** that should inform CG policy development, such as transparency and accessibility of information, services tailored to the specific needs of particular groups, gender-sensitivity in the provision of career information and guidance, and so on. It is here being suggested that the Task Force's proposed policy framework, the underpinning principles, as well as its Action Plan (see para. 5.2.3. below) would be presented within 6 to 12 months to the relevant authorities for validation and endorsement, as well as to a broader forum where different Ministries, NGOs, donors and international agencies would commit themselves to supporting specific aspects of the overall initiative.

5.2.3. Establish an **Action Plan** that translates policies and principles into realisable goals. Such an Action Plan would:
[a] Identify the key **strategic priorities** that need to be addressed in the short, medium and long term. Among the most important that need to be tackled immediately are the setting up of a labour market information system; the training of a cadre of CG specialists; and the generation of a wider forum for policy debate about the role that CG can play in the development of an overarching HRD policy for the OPT.

[b] Identify the **elements of CG service** that are particularly relevant to the OPT (e.g. CG for employment in the region and internationally; development of entrepreneurial skills in young people and the unemployed) and that should inform systems development.

[c] Indicate **who** from among the players active in the CG field has the **capacity** and **resources** to take responsibility for addressing specific priorities (e.g. ILO, GTZ and MoL in developing the LMIS; a higher education institution, possibly collaborating with an EU or US university, developing a training course for CG specialists, or extending the training of counsellors to include CG).

[d] Articulate clear **terms of reference**, including delivery deadlines, for the co-operating and implementing partners and agencies.

[e] Identify potential regional and international **resource sources** that would support and co-fund implementation.

5.2.4. Design and oversee the establishment of a **National Career Guidance Centre (NCGC)**. The NTFCG would constitute the Board of Directors of the Centre, whose Director would be integrated as a Board member on his or her appointment. The NCGC would have the responsibility to implement specific aspects of the Action Plan developed by the NTFCG, and would be accountable to the Task Force in all matters.

5.3. A second important step is the setting up of a **National Career Guidance Centre**. This would have the pivotal role of being the **reference point** for much of the activity related to CG. It must be designed in such a way as to *sustain* and *support*, rather than supplant important CG initiatives and services that are already on offer in the OPT, and which have been mapped out in this Report.

5.3.1. Para. 4.2.4. makes a suggestion as to the **Units or divisions** that could be set up within the NCGC, which would cater not only for the delivery of some CG services, but also for the translation of labour market data into information that can guide career decision-making; for the articulation of CG delivery models that are suitable for the OPT; for the purchase, adaptation and development of CG resources and materials; for the continued professional development of CG staff; for the standards required of CG providers; and for research, monitoring and quality auditing.

5.3.2. It is critical that **appropriately trained persons** are appointed to lead each Unit in order to make sure that services are set up on a sound footing. While comprehensively trained staff are not available in the OPT at the moment, some have developed sufficient experience and skill to be able to reach required competence levels with some top-up training abroad, and if such an investment is made without too much delay, would be available to take up responsibilities within a year. Some of the outputs expected from the NCGC (e.g. school-to-work curriculum and resources, CG materials, tracer studies and other research, organisation of career fairs, publication of education and training directories, etc) could be outsourced to NGOs, agencies and institutions that are already active in the field, thus sustaining their input, rendering it more sustainable, and taking their good practice to scale.

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Programme

Sunday, 31 August 2008
Ramallah

09:00-10:00	Meeting with Minister of Education and Higher Education Ms Lamis M. Alami, with DG TVET (Mr Ziad Jweiles) & Assistant Deputy Minister for Planning & Development (Mr Basri Saleh)
10:00-12:00	Meeting with DG TVET (Mr Ziad Jweiles), with Director of Vocational Schools Department (Mr Osama Eshtayeh), Deputy DG of TVET (Mr. Nasser Awad)& Head of TVET Division (Mr. Raeef Shabaneh)
12:00-13:00	Meeting with DG Planning (Mr Saadeh Y. Hammoodeh) and three IT persons from the EMIS team at the MOEHE
13:30-15:00	Visit to the Labour Office in Ramallah: interviews with the Deputy Director, and with the Director of the Employment Section.

Monday, 1 September 2008
Ramallah

08:15-09:15	Meeting with Ministry of Social Affairs Ms. Maisun Wihaidi, Deputy, and head of a Vocational centre
09:30-11:00	Meeting with Ministry of Women's Affairs Ms. Fatinah Al-Wathaefi DG Planning and Policies, Ms Fatima Botmeh, Mr Mashour Ibssisi
11:30-13:00	Meeting with Ministry of Labour Mr. Zbeidi Hamayel (VG expert), Mr. Samer Salameh DG Voc Training, DG International affairs, Mr. Asef Asa'd

Jerusalem

14:00-15:30	Meeting with Norwegian Rep. Office Ms. Raheek Rinawi, Ms. Signe Marie Breivik

Tuesday, 2 September 2008
Hebron

12:30-13:15	Focus group with Agriculture Vocational School students in Doura (Hebron)
13:15-14:00	Focus group with Agriculture Vocational College students in Doura (Hebron)

Jerusalem

15:00-16:00	Meeting with the Office of the Quartet Representative Ms. Henriette Kolb
16:30-17.30	Meeting with Belgian Technical Cooperation Mr. Luc Laloo, Resident Representative

Wednesday 3 September 2008
Ramallah

09:00-10:00	Meeting with UNRWA Mr. Muhannad Beides, Mr. Wahid Jubran
10:30-11:30	Mr Khalid Tahhan – UNRWA Placement & CG Officer
12:00-13:30	Meeting with GTZ Nr Volke Ihde VET & LM Programme Team Leader Mr. Mohammad Malki, TVET Project Advisor

14:00-15:00   Mr Hisham Kuhail, TVET expert
Thursday 4 September 2008
Ramallah
08:30-09:30   Meeting with Birzeit Continuing Education Center
                   Ms. Naimeh Baidoun, Mr Marwan Tarazi, and Mr Nedal Zahran
Beit Sahour
10:30-11:30   Meeting with YMCA Biet Sahour
                   Mr Ramadan Daoud
Ramallah
13:30-14:45   Meeting with Sharek Youth Forum
                   Mr Yousef Ghosheh, Mr Hazem AbuHelal
19:00-20:30   Mr Mazen Hashweh, TVET expert
                   Mr Maher Hashweh, Dean, Birzeit University

Friday 5 September 2008
Jerusalem
10:00-11:00   Meeting with ILO
                   Mr. Munir Kleibo, Ms. Rasha El-Shurafa
13:00-14:30   Meeting with Save the Children
                   Mr David Bourns (Country Director), Mr Khalid Nabris (Deputy
                   Director)

Monday 13 October 2008
Ramallah
09:00-12:00   Ramallah Men's Technical College

Career Guidance reports available on the Internet

Hansen, E. **(2006)** *Career Guidance. A Resource Handbook for Low- and Middle-Income Countries.* Geneva: ILO.
[http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/career/download/career_guidance.pdf].

Sultana, R.G. (2008) *From Policy to Practice: A Systemic Change to Lifelong Guidance in Europe.* Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP. [also published in French and German].
[http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/505/5182_en.pdf].

Sultana, R.G. and Watts, A.G. **(2007)** *Career Guidance in the Mediterranean.* Turin: European Training Foundation.
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[http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/43062485065B0E82C1257020002FEB25/$File/ENL-Career%20guidance-0703_EN.pdf]

Watts, A. G., & Fretwell, D. H. **(2004)** *Public Policies for Career Development: Policy Strategies for Designing Career Information and Guidance Systems in Middle-income and Transition Economies.* Washington, DC: The World Bank.
[http://www1.worldbank.org/education/lifelong_learning/publications/PublicPolicy_CareerDev.pdf].