

Counselling and Career Education in Cyprus

**An External Evaluation of the
Counselling and Career Education Service of the
Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture**

Prepared for the Minister of Education and Culture

Scientific Evaluation Committee:

**Professor Stelios Georgiou, University of Cyprus (Chair)
Professor Despina Sidiropoulou, University of Athens, Greece
Professor Ronald Sultana, University of Malta
Professor A.G. Watts, NICEC, UK (Secretary)**

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Executive Summary

The Counselling and Career Guidance Service in Cyprus has considerable **strengths**:

- It is widely valued by students and their parents, by school principals and other teachers, by external agencies, and by the community as a whole.
- It is strongly professional, with staff who are unusually well qualified by international standards.

These strengths are currently balanced by two main **weaknesses**:

- The widespread sense of role overload. Counsellors do not have sufficient time for the tasks they are given, and this had an impact on the quality of their work, sometimes in relation to issues of considerable significance for students and/or for the school. The boundaries of their work are not defined with sufficient clarity to enable them to resist pressures from school principals and other teachers to perform tasks that should be outside their remit.
- There is evidence of ineffective management of resources within the service. Insufficient use appears to be made of the professionalism of the counsellors in schools to develop resources and innovative practices that might be of benefit to the service as a whole. Limited use has been made of the potential of new technologies to enhance access to services and the quality of services.

The **opportunities** for the service include:

- The changes that are taking place in schools, including moves towards a curriculum focused more on students' needs, and encouragement for more initiatives on the part of teachers within schools.
- The growing recognition of the need for lifelong access to guidance in support of lifelong learning, stimulated in part by Cyprus's participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network.

The main **threat** is:

- The impact on public expenditure of the current economic recession, which may limit the resources available for improving the service.

In addition, the service is currently characterised by three '**creative ambiguities**':

- Whether counsellors based in schools are being managed by the service, or by the school principal.
- Whether the counsellors are teachers, or a separate profession.
- The extent to which the core of their work is concerned with career guidance or with personal counselling.

In some respects, these ambiguities are strengths; in others, they are the sources of some of the difficulties being experienced within the service.

In the light of our review, we advocate that **priority** should be given to seven recommendations:

- That the boundaries of the counsellor's role be clarified, so that they are not expected to undertake tasks which are not relevant to this role and do not make use of their professional expertise.
- That the existing quota system be replaced by a more simple formula based on a norm of at least one counsellor for each gymnasium and at least two for each lyceum and vocational school. A threshold could be adopted to provide for exceptions in the case of very small schools, but these should be kept to a minimum. Extra resources should continue to be allocated to very large schools, and to schools in zones of educational priority (ZEP).
- That the roles of the two counsellors in each lyceum and vocational school should be distinguished, but with some overlap between them, within the framework of a manual specifying the tasks that need to be completed.
- That a further course in career education be introduced in the first term of the lyceum and vocational school, to build upon the groundwork established in the final year of the gymnasium; and that the latter course be moved to later in the school year.
- That significant priority be given to using ICT to improve the quality of the CCES's services both within schools and to the general public.
- That the regional centres in future be staffed on a full-time basis, and that the services offered to the general public be promoted more actively.
- That our report be used by the new National Forum on Guidance as a springboard for developing a lifelong guidance strategy for Cyprus, perhaps through a Task Force set up by the relevant ministries to work alongside the Forum.

In addition, we make 21 **other recommendations**:

- That entry to the role of school counsellor in future be open to graduates with a first degree in any subject, so long as they have had an appropriate training in counselling and career education.
- That consideration be given to setting up a postgraduate training programme in counselling and career education at a university in Cyprus.
- That a research unit be established alongside the proposed training programme.
- That the content of the teacher training programme as provided to future school counsellors be reviewed to make it more appropriate to their distinctive needs.
- That provision be made to provide special support to new counsellors for at least their first two years in post.
- That the textbook for the careers education and social education course be updated, extended to include a wider variety of exercises involving group work, and accompanied by a teacher's handbook.

- That possibilities for using some form of student assessment, separate from student grades, be explored.
- That further career education provision be built into the second year of the lyceum, linked to the work-experience programme.
- That ways be explored of introducing a more developmental approach to career and social education that would build throughout secondary education.
- That counsellors give more attention to helping teachers in general, and class teachers in particular, in offering helping relationships to students.
- That training be provided to school principals on how they can lead and support the design and implementation of school guidance programmes, with the counsellor as a key resource but not as the sole deliverer.
- That classroom teachers have some regular timetabled periods to be with their class groups.
- That a code of ethics be developed to support the work of counsellors.
- That guidelines be laid down for the minimum standards required for office accommodation to enable counsellors to do their distinctive work efficiently and for students to have ready access to career information resources within the school.
- That information resources be developed showing the range of occupations to which particular education pathways might lead.
- That a review be undertaken of the role of psychometric tests and also of other tools (e.g. portfolios) in the CCES.
- That in future the Director of the service should be someone with experience directly related to counselling and career education.
- That a system of clinical supervision be introduced to support school counsellors.
- That there be regular internal evaluations of the service from the perspectives of students, parents, external agencies, employers, and the counsellors themselves.
- That the CCES be recognised as having a transversal cross-sectoral relevance across the Ministry of Education and Culture as a whole.
- That stronger links be established between CCES and the Department of Labour.

Preface

This report has been prepared in response to an invitation from the Minister of Education and Culture, Dr Andreas Demetriou, to conduct an external evaluation of the Ministry's Counselling and Career Education Service. It is one of a series of evaluations he has commissioned of various aspects of the Ministry's work.

Our work was carried out during the first week of February 2010. Our itinerary is outlined in an Annex to the report. It included meetings with the Minister and Permanent Secretary, with the Head of the Middle Education Department, with the Director of the Service, and with the Directors of related services within the Ministry, including the Educational Psychology Department, the Educational Research and Evaluation Centre, and the Examination Department, as well as with a special education representative. We also had meetings with key staff in the Pedagogical Institute and in the Department of Labour within the Ministry of Employment and Social Insurance. In addition, we met representatives of the organisations of parents and of school principals, and of the Association of School Counsellors. Finally, we visited a lyceum and a gymnasium.

In addition to our meetings and visits, we had access to a range of reports and other documentation. Statistics cited in this report have been provided to us by the Ministry except where stated otherwise.

We are most grateful to the various people we met, for sharing their information and their perspectives on the service. We are particularly grateful to Antonis Antoniou, for organising the programme and for his general support throughout the evaluation process.

We commend our report and its recommendations to the Minister and his colleagues, and we hope that it will contribute to the further strengthening of the service.

Stelios Georgiou
Despina Sidiropoulou
Ronald Sultana
Tony Watts

1. History and Structure of the Service

History

1.1 Guidance and counselling services were first introduced into state schools in Cyprus in 1964/65 as a pilot scheme in 27 secondary schools, based broadly on the American model.¹ Teachers were appointed as teacher-counsellors, and fortnightly in-service seminars were organised to provide them with training in guidance and counselling. But most were expected to perform their new additional duties on top of a full teaching load.

1.2 In 1991 the basis of what is now the Counselling and Career Education Service (CCES) was established within the Ministry of Education and Culture, and qualified counsellors began to be employed by the Ministry. A programme to train around 15 school counsellors was run for a year by an American professor under the Fulbright programme, but subsequently all of the counsellors have been trained overseas, in the UK or USA.

1.3 The CCES currently comprises 119 school counsellors, 7 of whom are based in the central offices and the rest spread across the 123 secondary schools under the Ministry's jurisdiction. Of these, 69% are women: a little higher than for secondary teachers as a whole (for whom the figure is 60%).² Of those in schools, a dozen or so have become school principals or assistant principals, and so spend only a small proportion of their time on guidance and counselling tasks; others cover more than one school. Thus only 49 of the 123 schools have a full-time counsellor (though none of the counsellors does any conventional subject teaching). The staff in the central offices carry out administrative tasks, and also offer a guidance and counselling service available to the general public.

1.4 While there has been some development within the model established in 1991, there has been no significant review of the principles on which the CCES is based, in the light of the issues which have emerged in its operation. This has produced a sense of stagnation. Our review is accordingly timely, particularly since it takes place at a time when other changes are occurring within the education system in Cyprus that could have implications for the service. These include moves towards a curriculum focused more on students' needs, likely changes in the option structure within lyceums, possible merging of lyceums and vocational schools, and moves to encourage more initiative on the part of teachers within schools.

¹ Sophocleous, C. (2002). *Development and Management of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Secondary Schools*. PhD thesis, University of Manchester.

² It thus seems that the feminisation of the counselling and career education labour force has been less marked than in some other European countries. Cf. Sultana, R.G. (2004). *Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society*, p.76. Thessaloniki: Cedefop.

1.5 It is important to note that the service does not operate in the northern part of Cyprus, covering nearly a quarter of the island's population, where many of its Turkish community are based: this is under the control of a separate administration, the legitimacy of which is contested by the Cypriot Government. In addition, within the main part of the island, the service does not operate directly in the private schools, which cater for around 14% of the secondary-school population. Many of these schools have counselling and career education services, but these are outside the Ministry's jurisdiction. Private-school students may however visit the CCES central services, and their teachers may attend the staff-development events run by the Ministry.

Aims and activities of the service

1.6 The main stated **goal** of the CCES is to assist students and other young people to meet the general goals of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which include:

- The healthy development of the students' personalities.
- The development of problem-solving skills so as to deal effectively with their personal, educational, professional and social problems.

More specifically, the goal of the service is defined as being 'to provide specialised assistance to students and youngsters through counselling and guidance in order to deal effectively with their personal, educational, career and social problems'. Emphasis is placed on:

- Self-knowledge.
- Self-approval and self-confidence.
- Self-actualisation.
- Decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Healthy adjustment to the school and social environment.
- Critical thinking and effective use of appropriate information.³

1.7 In practice, the school counsellors spend much of their time **working with individuals or small groups of students** (normally 2-4), both through timetabled sessions during class periods (usually around 45 minutes) or by being available for shorter sessions during breaks; sometimes students may be accompanied by their parents. These sessions can cover a wide range of issues, ranging from guidance on educational and career choices (sometimes using psychometric tests), through disciplinary and relationship issues, to issues like drugs and sexual/psychological abuse.

1.8 In addition to their work with individual students, the counsellors in the gymnasium (middle school) teach **courses** on career education and social education in the early part of the final year; while in the lyceum (upper school), they support an assistant

³ Ministry of Education and Culture (2009). *Counselling and Careers Education Service in Cyprus*, pp.2, 4-5. Nicosia: MEC.

principal in organising a one-week **work-experience programme** in the second year⁴. They periodically visit classes to give **talks** on educational options and the like, and organise **visits** to post-school education institutions. They also maintain a **careers library** (usually in their offices).

1.9 A substantial part of the counsellors' work is devoted to **liaising with other teachers, with parents and with a range of external services**, including educational and clinical psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and the police, in relation to the problems of particular students. In the case of students with special needs in terms of physical disabilities or learning difficulties – where the Ministry's policy is now to include them in mainstream secondary education wherever possible – the counsellor plays a central role (alongside an assistant principal) in convening case conferences to determine an action plan for addressing their distinctive needs within the school: these may involve various teachers, external agencies, and parents. The same approach is now also often used for students with literacy problems or exhibiting challenging behaviour within the school. In some schools, we were told, there might be up to 150 students requiring this kind of approach; in others, only 20 or 30. In the former, such work might now take up to half of a counsellor's time. The growth of this work since the service was established has not been accompanied by any growth in the number of counsellors, and has accordingly been at the expense of other core tasks.

1.10 Work with parents may include parents' attendance at interviews with their children, and parents' evenings relating to educational choices and the like. Some counsellors also run workshops for parents on topics like parent-child relationships. Through such means, they are acting as an important link between the home and the school.

1.11 Alongside their guidance and counselling work, the counsellors undertake a variety of **administrative tasks**. These include maintaining student records for guidance purposes; they also include, for example, checking application forms and writing reference letters for overseas universities (which can take up a lot of time in lyceums). Some of these tasks are directly related to and support their guidance and counselling work, but some (e.g. invigilation and break duties) clearly do not, while others are questionable in this respect (writing references, for example, might arguably be done by class teachers). Because the counsellors are not timetabled for regular work with classes, it seems that school principals tend at times to regard them as being available for tasks which bear little relationship to their professional role or their professional skills.

1.12 The school counsellors are supported by a **small central team** based at the Ministry of Education and Culture. This currently comprises seven staff members. With the exception of the Director of the service, all are trained counsellors, who may spend up to eight years in the Ministry before returning to school work. The various Directors of the service in recent years have not had any professional background in the field of guidance and counselling: they have been appointed because of their seniority within the education service as a whole.

⁴ In the course of which, students observe various work tasks and may be assigned some of them.

1.13 The central team provides **support** to the counsellors in schools in five main respects:

- Developing publications and other resources (e.g. a film on the world of work).
- Developing and maintaining the service's web pages within the Ministry's website.
- Organising staff development courses and conferences on particular topics.
- Organising careers fairs, where universities, colleges, professional associations and employers are invited to exhibit the opportunities they offer.
- Responding to queries and requests.

1.14 In addition to their support work, the counsellors in the central team also spend over half of their time providing a **direct guidance and counselling service** to young people and their parents. These may include those who have left school, those who are in post-school educational institutions with limited services of their own, or those who prefer – for whatever reason – to go to an external service rather than to one within the school or other institution where they are based. During 2008/09, 1,675 people were seen on this basis, of whom 26% were secondary education students, 32% secondary education graduates, 27% university students, and 15% working.⁵

1.15 In the past this service has been offered mainly in Nicosia, but recently a pilot programme has been run in three regional centres (in Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos) under which a service is available to the general public, staffed by the central team on a day per week. This service is not yet widely publicised, and the take-up has accordingly been limited. It is however a potentially very significant development, which we will discuss further in Section 8.

⁵ In addition to these, it should be noted that a counselling service is also provided in the evening gymnasiums, which cater for students aged 20 above who have failed to complete their secondary education.

2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats – and Creative Ambiguities

SWOT analysis

2.1 The main **strengths** of the CCES, in our view, are two-fold:

- The service is **widely valued** by students and their parents, by school principals and other teachers, by external agencies, and by the community as a whole. There are of course criticisms of its limitations, and sometimes of its failings. But in our meetings with representatives of several of these groups (see Annex), all were predominantly very positive about the service it provides and the role it plays, both for individuals, and in enabling the smooth running of the middle and upper schools.
- The service is strongly **professional**. In addition to their first degree, the counsellors all have a postgraduate diploma or master's degree in guidance and/or counselling from an American or British university, plus a year's teacher training within Cyprus. On top of this, all have engaged in a variety of continuing professional development activities, provided as part of the service's activities. This represents, by international standards, an unusually strong professional base.

2.2 These strengths are currently balanced by two main **weaknesses**:

- The widespread sense of **role overload**. All of the counsellors to whom we spoke complained about the range and extent of the work they were expected to do. They felt that they did not have sufficient time for the tasks they were given, and that this had an impact on the quality of their work, sometimes in relation to issues of considerable significance for students and/or for the school. They also felt that the boundaries of their work were not defined with sufficient clarity to enable them to resist pressures from school principals and other teachers to perform tasks that should have been outside their remit.
- There is also, in our view, evidence of **ineffective management of resources** within the service. Insufficient use appears to be made of the professionalism of the counsellors in schools to develop resources and innovative practices that might be of benefit to the service as a whole. Limited use has been made of the potential of new technologies to enhance access to services and the quality of services.

2.3 The **opportunities** for the service include:

- The changes that are taking place in schools, including moves towards a curriculum focused more on students' needs, and encouragement for more initiative on the part of teachers within schools.

- The growing recognition of the need for lifelong access to guidance in support of lifelong learning, stimulated in part by Cyprus's participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network.

2.4 The main **threat** is:

- The impact on public expenditure of the current economic recession, which may limit the resources available for improving the service.

Creative ambiguities

2.5 In addition, we consider that the service is currently characterised by three 'creative ambiguities'. In some respects, these are strengths; in others, they are the sources of some of the difficulties being experienced within the service.

2.6 The first is the ambiguity concerning whether counsellors based in schools are being managed by the service or by the school principal. In many respects their work is defined by, and accountable to, the head of the service, based within the Ministry. But they are also, as part of the school staff, accountable to the school principal. The final item in their list of duties and responsibilities obliges them to perform 'any other duties that are assigned to him/her'. It is unclear whether this refers to duties assigned by the Director or by the school principal. This is a particularly important issue in the case of the counsellors because the pattern of their work is so different from that of other teachers in the school. Being viewed as part of the school staff is of value in helping them to be viewed as part of the staff community. But it can leave them exposed to feeling under pressure to accept tasks that are deflections from their remit.

2.7 This is linked to the second ambiguity, which is whether or not the counsellors are teachers. They are trained as teachers, and indeed their official status is 'secondary school teacher for counselling and career education'. But in the lyceum and vocational school they do no teaching at all. Even in the gymnasium, they teach only a short course; and because it is not graded, it is based on very different principles and methods than other school subjects. Being viewed as a teacher can be helpful, in enabling them to be viewed by other teachers as 'one of us'; it may sometimes, however, be unhelpful, in failing to recognise the distinctive nature of their expertise, and their need at times to distance themselves from a disciplinary role in order to establish helping relationships with students.

2.8 The third is the ambiguity about the extent to which the core of their work is concerned with career guidance or with counselling. Some of the counsellors have been trained within the American tradition, where school counsellors play a holistic role concerned both with educational and career guidance on the one hand, and with personal and social counselling on the other. Others, however, have been trained in the UK, where many of the courses are designed to train career guidance specialists who are based

outside schools.⁶ We were told that the nature of this training could significantly influence the balance of activities adopted by school counsellors in Cyprus, with, for example, those trained on the UK career guidance courses being less inclined to spend time on the more complex areas of personal counselling, for which they felt less well prepared. The tension between the two traditions is, in our view, one of the strengths of the service. We were struck, for example, by the absence of the criticism that has been voiced in many countries which have adopted the American model: that attention to the personal and social problems of a minority of students tends to ‘crowd out’ attention to the educational and career decisions of all students.⁷ On the other hand, it adds to the sense of role overload.

⁶ In the UK system, the career guidance system is based on a partnership between schools (which run careers education programmes within the curriculum, provide career information libraries, offer some ongoing support through a tutor system, and make available information about students to the external service) and an external careers service (which provides professional career guidance interviews, helps in organising work-experience schemes and the like for students, and runs staff development programmes for school staff). See Watts, A.G. (2008). The partnership model for careers education and guidance in schools and colleges: rise, decline – and fall? *Career Research and Development*, 20, Summer, 4-8. The Qualification in Career Guidance courses, to which students from Cyprus tend to go, are addressed primarily to people who will work in the external service, almost all of whom are not trained teachers.

⁷ Watts, A.G. & Sultana, R.G. (2004). Career guidance policies in 37 countries: contrasts and common themes. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4(2-3), 105-122.

3. Qualifications and Initial Training

Current counsellor qualifications

3.1 Before being appointed, the counsellors are expected to be qualified at three levels:

- To hold a first degree in a subject taught in schools.
- To hold a postgraduate diploma or master's degree in guidance and/or counselling from an overseas university.
- To have completed a one-year⁸ initial teacher training programme in Cyprus. Until 2006, this was run by the Pedagogical Institute: it is now managed by the University of Cyprus.

3.2 In the case of the first of these, the requirement that the counsellors' **first degree** should be in a subject taught in schools is anomalous. It appears to be a relic from the system prior to 1991, when counsellors also taught a conventional school subject (see para.1.1 above). Since this is no longer the case⁹, the rationale for the requirement has been removed. Its retention is, in our view, a sign of the lack of capacity in the current structure of the service to manage change.

3.3 Paradoxically, one of the results of the anomaly has been that graduates in psychology, the subject which arguably is the most directly relevant to guidance and counselling, have been formally debarred from entering the role. In practice, it seems that some exceptions to this have been permitted. But removing the school-subject requirement would formally legitimise this practice, and encourage psychology graduates to consider the role of school counsellor as a career route.

3.4 We considered the possibility that entry to the role might be limited to first degrees that were viewed as having some congruence with it – social science degrees, for example. But we were told that very competent counsellors came from a wide variety of first-degree backgrounds. There would therefore seem to be no defensible basis for restricting entry in this way. *We accordingly recommend that entry in future should be open to graduates with a first degree in any subject, so long as they have had an appropriate training in counselling and career education.*

3.5 On the second level of qualification – the requirement to hold a **postgraduate diploma or master's degree in guidance and/or counselling** – the current practice is for such qualifications to be acquired in the UK or USA. They have to be approved by the Cyprus Council for the Evaluation of Academic Degrees (KYSATS). Of the current counsellors, 77% acquired their qualification in the UK, and 23% in the USA; 68% have

⁸ In practice, the programme runs from October to April, and around half of the time is spent in teaching practice within schools.

⁹ Although the role description still includes in the list of duties that he/she 'teaches subject of his/her first degree for restricted time period whenever is needed', this is now rarely if ever invoked.

a qualification in guidance, and 53% in counselling (i.e. 21% have a qualification covering both); and 47% hold a postgraduate diploma, while 58% hold a master's degree or PhD (i.e. 5% hold both a postgraduate diploma and a postgraduate degree).

3.6 As noted in Section 2, the way in which the service draws upon both the American and British models, with their distinctive strengths in counselling and career guidance respectively, can be seen as one of its positive attributes. In the longer term, however, ***we recommend that consideration be given to setting up a postgraduate training programme in counselling and career education at a university in Cyprus.*** The case for this will be stronger if our later recommendations for expanding the service (see paras.4.6-4.8) are adopted, and if the course can also be viewed as preparation for other guidance and counselling roles in Cyprus – for example, in universities and other post-secondary educational institutions, in the Department of Labour and in the private sector (see paras.8.5-8.7). There could, for example, be a core component common to all, and specialist electives for those working in different sectors and/or different roles.

3.7 Such a programme would be even stronger if it could be linked to a research unit conducting research and development work in the counseling and career education field. The need for a stronger research base to support evidence-based policy and evidence-based practice has been strongly advocated by OECD¹⁰, and is reflected in the work of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, of which Cyprus is a member¹¹. ***We accordingly recommend that a research unit be established alongside the proposed training programme.***

3.8 On the third level of qualification – the requirement to have completed a one-year initial teacher training programme in Cyprus – we suggest that the need for this should be reviewed if and when our recommendation for a new training programme is established: the two programmes might then be merged in some way. In the meantime, however, the rationale for maintaining it is two-fold: that it enables students to relate their skills and knowledge acquired overseas to the distinctive nature of the Cypriot educational system; and that it provides some training as a teacher, which is valuable both for credibility within schools and for teaching career education and social education¹².

3.9 ***We recommend, however, that the content of the teacher training programme as provided to future school counsellors be reviewed to make it more appropriate to their distinctive needs.*** At present, most of it is the same as that provided to teachers of other subjects. The section on guidance and counselling tends to over-emphasise the limited teaching aspect of the role (the careers education and social education programmes within the gymnasium), and where it addresses other aspects, to repeat some of the material already covered in the overseas courses. Instead, it should seek to complement this

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, ch.9. Paris: OECD.

¹¹ One of the ELGPN Work Packages is concerned with quality assurance and the evidence base for policy and systems development.

¹² Which we later recommend should be extended to the lyceum and vocational school as well as the gymnasium where such programmes are located at present: see paras.5.4-5.5.

material and to enable students to share what they have learned within the different traditions on which they have drawn. This requires creative use of options and of opportunities for peer learning. A particularly important need is to ensure that those trained in the UK career guidance tradition develop adequate skills for handling complex personal and family issues (this may also have implications for subsequent in-service training).

3.10 One of the incentives for people to enter the counsellor role in schools is that entry into the teaching profession is based on a queueing system for those who have the requisite qualifications. The length of the queue has tended to be appreciably shorter for counselling and career education than for other subject specialists within schools (in some subjects, we were told, the queue can be up to ten years or even longer). Entering this route has accordingly been a way of ‘jumping the queue’. As a result, the counsellors have tended to be somewhat younger than other teachers. This has perhaps been an advantage in terms of their relationships with students, but a disadvantage in terms of their standing within the school staff. The gap is however narrowing over time: 62.5% of counsellors have now been in post for 11 years or more.

3.11 It is worth noting that although all entrants are highly qualified in formal terms, the selection processes in terms of appropriateness for the counsellor role are limited. For the teaching qualification, all candidates with appropriate qualifications are accepted, and almost all pass: we were told of only one case where an intending counsellor was told they would have to retake the course. Yet the counsellor role requires distinctive personal attributes as well as formal qualifications. In these terms, the service is effectively placing its selection processes in the hands of the entrance and assessment processes of the overseas university where they take their postgraduate qualification. If our recommendation regarding the establishment of a postgraduate training programme in guidance and counselling (para.3.6) is accepted, this will enable a stronger selection process to be developed within Cyprus itself.

3.12 A further issue which requires attention is **induction training**. Support for new counsellors at present seems very limited. *We recommend that provision be made to provide special support to new counsellors for at least their first two years in post.*

3.13 **In-service training** is offered by the service in conjunction with the Educational Institute of the Ministry. This includes various seminars and training programmes. Regular meetings are also held of the counsellors in each of the four provinces. Counsellors are now consulted each year on their priority needs: current concerns include drug prevention, multi-cultural counselling, dealing with bullying, and working with special-needs students. Attention is also being given to improving their knowledge of labour-market trends. In all, 64% of the school counsellors undertake professional development activities for ten or more days a year.¹³ This is higher than for most teachers –justifiably so, because of the range of issues which counsellors are expected to address, and their changing nature. Quite a lot of this time, however, is devoted to information

¹³ Antoniou, A. (2009). *Professional Development and Formative Evaluation of School Counselors*. Master’s thesis, Open University of Cyprus.

sessions. Moreover, the provision seems to be organised on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than responding to clearly articulated strategic goals.

3.14 Some continuing professional development activities are also run by the Association of School Counsellors. This is a branch of the union of secondary-school teachers, which is a powerful trade union in Cyprus. It thus tends to operate more as a union than as a professional association. There used to be an Association of Counselling and Guidance which focused more on professional development issues, but this appears to be inactive or defunct.

4. Staffing Levels and Staff Deployment

Staffing levels within schools

4.1 As already mentioned (para.2.2), all the counsellors to whom we spoke indicated that they had **insufficient time** for the tasks they were given, and that this had an impact on the **quality** of their work, sometimes in relation to issues of considerable significance for students and/or for the school. An indication of the range and extent of these tasks is indicated graphically in an outline of a typical day provided to us by a counsellor in a lyceum (Box 1).

Box 1: A typical day

- New decision about a student with learning difficulties: inform 12 teachers.
- Student: 'I need to talk with you urgently. Last night my father left the family.'
- Teacher: 'This student keeps coming late. If he does that once more, he will have to repeat the year. Please have a session with him.'
- Teacher: 'Please check because I strongly believe that this student has learning difficulties.'
- Teacher: 'You have arranged to take my class tomorrow but unfortunately I cannot give it to you. Please find another teacher.'
- Teacher: 'We have money to give three students food from the canteen: can you give us some names.'
- Teacher: 'Please tell these 10 students that their sociology class will not be available next year.'
- Student/parent: 'I need an appointment before the deadline (to return forms for the elective classes).' Counsellor: 'Sorry, I do not have time.'
- Student: 'Whenever I come to your office, you have so many students waiting for you. I have spent three breaks waiting for you.'

4.2 In many respects, the school counsellor's role is to help the school to address the individual needs of its students, and to manage the school's relationship with the wider society. Part of this is to help students to clarify their future career pathway and to make educational choices which will help them to maximise their potential, harness their motivation and achieve their career goals. But part is also to help the school to manage all the personal and social issues which students bring into the school from outside, some of which can seriously impede their learning unless they are addressed effectively. As social problems grow (e.g. juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, violence within families), as they currently are in Cyprus as in many other countries, this role becomes ever more demanding and ever more important. Counsellors are the only professionals within the school with the professional competence to respond to the complexity of these issues (educational psychologists have a supportive role to play, but they are not based inside the school). If the counsellor does not have the time to address these issues adequately,

this is likely to have an adverse effect both on the welfare of individual students and also on the effectiveness of the school itself.

4.3 In response to the issue of **role overload**, we consider that two initial steps need to be taken. The first is that *we recommend that the boundaries of the counsellor's role be clarified, so that they are not expected to undertake administrative tasks which are not relevant to this role and do not make use of their professional expertise*. The second is to strengthen the helping role of the class teacher and other teachers: we will discuss this in more detail in Section 5.

4.4 But while both of these may lead to better use being made of the time of counsellors, we consider that it will not reduce significantly the pressures on that time. We accordingly consider that there is also a compelling case for significantly increasing the number of counsellors in schools.

4.5 The current **staffing levels** are based on a quota system, based on one out of 14 teaching hours per week for every 60 students in the gymnasium, and one per week for every 50 students in the lyceum and vocational school.¹⁴ This has remained in place since it was initially agreed in 1992. In practice, the formula as applied is more complex than this.¹⁵ The outcome is that gymnasiums have, on average, around 0.8 of a counsellor each (i.e. for four days per week), while lyceums and vocational schools usually have one counsellor each (i.e. full-time).¹⁶ More specifically, there are full-time counsellors in 9 of the 63 gymnasiums, 31 of the 44 lyceums, and 9 of the 11 vocational schools.

4.6 In addition to the general problem of overload, there are four main problems with these arrangements:

- In the gymnasium in particular, it means that there are days when no counsellor is present at all. This means that there is no-one available to deal with important problems as they arise.
- The problems of allocating resources across gymnasiums mean that some counsellors have to divide their time between two or even three schools, which limits the extent to which they can get to know the students.
- In the lyceums and vocational schools, significantly more attention has to be paid to educational and career choices. This is partly because the first significant choices have to be made towards the end of the first year of the lyceum or vocational school¹⁷, and further important choices have to be made on leaving.

¹⁴ Thus in the gymnasium there would be one full-time counsellor in a school with 840 students (14 x 60); and in the lyceum and vocational school, one full-time counsellor in a school with 700 students (14 x 50). The average size of a gymnasium is around 400 students, and of a lyceum around 570 students.

¹⁵ Extra resources may, for example, be allocated to schools in zones of educational priority (ZEP).

¹⁶ The allocation is complicated further by the fact that school principals with a counsellor background retain 4 periods a week for counselling and career education work, while assistant principals retain 14-16 hours.

¹⁷ It could be argued that the most significant choice of all is the decision made at the end of the gymnasium as to whether the student will go to the lyceum or to the vocational school. But this decision is based largely on school grades rather than on student or parental choice. Moreover, as noted in para.1.4,

Thus whereas in gymnasiums only around 31% of students are recorded as receiving help from the counsellor with career and occupational issues, in lyceums the figure is 87%. At times in lyceums and vocational schools when educational and career choices are particularly pressing – in January, for example – the capacity of counsellors to respond to other issues is especially limited.

- In all schools, school counsellors tend to feel isolated.

4.7 A paper prepared by the Association of School Counsellors has argued, on the basis of a careful analysis of current tasks, that the average number of counsellors per school should be 1.25 for a gymnasium and 2.07 for a lyceum.

4.8 In the light of the available evidence, *we recommend that the existing quota system should be replaced by a more simple formula based on a norm of at least one counsellor for each gymnasium and at least two for each lyceum and vocational school. A threshold could be adopted to provide for exceptions in the case of very small schools, but these should be kept to a minimum. Extra resources should continue to be allocated to very large schools, and to schools in zones of educational priority (ZEP).*

4.9 In relation to the lyceum, we gave careful consideration to the issue of whether – if there are to be two counsellors in each lyceum and vocational school – their roles should be **split** or not. There are three options here:

- That in all such schools, one of the roles should be that of a counsellor (focusing mainly on personal and social issues), and the other that of a career counsellor (focusing mainly on educational and career choices).
- That both counsellors should perform the same broad role covering both areas, but for different groups of students.
- That no firm rule should be established on this issue, but that counsellors should be permitted to distinguish their roles if they wish to do so.

4.10 In favour of the first option, it is argued that:

- Splitting the role in this way would ensure that the distinctive needs of both areas are addressed.
- It would build upon the two overseas traditions on which the service has drawn, in the UK and USA respectively (see para.2.8).
- It would enable specialised knowledge and skills to be developed to greater depth.
- It would enable more attention to be given not just to subject choices but to their career implications (one counsellor told us that ‘we do not actually do much career exploration, we just help them find their classes’).

4.11 In favour of the second option, it is argued that:

there are currently proposals to merge the vocational schools into the lyceums, which would effectively remove the decision.

- The needs of young people are holistic, and difficult to separate in this way. Students may present with one kind of problem, but then open up another.
- Going to a counsellor for an educational or career problem carries no stigma, whereas going for a personal or social problem may: combining the two in the same role provides ‘cover’ for the latter.
- Counsellors tend to be moved between different types of secondary school (like other teachers, they are periodically rotated by the Ministry). Since a holistic model is to be retained in the gymnasium (where under our proposals there will only be one counsellor), this could pose difficulties if there were to be separation of roles in the lyceum and vocational school.

4.12 We are inclined to favour the first option (splitting the roles). We recognise, however, the force of the arguments in para.4.11. ***We accordingly recommend that the roles of the two counsellors in each lyceum and vocational school should be distinguished, but with some overlap between them, within the framework of a manual specifying the tasks that need to be completed.***

Career development

4.13 The only career promotion route currently open to counsellors is to senior positions within schools. Promotion within the Cypriot school system is based largely on seniority and on inspectors’ evaluations; little if any account is taken of higher degrees. The system is highly centralised, with all teachers being appointed, transferred and promoted by the Educational Service Commission, an independent five-member body appointed for a six-year period by the President of the Republic. Inspections’ evaluations attach significant attention to teaching work, which means that they have little applicability to the work of counsellors, especially in lyceums and vocational schools (where counsellors currently do no classroom teaching at all). Moreover, there is currently no inspector with competence in the field of counselling and career education (see para.7.5).

4.14 At present, four counsellors have been appointed as school principals, and around ten as assistant principals. They retain some periods for counselling and career education work (see footnote 14): there can be some role conflict between these roles and their disciplinary roles, as well as difficulties in protecting their counselling and career education hours in view of the other pressures on their time.

4.15 In principle, there would seem to be a strong case for more counsellors to be appointed to senior positions with schools. As already noted (para.4.2), they have extensive knowledge of the school as a whole, and of its interface with the wider community. This will be extended if, as we suggest in Section 5 (paras.5.7-5.12), they devote more attention to supporting other teachers in their roles. In reviewing their adequacy for such roles, fuller account should be taken of their work as a whole, not only its teaching aspects.

4.16 In addition, there is a strong case for developing other career development routes for counsellors *as* counsellors. These might include, for example, some of the positions within the central team, selection for which should be based on competence (e.g. in ICT skills or supervision skills). It might indeed include the Directorship of the service, in the light of our later recommendation (para.7.1) that future Directors should have some experience directly related to counselling and career education. The establishment of a training course and research unit at a university in Cyprus (see paras.3.6-3.7) would also open up an alternative career route for academically-inclined counsellors.

4.17. The development of progression routes opens up issues about how the CCES inspects, supervises and evaluates its counsellors. We discuss these issues further in Section 7.

5. School Issues

Guidance in the curriculum

5.1 The title of the service is the Counselling and Career Education Service. The use of the term 'career education' could be interpreted as indicating that a substantial part of its work is developmental work within the curriculum.

5.2 In practice, however, the sole location currently provided to counsellors within the curriculum is in the first four months of the third year in the gymnasium, where they teach a course in career education and social education. It is timetabled for one period a week. The objectives are listed in Box 2. The course is not graded.

Box 2: Objectives of the careers education and social education courses in the third year of the gymnasium

Careers education (14 periods)

After completion of the course, students will:

- Realise the need for career guidance and counselling.
- Know the goals of the Counselling and Career Education Service.
- Have acquired the self-knowledge needed in order to make suitable educational/career choices.
- Have familiarised themselves with the world of work, the different professions, the scientific taxonomies of professions, the work values, the work conditions, the recent changes in the Cyprus and European labour market, etc.
- Know the educational system in Cyprus, with specific emphasis on the existing educational choices after completion of the gymnasium.
- Be informed about post-secondary institutions in Cyprus, Greece and other foreign countries.
- Have developed the necessary decision-making skills so as to make suitable educational/career choices.

Social education (3 periods)

After completion of the course, students will have:

- Acquired appropriate self-knowledge.
- Developed self-esteem.
- Developed self-confidence.
- Developed the skills needed for a normal adjustment to the school and social environment.
- Developed self-resilience skills to protect themselves from different social dangers.
- Developed problem-solving and social skills.
- Developed decision-making skills.

5.3 A textbook has been developed by the CCES to support this course: it includes various student activities, and contains many check-lists. ***We recommend that this textbook be updated, be extended to include a wider variety of exercises involving group work, and be accompanied by a teacher's handbook. We also recommend that possibilities for using some form of student assessment, separate from student grades, be explored.***¹⁸

5.4 Several people to whom we spoke questioned whether the third year of the gymnasium was the most appropriate location for such a course. They pointed out that, as we have noted in para.4.6, the first significant choices do not have to be made until towards the end of the first year of the lyceum or vocational school. There would accordingly seem to be a case for moving the course to the early part of that year. We agree with the desirability of further work during that period, as the reality of the choices gets closer. We consider, however, that this should be in addition to, not instead of, the course in the gymnasium. There is merit in helping students to start developing career management skills well in advance of important decisions, and not to do so when students are also coping with the demands of a new school environment. There is however a case for moving the gymnasium course to later in the school year (placing it at the beginning of the year seriously reduces the time counsellors have available to get to know new students and support their transition to their new school). ***We accordingly recommend that a further course in career education be introduced in the first term of the lyceum and vocational school, to build upon the groundwork established in the final year of the gymnasium; and that the latter course be moved to later in the school year.***

5.5 There would also seem to be a strong case for further provision in the second year of the lyceum and vocational school, looking forward to the choices which will need to be made on leaving school. One possibility would be to build this around the work-experience programme that takes place in the second year. Here the emphasis seems to be on getting students into placements, which preferably have some link with their career interests. For effective learning from such experiences, however, it is important that they be part of a curriculum programme which includes preparation, briefing, debriefing and follow-up.¹⁹ Such a programme could be extended to include further aspects of career education, including the skills of applying for courses and jobs. ***We therefore recommend that further career education provision be built into the second year of the lyceum, linked to the work-experience programme.***

5.6 Beyond this, since the structure of the school curriculum is currently being reviewed, ***we recommend that ways be explored of introducing a more developmental approach to career and social education that would build throughout secondary education.*** Possibilities include:

¹⁸ See Barnes, A. (2009). Assessment for career learning and development: now or never? *Career Education and Guidance*, February, 2-7.

¹⁹ See Miller, A., Watts, A.G. & Jamieson, I. (1991). *Rethinking Work Experience*. London: Falmer.

- Linking it to the new course in health education which is to be introduced throughout the three years of the gymnasium.
- Exploring ways of mapping links to other school subjects, across the curriculum.²⁰
- Introducing regular classroom teacher periods for which a programme including elements of career and social education could be developed (see para.5.11 below).

Currently, counsellors often have to ‘beg’ periods from other subject teachers in order to run classroom sessions on particular topics (e.g. study skills, conflict resolution). A more systematic structure of career and social education should reduce the need for this.

Supporting other teachers

5.7 Alongside the curriculum provision, more attention is also needed to exploring ways of enhancing the role of the counsellor in supporting other teachers. We have already referred (para.1.9) to the important work carried out by the counsellor in supporting case conferences and action strategies for students with special needs (broadly defined). In addition, *we recommend that counsellors should give more attention to helping teachers in general, and class teachers in particular, in offering helping relationships to students.*

5.8 This is an important issue. If teachers take a narrow view of their role as concerned only with teaching their subject, and leave all personal issues to be dealt with by the counsellor, this casts the counsellor as a kind of refuse bin for all the personal issues that are brought into or created by the school. Current curriculum reforms, however, are concerned with paying more attention to the needs of the student. This requires all teachers to pay more attention to these needs.

5.9 Class teachers have a particularly important role to play in this respect. Currently they have two periods free from class teaching in order to perform their role. But this role is not clearly defined, and little if any training is provided to help them to prepare for it and to develop their helping skills. The result is that many class teachers define their role in purely administrative or disciplinary terms. It could however be extended to cover a wider pastoral role, as it is in some other countries, including the UK and USA on which Cyprus has significantly drawn in developing its school guidance system. If attention to this were incorporated more strongly in their role description, and training for it was incorporated in the initial training of all teachers, this would provide a basis on which a continuing support role could be provided by the counsellor.²¹ This might include, for example, workshops for teachers on such issues as ‘how to deal with students with behavioural problems’, as well as individual support where needed. In short, class teachers could be viewed as having a ‘first-in-line’ helping role, with counsellors available to support them in this role, as well as to provide more specialist help to

²⁰ As is being done in Austria, for example.

²¹ We acknowledge that this will need to be negotiated with the teachers’ union, recognising that the aim of the proposal is to ensure a better service to students.

students where it is required. The result would be more rapid identification of students with problems (e.g. bullying), a wider range of sources of help for students to draw upon, and more effective use of the distinctive expertise of the counsellor.

5.10 It is important to recognise, however, that experienced counsellors are more likely than younger ones to command the respect of teachers in adopting such a support role. Much also depends on the support of school principals. Some principals clearly value the counsellor as a crucial resource within the school; some do not. ***We recommend that training be provided to school principals on how they can lead and support the design and implementation of school guidance programmes, with the counsellor as a key resource but not as the sole deliverer.***

5.11 Linked to this, ***we recommend that classroom teachers should have some regular timetabled periods to be with their class groups***, as occurs with tutor periods in the UK and homeroom periods in the USA. At present, these tend to be confined to occasions when other periods are ‘squeezed’ to create some extra space. A more systematic approach to such provision would make it possible for them to get to know their students better, and to introduce a developmental programme as outlined in para.5.6 above.

5.12 If the role of the counsellor in supporting other teachers is to be extended, it is important that it be supported by a code of ethics covering such issues as confidentiality. The current ‘explanatory instructions’ issued by the Ministry include some ‘basic principles’ in this respect. ***We recommend that a code of ethics be developed to support the work of counsellors***, building on these principles.²²

²² Codes of ethics developed in other countries might be useful sources here. An example is that published by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in Ireland.

6. Resources

Office space

6.1 The office accommodation available to counsellors is often inadequate to support their role. Where there is only one room which acts simultaneously as an office, as a counselling room and as an information library for students, these uses frequently conflict with one another (see para.6.5 below). The problem is exacerbated where two counsellors are present at the same time, as sometimes occurs in larger schools. There sometimes is no dedicated telephone for contact with parents and external services. Internet access can be limited. *We recommend that guidelines be laid down²³ for the minimum standards required for office accommodation to enable counsellors to do their distinctive work efficiently and for students to have ready access to career information resources within the school.*

Information resources

6.2 The service's central team produces a range of information resources for students, parents and others to use. These include:

- Three information guides: on post-gymnasium education in Cyprus; on higher education in Cyprus; and on scholarships for university studies in Cyprus and abroad.
- A guide for parents on the role of the family in students' educational and career choices.
- A textbook to support the career education and social education course in the gymnasium (see para.5.3).

6.3 In addition, the Department of Labour with the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) is currently developing an occupational manual containing occupational descriptions, qualifications required for entry, and projections of likely long-term demand. This could be a major resource. *We recommend, however, that further information should be developed showing the range of occupations to which particular education pathways might lead.* The Ministry of Education and Culture has included in its short-term goals the promotion of closer connections between education and the labour market, linked to long-term forecasting of labour market demand.²⁴ The availability of information of this kind would seem to be a prerequisite for the implementation of these goals. Such information should be made available on the web as well as in hard-copy form.

²³ As is already the case in some other areas, e.g. languages, home economics, science.

²⁴ Ministry of Education and Culture (2007). *Interim Report on the Implementation of the Programme 'Education and Training 2010'*. Nicosia: MEC.

6.4 The counsellor is responsible for utilising these various publications within their school, and for maintaining a library of these and other resources for students to use. In the case of the lyceum, the resources currently focus heavily on information on higher education overseas. Much of this is promotional in nature: money to buy objective guides is often limited. Information on occupations and careers is very restricted.

6.5 Some of these publications may be available for borrowing. Where, however, counsellors have only one room, which also functions as their office (as is commonly the case in gymnasiums in particular), it has to be locked when they are absent because of the confidential material it contains; entry may also be limited when they are engaged in individual or small-group counselling. This can seriously restrict students' access to the resources. In such cases, the possibility of locating the resources in the school library might be explored.

6.6 Some information is also available on-line. Most of it, however, is links to other websites. All counsellors' offices are equipped with a computer for students to use, but internet access is sometimes limited. Access to computers elsewhere in the school tends to be confined to a computer laboratory, which is heavily used. An increasing number of students have internet access at home, but some do not. It is accordingly important that readier access be provided within the school.

6.7 In general, the scope for increasing the quality of the service through use of ICT is considerable. Some counsellors have developed their own software for student records, and their own web pages on the school's website; and have used SMS to remind students of deadlines. This however is an area where there could be significant saving of energy through development of collective resources across the service. In principle, this could be carried out through the central team, and/or through forming small teams of school counsellors interested and skilled in ICT to develop resources for collective use, and/or through contracting out the work. While we do not rule out the latter for particular purposes, we favour the first two of these, to foster a sense of ownership of the resources developed, and to ensure that they are grounded in the needs of the service.

6.8 The use of ICT could also make it possible to extend access to services to the public at large (cf. Section 8). In some other countries, career services are being significantly remodelled through use of technology to extend access to services, the quality of services, and the cost-effectiveness of services.²⁵ ***We accordingly recommend that significant priority be given to using ICT to improve the quality of the CCES's services both within schools and to the general public.***

Psychometric tests

6.9 The main psychometric device used by the CCES in its early years was Holland's Self-Directed Search. In recent years, this has been largely replaced by Career Gate, an

²⁵ Watts, A.G. (2010). Policy issues relating to the use of ICT in lifelong career guidance. *Career Research and Development* (in press).

interests inventory developed by a company in Greece. A contract was issued, with funding from the European Social Fund, to adapt this for use in Cyprus. There seem to be doubts, however, about whether the inventory was sufficiently standardised for use in Cyprus, including revising it to relate to the different structure of the labour market in Cyprus. It has tended to be used selectively with undecided students. A contract for a new version of the test is currently under discussion.

6.10 ***We recommend that a review be undertaken of the role of psychometric tests and also of other tools (e.g. portfolios) in the CCES.*** Many countries have moved away from ‘test and tell’ approaches. While tests may still be useful as an additional source of information, they need to be fit for purpose, and counsellors trained in their interpretation, with sufficient time available to use them effectively with students. Consideration should also be given to devices like profiling and portfolios, designed to encourage students to manage their own learning and to see it in relation to their career plans. Such tools are being used in an increasing number of other countries, but seem so far to have received little attention in Cyprus.

7. Management Issues

Leadership

7.1 The first Director of the CCES was a trained counsellor. Since then, however, the various Directors (they normally stay in post for 4-5 years) have all lacked any professional background in guidance and counselling. This has been viewed by many of the counsellors as limiting their leadership credibility, both within the service and outside it. It has been exacerbated by the fact that many of them seem to have adopted a top-down leadership style. The result is that many counsellors have felt that they have not been listened to, and not supported. We emphasise that these comments are not shaped by the work of the current Director, who has attracted considerable respect within the service. *We nonetheless recommend that in future the Director of the service should be someone with experience directly related to counselling and career education.*

7.2 The issue of leadership style is an important one. The service contains many highly trained professionals. But it often seems to view them merely as deliverers of a service rather than as partners in the development of the service. Sometimes they are consulted on changes, but sometimes they are not. When they suggest improvements, they sometimes receive responses, but sometimes they do not. We heard of cases where their suggestions had been implemented, but also of at least two cases where plausible offers had been ignored.

7.3 In general, the education service in Cyprus is highly centralised. The Ministry prescribes syllabi, curricula and textbooks, and regulates and supervises all schools under its jurisdiction. Teachers have been expected to implement the instructions given to them by the Ministry: they have had no flexibility to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their particular students, or to choose materials and instructional methods. This is however beginning to change, with encouragement to teachers to develop their own action research projects, linked to school development planning. To date, counsellors have not participated in these activities. But there is now scope for them to do so.

7.4 In particular, there would seem to be potential for encouraging counsellors with particular expertise or interests to work together to develop methods and materials that could then be adopted more widely across the service. We have already suggested this approach in relation to the use of ICT (para.6.7). The same approach could be used in other areas (e.g. mediation, or developing a counsellor handbook). In this way, a 'community of practice'²⁶ could be developed which might significantly enhance both the motivation of counsellors and the quality of their work.

Inspection, supervision and evaluation

²⁶ Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7.5 There is currently no inspector for counselling and career education. The role was merged into that of the Director of the service, but since the Director has no professional competence in the field (see para.7.1 above), it has effectively lapsed. Our recommendation that in future the Director should have directly relevant experience should enable this situation to be remedied. The issue of inspection needs, however, to be framed within the wider issue of quality assurance.²⁷

7.6 In addition to inspection and managerial supervision, ***we recommend that a system of clinical supervision be introduced.*** Counsellors often have difficult cases to deal with, which can cause them considerable stress and lead to professional burn-out; they may find it difficult to ask for help, fearing that it might be interpreted as revealing lack of competence on their part. There is a need for them to have opportunities to explore these issues both individually and in small groups with someone who has been trained in supervision skills. We were told that six counsellors were trained in such skills a couple of years ago, but that no steps have yet been taken to utilise these skills. This reinforces our comments above (paras.7.2-7.4) about the need to change the culture of the service to harness the professional resources within it.

7.7 Alongside this, ***we recommend that there should be regular internal evaluations of the service from the perspectives of students, parents, external agencies, employers, and the counsellors themselves.*** To date, any such evaluations have usually been carried out by individual counsellors, as part of their work for higher degrees. In future, evaluations of this kind should also be carried out in conjunction with the Ministry's Educational Research and Evaluation Centre, and viewed more systemically as part of a system of continuous quality improvement.

Location of the CCES within the Ministry

7.8 Finally, it is worth noting that the CCES is currently located within the Ministry as part of Secondary General Education. Within the current structure of the Ministry, this is the most appropriate location for it. But it means that it has no direct relationship with Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, even though this includes vocational schools, which are an important part of the service's work.

7.9 It also means that there is no direct link with the two other main sectors covered by the Ministry:

- Primary Education. Here the special education teacher tends to adopt some of the role carried out by the counsellor in secondary schools. But this can lead to pupils with whom the teacher works being labelled as 'special needs' children. It also

²⁷ For a discussion of some of the available models, see Plant, P. (2004). Quality in career guidance: issues and methods. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4(2-3), 141-157. The choice will need to take account of other quality-assurance models being adopted and implemented across the education sector in Cyprus.

means that no attention is paid to career education and social education. Yet a developmental approach to such learning suggests that such programmes should start in primary school, as they do in some other countries.²⁸

- Higher and Tertiary Education. Here there are some limited services, notably in the University of Cyprus, where the counselling service includes some career education and guidance activities, including career days to which companies are invited. There could be a more systematic policy on such provision.

A ‘lifelong guidance’ approach (see Section 8 below) would seem to require that the service be extended to cover both of these sectors too. ***We accordingly recommend that the CCES be recognised as having a transversal cross-sectoral relevance across the Ministry of Education and Culture as a whole.***

²⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, pp.14-15. Paris: OECD. Also Sultana, R.G. (2004). *Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society*, p.43. Thessaloniki: Cedefop.

8. Towards a National Lifelong Guidance Strategy

Services to the general public

8.1 We noted in Section 1 (para.1.14) that a pilot programme has recently been run in three regional centres (in Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos) under which a service is available to the general public, staffed by the central team on a limited number of days a week. We also noted that this service is not yet widely publicised, and that the take-up has accordingly been limited.

8.2 The initiative appears to have been influenced by Cyprus's participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, and represents a significant first step towards transforming the CCES from a school- and youth-oriented service to a lifelong guidance service. This is in line with the Resolutions of the EU Council of Ministers in 2004²⁹ and 2008³⁰. Both articulated the need for guidance to be available on a lifelong basis. The 2004 Resolution stated that: 'Services need to be available at times and in forms which will encourage all citizens to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market.' It added: 'Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them.'

8.3 The underlying argument here is that public expenditure of lifelong guidance services should be viewed not as a cost but as an investment. If citizens make well-informed and well-thought-through choices about learning and work throughout their lives, this is likely to lead to reduced social costs (e.g. unemployment benefits) and higher productivity.³¹ A recent study in Northern Ireland estimated the economic benefits as amounting to over UK£9 net additional tax revenue for every UK£1 of public money invested in guidance services.³²

8.4 If the spirit of these EU Resolutions is to be implemented in Cyprus, it is important that the regional centres be developed further. ***We accordingly recommend that the regional centres should in future be staffed on a full-time basis, and that the services offered to the general public should be promoted more actively.*** The experience of the Careers Advice Service in the UK has demonstrated the massive impact that active marketing of services, alongside creative use of ICT, can have.³³

²⁹ Resolution on 'Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout Life in Europe', Council of the European Union, May 2004.

³⁰ Resolution on 'Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies', Council of the European Union, November 2008.

³¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002). Rethinking human capital. In *Education Policy Analysis*. Paris: OECD.

³² Regional Forecasts (2008). *Examining the Impact and Value of EGSA to the NI Economy*. Belfast: Oxford Economics.

³³ Watts, A.G. & Dent, G. (2008). The evolution of a national distance guidance service: trends and challenges. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 36(4), 455-465.

Other providers

8.5 At the same time, it is important to recognise that if there is to be a lifelong guidance strategy in Cyprus, the CCES is not the only provider. An important potential partner is the Department of Labour within the Ministry of Employment and Social Insurance. This offers some employment counselling in its 14 local offices (there are also some other service points in rural areas). Such counselling is concerned mainly with job placement rather than career choices.

8.6 Links between the CCES and the Department of Labour have hitherto been limited. Some links were established through the setting up of the Euroguidance service, which connects guidance services in Cyprus with those across Europe in order to support student and worker mobility. *We accordingly recommend that stronger links be established between CCES and the Department of Labour*, in a number of respects:

- Helping the CCES to be better informed about labour market trends within Cyprus.
- Collaborating in the development of more integrated information systems covering the interaction between education pathways and the labour market (see para.6.2).
- Establishing closer links between students' work experience in the lyceum and vocational school (supported by the CCES) and their summer job placements (supported by the Department of Labour).
- Exploring possibilities for joint initial training (cf. para.3.6).³⁴

8.7 Other career guidance providers mentioned in a report prepared for the European Training Foundation in 2002³⁵ included:

- Student services in universities (cf. para.7.9 above).
- Private counselling and employment services.
- The National Youth Organisation.

A national forum

8.8 Many of the weaknesses of career guidance provision in Cyprus mentioned in an annex to the ETF 2002 report³⁶ related to the lack of a focal point for:

³⁴ The current training for the Department of Labour employment counsellors is managed in-house, and comprises 300 hours' training over four months; it is not accredited.

³⁵ Christodoulides, G. (2002). Report on the survey regarding the situation of guidance and counselling in Cyprus being part of the project 'information collection on the situation of guidance and counselling in 8 candidate countries'. ETF 13241.1. Turin: European Training Foundation (mimeo).

³⁶ Christodoulides, G. (2002). Country annex: Cyprus's information, guidance and counselling service: a brief overview of national arrangements. Turin: European Training Foundation (mimeo).

- Developing a national strategy for the contribution of information, guidance and counselling services to lifelong learning.
- Promoting the role of guidance services in developing lifelong learning and a knowledge-based economy.
- Involving the various stakeholders in policy formulation and in delivery processes.
- Supporting interaction, co-operation and integration of services between the main service providers.
- Ensuring quality standards.
- Carrying out research into community needs and client expectations.

8.9 Recently, the CCES has taken the lead in filling this gap, through setting up a National Forum on Guidance. The establishment of the Forum has been agreed by the Council of Ministers, with the CCES to provide the secretariat. A technical committee involving the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Department of Labour has been set up to initiate the Forum, and is due to report by the end of April 2010.

8.10 The establishment of the Forum could be a major step in developing a national strategy for lifelong guidance in Cyprus. ***We recommend that our report be used by the Forum as a springboard for developing such a strategy, perhaps through a Task Force set up by the relevant ministries to work alongside the Forum.***

9. Summary of Recommendations

1. That entry to the role of school counsellor in future be open to graduates with a first degree in any subject, so long as they have had an appropriate training in counselling and career education (para.3.4).
2. That consideration be given to setting up a postgraduate training programme in counselling and career education at a university in Cyprus (para.3.6).
3. That a research unit be established alongside the proposed training programme (para.3.7).
4. That the content of the teacher training programme as provided to future school counsellors be reviewed to make it more appropriate to their distinctive needs (para.3.9).
5. That provision be made to provide special support to new counsellors for at least their first two years in post (para.3.12).
- 6. That the boundaries of the counsellor's role be clarified, so that they are not expected to undertake administrative tasks which are not relevant to this role and do not make use of their professional expertise (para.4.3).**
- 7. That the existing quota system be replaced by a more simple formula based on a norm of at least one counsellor for each gymnasium and at least two for each lyceum and vocational school. A threshold could be adopted to provide for exceptions in the case of very small schools, but these should be kept to a minimum. Extra resources should continue to be allocated to very large schools, and to schools in zones of educational priority (ZEP) (para.4.8).**
- 8. That the roles of the two counsellors in each lyceum and vocational school should be distinguished, but with some overlap between them, within the framework of a manual specifying the tasks that need to be completed (para.4.12).**
9. That the textbook for the careers education and social education course be updated, extended to include a wider variety of exercises involving group work, and accompanied by a teacher's handbook (para.5.3).
10. That possibilities for using some form of student assessment, separate from student grades, be explored (para.5.3).
- 11. That a further course in career education be introduced in the first term of the lyceum and vocational school, to build upon the groundwork established in the final year of the gymnasium; and that the latter course be moved to later in the school year (para.5.4).**

12. That further career education provision be built into the second year of the lyceum, linked to the work-experience programme (para.5.5).
13. That ways be explored of introducing a more developmental approach to career and social education that would build throughout secondary education (para.5.6).
14. That counsellors give more attention to helping teachers in general, and class teachers in particular, in offering helping relationships to students (para.5.7).
15. That training be provided to school principals on how they can lead and support the design and implementation of school guidance programmes, with the counsellor as a key resource but not as the sole deliverer (para.5.10).
16. That classroom teachers have some regular timetabled periods to be with their class groups (para.5.11).
17. That a code of ethics be developed to support the work of counsellors (para.5.12).
18. That guidelines be laid down for the minimum standards required for office accommodation to enable counsellors to do their distinctive work efficiently and for students to have ready access to career information resources within the school (para.6.1).
19. That information resources be developed showing the range of occupations to which particular education pathways might lead (para.6.3).
- 20. That significant priority be given to using ICT to improve the quality of the CCES's services both within schools and to the general public (para.6.8).**
21. That a review be undertaken of the role of psychometric tests and also of other tools (e.g. portfolios) in the CCES (para.6.10).
22. That in future the Director of the service be someone with experience directly related to counselling and career education (para.7.1).
23. That a system of clinical supervision be introduced to support school counsellors (para.7.6).
24. That there be regular internal evaluations of the service from the perspectives of students, parents, external agencies, employers, and the counsellors themselves (para.7.7).
25. That the CCES be recognised as having a transversal cross-sectoral relevance across the Ministry of Education and Culture as a whole (para.7.9).
- 26. That the regional centres in future be staffed on a full-time basis, and that the services offered to the general public be promoted more actively (para.8.4).**

27. That stronger links be established between CCES and the Department of Labour (para.8.6).

28. That our report be used by the new National Forum on Guidance as a springboard for developing a lifelong guidance strategy for Cyprus, perhaps through a Task Force set up by the relevant ministries to work alongside the Forum (para.8.10).

Of these, we attach particular priority to the seven recommendations in bold: i.e. numbers 6, 7, 8, 11, 20, 26 and 28.

Annex: Evaluation Programme

Monday 1 February	
9:00–9:30	Director of CCES (Savvas Antoniou)
9:30–10:00	CCES School Principal of Vergina Gymnasium (Niki Mavrokordatou)
10:00–10:30	Break
11:00–11:30	CCES Vice-Principal at Pedagogical Institute (Eleni Papastefanou)
11:30–12:00	Counsellor Instructor at Pedagogical Institute (Antonia Spiropoulou)
12:00–12:30	Director of Educational Psychology Department (Michael Ioannou)
12:30–1:00	Director of Educational Research and Evaluation Centre (Dr Athena Michaelidou)
1:00–1:30	Social Worker (Savvoula Papamiltiadous)
1:30–2:00	Antonis Kafouros and Head of Department of Labour
Tuesday 2 February	
9:00–9:30	Head of Examination Department (Dr Terpsa Konstantinidou)
9:30–10:00	Special Education Representative (Eftichia Kallepide)
10:00–10:30	Break
10:30–11:30	Members of the Association of School Counsellors (Evagoras Papayiannis and Vasos Vasiliou)
12:00–1:30	Counsellors in the Central Offices of CCES (Nikoletta Loizou, Antonis Antoniou, Konstantinos Sophocleous)
1:30	Working lunch
Wednesday 3 February	
9:00–9:30	Organised Parents (Konstantinos Aspris)
9:30–10:00	President of Middle-Level School Principals (Kyriakos Barris) & Technical School Principal (Konstantinos Georgiou)
11:00–12:00	Visit to Lyceum (Counsellor: Lefcos Demosthenous)
12:30–2:00	Visit to Gymnasium (CCES Vice-Principal: Lefci Hatjittofe)
Thursday 4 February	
8:30–9:00	Minister of Education and Culture (Dr Andreas Demetriou) & Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Education and Culture (Olympia Stylianou)
10:30–11:00	Head of the Middle Education Department (Dr Zena Poulli)
Friday 5 February	
9:00–12:00	Final meeting of the Committee