



National Centre for Guidance in Education
Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas

IGC Conference 21st March 2014

Guidance Research Poster Presentation Event

Official Opening

Speech delivered by Jennifer McKenzie, Director, NCGE

President of IGC, Members of the Conference Organising Committee Colleagues, invited guests, students and former students of Guidance ...

I was delighted when Ger Murphy contacted me to invite the National Centre for Guidance in Education to launch this event this evening. As an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, NCGE fully supports research and data gathering to inform and support evidence based practice. It is essential that, as we head further into the 21st Century, we develop guidance practice and provision in line with the ever changing needs of our clients whether they are 16 or 60!

NCGE has been involved in research in guidance on behalf of the Dept. of Education and Skills since the establishment of NCGE in 1995. We have developed and published our *Research Code of Ethics* to inform all researchers who are commissioned to carry out research on our behalf.

As the co-ordination agency of the National Forum on Guidance we reflect and recognise the requirements to encourage research in guidance in education, public employment and private sectors

The provision of guidance involves the relationship between the Practitioner and the client or student. It's not a 'one size fits all' system and the activities of guidance may differ depending on the sector. One service may focus specifically on job search and another may focus on the holistic personal educational and career needs of the person.

The outcomes of guidance vary greatly and deeply depend on the reason for attending guidance in the first place. Some examples of the choices our clients are facing include - Subject choices, personal concerns, post school college choices, 'I'm unemployed so what do I do now?' / 'I need a career break for my family choice' / 'should I do a PHD next' / 'I'm retiring soon so what's next for me'----

But the one thing in common is the guidance can facilitate all of these clients to make their choices.

But - *How* do we know its *good* guidance? Is it working? Is the client getting what they need? Is the guidance practitioner keeping up to date with latest methods / information? Is the guidance counsellor working with tried and tested methods which we know help our clients and not just looking to the next new-thing? Why is guidance *so* important as a service to so many people from all backgrounds at the various transitions in their lives?

Until we produce the data for ourselves and the outside world - *why* would the outside world consider and understand that Guidance *is* a public good? We need more qualified guidance counsellors involved in guidance research. We need to encourage practicing guidance counsellors to become reflective practitioners and get involved in research.

We know guidance works, but we need to be more confident in our profession and properly shine a light on what works and what's not working and propose new methods for supporting our clients.

I wish to congratulate the Dublin South / Wicklow branch of the IGC for introducing this process to the IGC conference as this reflects good practice in international Guidance Conferences. I would like to strongly encourage the next branch to host the IGC conference to continue this practice.

In preparation for this evening I had a good read through the Research booklet IGC have produced and I've conducted my own very short meta- analysis.

I'm delighted that my findings show that Students of guidance counselling presenting here this weekend are coming from all backgrounds –teachers, science and medical careers, recruitment, psychology, Social care, Welfare, Social science and prison work.

Guidance is a social good – it facilitates the individual to make choices about their personal, social education, career, and vocational lives. It is vital therefore that the guidance community become involved in research into both the delivery of services and the impacts on the clients of that service – what have *they* learned / achieved / decided following their connection or engagement with the guidance service.

The Research highlighted here shows that conducting research is not just about collecting numbers, but it is in using Different methods of research– quantitative and qualitative – questionnaires / focus groups / use of narrative / semi structured interviews, and encouraging the guidance practitioner to see themselves as a researcher and not just leave it to the academics!! (No offence to those academics in the room!)

Research findings can raise questions for further research - like what is the impact on the student's outcome of the work of the guidance counsellor – in school or in adult work.

My sincerest congratulations to all of you presenting – whether you have already graduated, or you are nearly there – you are the future of guidance research and I and NCGE look forward to seeing more of your Research work in the future .

Well done agus go n-éirí an bóthar libh go léir!

Thank-you !