



# Discovering Career Education

## Module 1



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## Introduction

This module introduces the concept of career education, providing basic definitions that depict the way it is framed, highlighting career-related learning to early childhood activities. It further elaborates on career teaching, presenting career management themes, effective way for teacher to make career education and provides activities that can be used. Furthermore, it presents the definition and value of work-related learning.

This module was compiled within the framework of the project PRIME - PRomoting and IMproving career-related Education in primary education

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## Definitions

### Career education

Lifelong career guidance refers to services intended to support individuals of any age and their families at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training, and occupational choices and to manage their careers (career management skills). Career guidance can include skills assessments, advice, information, development of job search skills, mentoring, counselling, networking, job placement and career education and be delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in a blended setting.

Career education refers to well-organised learning activities aimed at developing individuals' career management skills. Offered by schools, public employment services, NGOs, social partners, universities, adult learning institutions or community-based services, they cover self-learning, capacity building to identify and interpret labour market information, as well as learning and career opportunities, learning and career decision making. It is a key tool to provide young people in mandatory education and beyond with access to career guidance.

The six skills are the learning aims that career development programmes and interventions in schools should focus on.

- to grow throughout life,
- explore possibilities,
- manage career,
- create opportunities,
- balance life and work and
- see the big picture.

### Career Related Learning

Career learning refers to the ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences to develop and advance in one's career. It involves actively engaging in learning opportunities and gaining insights to make informed decisions about career choices, growth, and development.



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The term “career-related learning” refers to early childhood activities which in primary schools are designed to “give children from an early age a wide range of experiences of and exposure to education, transitions and the world of work” (Kashefpakdel et al., 2018).

Savickas (2005) defined career learning as a “subjective construction that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a life theme that patterns the individual’s work life”. The sequence of events, milestones and experiences determines the decisions we will make throughout our lives.

Career learning in Norwegian schools is slowly changing focus, and practitioners now see it more as a question of life-long learning, providing pupils with the necessary career competence to handle a series of career choices that will confront them during the rest of their lives (Mordal et al., 2018; Buland et al., 2011). The goal of career learning will, therefore, be to help the individual pupil to develop an adequate understanding of the world that can provide the base for the pupil’s later transitions in life (see, for example, Law, 1996).

This includes several different academic activities linked to providing extended knowledge of social and working life, as well as the pupil’s own preferences and interests.

Children are in the process of orienting themselves to the world, thus they try to understand how everything works. Therefore, they will learn about career and working life regardless of what their schools and parents do. Crause, Watson, and McMahon (2017) pointed out that there are two distinct categories of career development in childhood: the conscious (formal career learning) and the unconscious (what children see and hear in their surroundings). One must see these two forms in conjunction with career theory, research, politics and practice to develop a comprehensive understanding of how career development takes place in childhood. Providing children with career learning activities can help them think about possible career preferences and how subjects are relevant for their future working lives. The advantage both for the children and for the community is a more efficient management of decisions about careers and transitions.

When a broader understanding of the concept of ‘careers’ together with the concept of career learning is introduced, instead of guidance focused on one singular choice of education, this opened up new understandings of their normal, ongoing activities. By teaching the pupils self-reliance, interpersonal skills, and creativity and as they used alternative learning arenas, the schools were involved in many relevant ‘career guidance’ activities. However, the activities were rarely seen through ‘career glasses’.



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Armed with this new understanding linked to the concept of 'life skills' (UNICEF,2012), the importance of teaching their pupils' skills and competences like critical and creative thinking, innovation, communication, endurance, self-esteem, participation, and cooperation was highlighted. Therefore, their perspective on career learning changed from seeing it as irrelevant to seeing it as one of the most important activities in school. Many activities, both curricular and extra-curricular, thereby gained significant additional content.

A focus on career learning may only require minor changes to how career education and guidance activities are provided. The focus is placed on *how the activities are framed* and *on dialogue regarding their learning potential*. It includes supporting students' preparations for the activities in a way that helps them expand their horizons for actions. Finally, care should be taken to ensure that the students have an opportunity to share their experiences and reflect on what they have learnt with their peers. (Career and Career Guidance in the Nordic Countries, Edited by Erik Hagaseth Haug, Tristram Hooley, Jaana Kettunen and Rie Thomsen).

One thing that is considered as an important part of counselling work in primary schools, was referred to as 'developing both the power of judgment and the power of dreaming'. Thus, career guidance was seen as an important task to contribute to the development of individual pupils' good judgment: thinking before acting, thinking critically to consider different alternatives and situations, and having enough faith in and knowledge of oneself and society to make the 'right' choices, both in professional and social settings. The power of dreams does not consist solely in dreaming about the future but also in knowledge of how to get there, what it takes to realise a dream and the obstacles they will meet. Therefore, meeting good role models that can nourish more dreams is important (Mathiesen et al., 2014).

Childhood experiences are foundational in the construction of identity. Beliefs regarding their place in the world and occupational preferences start taking a shape early in life. Understanding oneself and their educational and job opportunities is, in fact, a process that starts from an early age and continues over time (Gottfredson, 2002; Law, 2009). Already at 5 years, children can express their occupational dreams (Phipps,1995). Although it might be tempting to think that young children are too young for learning and thinking of careers, Australian researchers have shown that preschool children understand the concept of career development (Patton & McMahon, 1997) and that career preferences already exist in early years of school (Poole & Low, 1985).

One of the key findings in a systemic review of the components of best practice career education and development in Australian secondary schools highlighted the need to embed career education and development in curriculum/co-



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curriculum, beginning with exploratory activities in primary school and linking these to further exploration, reflection and adaptive goal setting in later years.

The process of career learning is, in fact, continuous (Fettes, Evans & Kashefpakdel, 2020): it starts when the child is born and goes on throughout life. Students actively explore their worlds, experience and reflect on the world of work and education and on the connection to other parts of life, they reflect on different lives to live, values, visions of life and visions in life. All this in relation to both oneself and others. They begin to build possibilities for present and future selves (Cahill, 2017) and reflect on the sense of self (who am I?), skills (what am I good at?), knowledge (what do I know?), knowledge of the world of work, life roles. Through self-reflection and social interaction, they make “meaning of their explorations and experiences of the world and build foundational stories about who they are and about who they could become”.

In this sense, career-related learning is not about asking pupils what they want to do in their future when they grow up but is about helping them grow awareness of themselves and the world of work, it aims at helping them “weaving what they know into useful learning for now and later” (Watts, 2002). Even if, as previously said, childhood is a developmental stage characterised by exploration and aspirations are imaginative, yet a range of attributes and behaviours can still be instilled in those years with the aim of leaving children in the best possible position as they begin transition to their future life (starting with the transition to secondary school).

Early career-related learning is about providing children with an opportunity to consider their futures and offering pedagogical support to help them construct and realise their ambitions without constraints. As Cahill says, “this is not just about jobs, work, and careers, rather it is about life stories” (2017) and about providing children with the freedom to build their biographies in a socially just context.

## Career Teaching

The K-12 Career Learning Framework identifies the skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need to make informed choices and to effectively manage their careers. These competencies have been grouped under three themes.

### **Career management themes**

The career learning framework themes include:



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**Identity** – students are given opportunities to build and maintain a positive self-concept, build relationships, respond to change, identify what matters to them and develop their capabilities.

**Experience** – students will discover, investigate, and consider opportunities for lifelong learning to support career goals. They will understand how work contributes to individual lives and the broader community.

**Empower** – Students will learn to self-manage, engage in career decision making, develop the skills, capabilities and attributes that will empower them to make informed decisions and manage the career process.

### **Exploring the Identity Understand yourself Work well with others Adapt to change**

Discover personal characteristics, qualities strengths and weaknesses.

Discover change and growth are part of life.

Discover the feelings associated with change and how to ask for help.

### **Experience Lifelong learners Access and use career information Understand and experience work.**

Learn through curiosity and adventure.

Build an understanding that my learning counts.

Explore my community and the bigger world of work.

### **Empower Make informed decisions Growth mindset Plan develop and manage your career.**

Discover and build qualities to work with each other to accomplish tasks.

Discover life and work roles.

Discover what is needed to reach goals.

Principles of good practice to embed career learning.



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Critical parameters in the success of career learning activities at school include:

**Leadership** The success of career learning is driven by the vision, energy and passion of school leaders and how they enable others.

**Careers and transition advisers** Having specialist staff in secondary schools to deliver career education programs and to support student transition through and beyond school.

**Curriculum integration** Career learning is enabled when embedded into existing curriculum, integrated into class and school programs, and used as a strategy for contextualizing learning across the curriculum.

**School collaboration** High value is placed on communities of schools sharing ideas, data, programs and resources, planning curriculum initiatives and events.

**Teacher professional learning** Explicit teacher professional learning and staff commitment for careers education is built into staff meetings and school development days, developing a culture that 'careers is everyone's business'.

**Resource development** Locating and accessing relevant and adaptable resources, relevant to a stage of learning is imperative if career learning is to be effectively integrated into the curriculum.

**Community connections** Community partnerships are important as they provide a sense of belonging and connectedness. Strong community relationships can enhance the well-being of young people and the community as a whole. Liaising with the community, business and industry, allows students to see their community, at work, contextualising the relevance of what they are learning to the world beyond school.

**Parent engagement** Parents and carers remain the major influencer in a student's career development and decisions. Developing strong partnerships with parents allows barriers to be broken down between families and the school.

**Sustainability** Sustainability relies on developing effective policy and practices, a culture of commitment to career related learning, continuous improvement of its implementation..



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## Effective ways for teachers to make career education.

Teachers can play a vital role in helping young people navigate their futures—here's three effective ways to make careers education a part of daily learning.

### 1. Using links to careers

Making connections between your subject and future careers is the obvious way to integrate careers into your lessons, but some subjects lend themselves to this more than others.

Much emphasis has been put on STEM in recent years, and there are numerous resources for STEM teachers in both primary and secondary setting to link their subject to future careers.

### 2. Using skills

The importance of skills when it comes to what employers are really looking for can't be underestimated. Being able to draw on a bank of examples of when you might have used, for example, problem-solving skills, or been resilient, will be the best way to prepare pupils for job applications and interviews in the future. Recognising when we've used these skills is something we can all be doing, all of the time. Employers want evidence.

For those subjects e.g. English, History and languages, where it's harder to identify obvious career pathways, highlighting skills developed in studying those subjects can be a great way of making the subjects relevant, and making pupils more engaged.

### 3. Using employers

Giving pupils the opportunity to meet people in jobs is beneficial in so many ways. But there's so much more you can ask of employers than just giving talks or attending a Careers Fair. For example, in one school a drama teacher's subject was at-risk of being dropped completely because of low numbers. She approached a range of local organisations where drama was a key element of



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the careers within them and developed activities and encounters with these employers across her curriculum. The following year, her subject was oversubscribed.

#### **4. Invite Guest Speakers to the Class**

One of the best ways to introduce new careers to your students is to invite guest speakers to your classroom. These are people who operate in professions relevant to the materials you cover in class. A guest speaker provides a direct connection between what students are learning now and how it could be relevant in the future. However, you have to be strategic in how you invite people to your class.

“In initial communications with your speaker, be clear about your expectations, what in particular would be important for your students to learn, and information about your students and unit.

For example, a science teacher could bring in a biologist to talk about their work at any point in the school year. However, it’s more effective to introduce a shark researcher during a unit about marine biology. Similarly, you can invite a solar technician to speak during a unit on energy creation.

You will also want to allow extra time for your students to ask questions or for the speaker to run over time. Make sure the guest speaker knows how long they should present and whether they should be prepared to answer questions throughout the session.

#### **5. Field Trips for Career Exposure**

In some cases, you may want to bring your students to the professional instead of asking them to visit your classroom. These field trips can be done as a whole class or with small groups depending on the goals set. Meeting an employee at the company where they work can often change how students think of a profession.

### Career learning activities at school that work

Research shows that certain types of activities work best at the Primary school level because they have shown the most impact upon students. There are four key elements within career-related learning activities that have been shown to work best with school-age children:



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- Exploration is a key element within career learning. The aim of exploration is to broaden the information students have about careers and the world of work. This exploration is about a widening of information and perspectives for future opportunities both for training and professional pathways.
- Connection refers to making links and effective collaboration between the school and the world of work. Schools are at the centre of a community and the career learning activities that work best are those that actively involve external actors – companies, social sector entities, professional associations, individual professionals, etc. Connecting and contextualising classroom learning can impact students by having them challenge incorrect assumptions about working life and professions
- Experience or experiential activities are seen as those that offer first-hand experience of the world of work to students. Career learning activities of experience at the primary level are those such as visits to businesses and industries. Exposure and experience to the work of work is seen in the literature as an effective career-learning activity. Experience activities provide students with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. This can also be done via simulation of work within the school context during, for example, project work or other activities.
- Reflection is seen as another key aspect of all career learning activities. Reflection is impactful within career learning because it creates and promotes a time and space to think about the future and, like a wheel, as a process to then continue to expand horizons and to begin again with exploration. Thinking about the future allows the student to integrate within themselves what they have explored and experienced in other career-learning activities.

## Approaches used in schools

Primary school educators are enormously creative and will be able to think of lots of things to do to help children learn about career. The table below sets out some of the most common approaches used in schools. School-based activities

- Build career learning into the curriculum, e.g. using salary data in maths or talking about the career choices of book characters.
- Devote time to life skills development, e.g. decision-making or understanding money.



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- Run simulations, role plays and games based around work and entrepreneurship. Activities involving visitors
- Involve parents and alumni as speakers.
- Run events like mini career fairs with local employers.
- Bring in role models to talk to students.
- Engage with employers and staff as mentors and volunteers. Exploring beyond the school
- Run a 'transition to secondary school' program: the students' first big career transition.
- Visit local employers, colleges and universities.
- Set homework projects for students to learn about careers in their families and communities.

## Career guidance/ Work-related learning

Career guidance can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions. But at its heart it is a purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this.

The formal definition of work-related learning is: Planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices, and learning the skills for work.

In the context of this simpler definition:

- For work is about developing skills for enterprise and employability (for example, through problem-solving activities, work simulations, and mock interviews)



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- About work is about providing opportunities for students to develop knowledge and understanding of employers, employment and enterprise (for example, through vocational courses and careers education)
- Through work is about providing opportunities for students to learn from direct experiences of work, including developing the employability skills and 'can-do' attitude that employers value (for example, through work experience or enterprise activities in schools and learning through vocational contexts in subjects)

Work-related learning benefits schools and colleges by:

- helping to increase levels of attainment and participation rates;
- helping them bring the curriculum to life by showing how subjects are applied and valued in the workplace;
- enhancing the learning experiences and the opportunities they provide for their students;
- making links between different subjects within the curriculum

Work-related learning benefits teachers, tutors, trainers, mentors and others who are directly involved in delivering it, by:

- improving learner outcomes;
- helping them to connect the subjects they teach to the world of work;
- contributing to their professional development and management skills.

Work-based learning refers to all forms of learning that takes place in a real work environment. It provides individuals with the skills needed to obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional development.

Apprenticeships, internships/traineeships and on-the-job training are the most common types of work-based learning. Apprenticeships provide occupational skills and typically lead to a recognised qualification. They combine learning in the workplace with school-based learning in a structured way. In most cases, apprenticeships last several years. Most often the apprentice is considered an employee and has a work contract and a salary.



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Traineeships and internships are workplace training periods that complement formal or non-formal education and training programmes. They may last from a few days or weeks to months. They may or may not include a work contract and payment.

On-the-job training takes place in the normal work environment. It is the most common type of work-based learning throughout an individual's working life. These types usually – but not always – combine elements of learning in the workplace with classroom-based learning.

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