



Later, she told me that the girl had confessed that the story was a fabrication. Her mother had found the job for her, but she had really wanted to work with her friends in the local electronics factory and earn more money. Accordingly, she had sent this little madam from the office with a flea in her ear and reassured her recent employer that it was all an unfortunate misunderstanding. That evening, in the local hostelry, Bill and I pondered over the possible pain and embarrassment we might have caused this decent pillar of the community, had not the Old Crow intervened and we raised a glass to them both. In later years, I occasionally used this case, with a few embellishments, when training careers teachers and officers. It illustrated the importance of seeking advice from one's superiors before rushing into decisions which could have unfortunate consequences. I was rather pleased with it, but perhaps I should have waited a little longer.

The other day, I was helping out in a charity shop.

We were emptying bags of mildewed clothes and broken toys into a skip (80% of donations are complete rubbish). Whilst chatting to another volunteer, I discovered that she was the niece of the now long-departed pillar of the community. Without going into detail, I explained that I had once had some dealings with her aunt whilst working in the Youth Employment Service. My colleague turned a little pale and grasped my arm. "Please tell me", she implored, "that you didn't send anyone to work for her". I assured her that I hadn't which was quite true, but asked why. She explained that for many years the rest of the family had ostracised the aunt because of her treatment of domestic workers. She and her sisters had been banned from having anything to do with her. "Can you tell me more about this treatment?" I asked with a sinking feeling, for I had already guessed the answer. "Yes", she replied. "She would beat them and fine them for nothing. Sometimes, she would even lock them in their rooms. We detested her."

G is for guidance

Alan Vincent

The Journal Editor and General Secretary expresses personal views about the use of the term 'Information, Advice and Guidance' as an umbrella term.

Twice recently I have cringed as speakers at careers events have made these references to the term Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG):

We do not have a definition of IAG.

Careers education is a subset of IAG.

As the great philosopher Homer would have put it, "D'oh!" Yes, just for starters, how can something reasonably tangible and coherent, such as careers education and guidance (CEG), be a subset of something that is apparently undefined?

Perhaps more importantly, are we really comfortable with the ever-increasing use of IAG as an umbrella term to describe our professional activity? Until relatively recently, its use was confined to the area of adult guidance, but now, partly perhaps because of the influence of the Learning & Skills Council and its funding leverage, we see its increasing use in the 14-19 phase.

I held forth at a recent meeting of Advisers and Inspectors of Careers Education (AICE) about the

perceived iniquity of the term IAG, referring in a rather half-baked way to previous work in defining guidance, which I had always understood to be the umbrella term. I was later prompted to do a little research and, with the help of the estimable Tony Watts, discovered that the work I had remembered was conducted by the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE). This was a mid-1980s quango in England, created by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science. UDACE examined areas of possible development in education for adults and recommended strategies for development. The first and most significant work it undertook was that on adult guidance. My thesis is that UDACE's definitions of guidance and its activities are just as relevant now as they were then, and not just for adult guidance. In my view, the detailed analysis by UDACE of guidance and guidance activities serves to sharpen our thinking about what we are offering our students and clients.

The UDACE report, *The Challenge of Change: Developing Educational Guidance for Adults* (UDACE, 1986) was a seminal document. As



Jonathan Brown states in a recent article¹, “It made a lasting impact on the development and practice of adult guidance not only in England but also far beyond. It has also been used to analyse guidance in settings other than for adults. It is still widely cited by colleagues writing and speaking about guidance. In particular, the seven activities of guidance are in current usage in most services providing guidance for adults. Even in those services where only some of the seven activities are currently available, the terminology and concepts are used as a way of understanding and evaluating practice”.

The Challenge of Change is now out of print, but an edited version of the central chapters of the report was published in December 2003 by the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA)².

For practitioners and their managers the seven activities of guidance were expressed as:

- Informing – providing information
- Advising - helping clients to interpret that information and to choose the most appropriate option
- Counselling - using counselling skills
- Assessing - helping clients, by formal or informal means, to obtain an adequate understanding of their personal, educational and vocational development
- Enabling - helping clients to deal with third parties and the gaining of study skills (this would now probably comprehend the sort of coaching activities described in a separate article in this Journal)
- Advocating - negotiating with institutions or

agencies on behalf of individuals or groups for whom there may be additional barriers to access or to learning

- Feeding back - informing the education and training system of additional needs.

Guidance is seen as an umbrella term covering a mixture of all seven activities.

This conceptual understanding of guidance is at the root of Jonathan Brown’s (and my own) concern about official (DfES and LSC) use in England of IAG as if guidance were not an umbrella term. I am again grateful to Jonathan Brown for pointing me to the wise words of Tony Watts and Ruth Hawthorn on this matter. Referring to the use of IAG within the IAG policy framework (DfES, 2003), they described it as “serving to compound rather than resolve the previous conceptual confusion. The opportunity to confine the term ‘guidance’ to its generic usage has been lost by the retention of ‘IAG’. This leaves England out of line with other countries and international organisations, where ‘guidance’ (EC; Ireland), ‘career guidance’ (OECD; Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) or ‘career development’ (World Bank; Australia, Canada) are now used as the portmanteau terms. Adhering to ‘IAG’ – insider jargon which means nothing to outsiders – even after the ‘G’ has effectively been lopped off, seems particularly perverse³”.

I hope you agree with me that this concern for semantics is not just of academic concern. It is fundamental to our understanding of the sort of services that we are offering to our clients, whether they are adults or young people.

¹*Opening the door to opportunity: adult guidance holds the key*, Journal of Access Policy & Practice, 2004. This article can be viewed as a .pdf file at

www.naega.org.uk/library/adult-guidance/opening-the-door.pdf

²*The Challenge of Change* (Report by UDACE, 1986), ed J. Brown (2003).

³*IAG national policy framework: a critique and a way forward*, NAEGA News and Views (Spring 2104).

“My careers officer never told me about this.” – Michael Parkinson, on his ‘job’ of playing his favourite records on his BBC 2 programme.