



Quality and Professionalism in Career Guidance and Counselling - The Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development in Career Guidance in Germany (2009 – 2012)

- English Short Version of Main Results -

SPONSORED BY THE



Content

1. Introduction
2. Background and basic definitions
3. Quality criteria for good guidance
4. Quality Development Framework (QDF)
5. Competence profile for guidance professionals/practitioners
6. Outlook – experiences and further steps

1. Introduction

Lifelong guidance for education, career development and employment is an important service to support citizens of all ages and in all phases of their lives to plan and design their career and life course. In addition high quality guidance can make a crucial contribution to

- the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system and the labour market,
- using the full potential of human resources,
- promoting the individual's employability,
- securing future demand for qualified manpower,
- equal opportunity and social inclusion policy.

Representing important preconditions in order to secure high quality provision for lifelong guidance, guidelines and standards for quality and professionalism need to be agreed, accepted, and implemented by all relevant actors and stakeholders in the field.

The field of career guidance and counselling in Germany is quite heterogeneous and there are no common standards or guidelines in operation for quality and professionalism until recently. This is why the National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment (*nfb*) in collaboration with the Institute of Educational Science at the Heidelberg University (IBW) started and coordinated an "Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development" involving actors and stakeholders from policy, science, the economy, associations, social partners and practice on federal, state and municipal level. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 2 phases:

1. The "Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development" (2009-2012) commenced the collaborative development and a shared understanding of guidance quality among the involved actors and stakeholders. On the basis of a common understanding of career guidance

- a catalogue of quality criteria and
- a quality development framework (QDF) were developed and piloted with 19 providers.

In addition a competence profile for guidance practitioners related to the quality criteria was developed as a basis for recognition of competences and for training programmes.

2. The second phase "Implementation and Scientific Grounding" (2012-2014) aims at

- disseminating the results and initiating a broad dialogue about quality in guidance,
- advancing and testing the quality criteria, the competence profile and the QDF,
- developing instruments for practitioner's competence documentation and validation,
- deriving quality standards and guidelines from the beforehand agreed quality criteria, again by involving actors and stakeholders from different guidance areas,
- investigating possible ways of credentialing and certification in the guidance field,
- developing implementation strategies for continuous quality and professional development in career guidance in Germany.

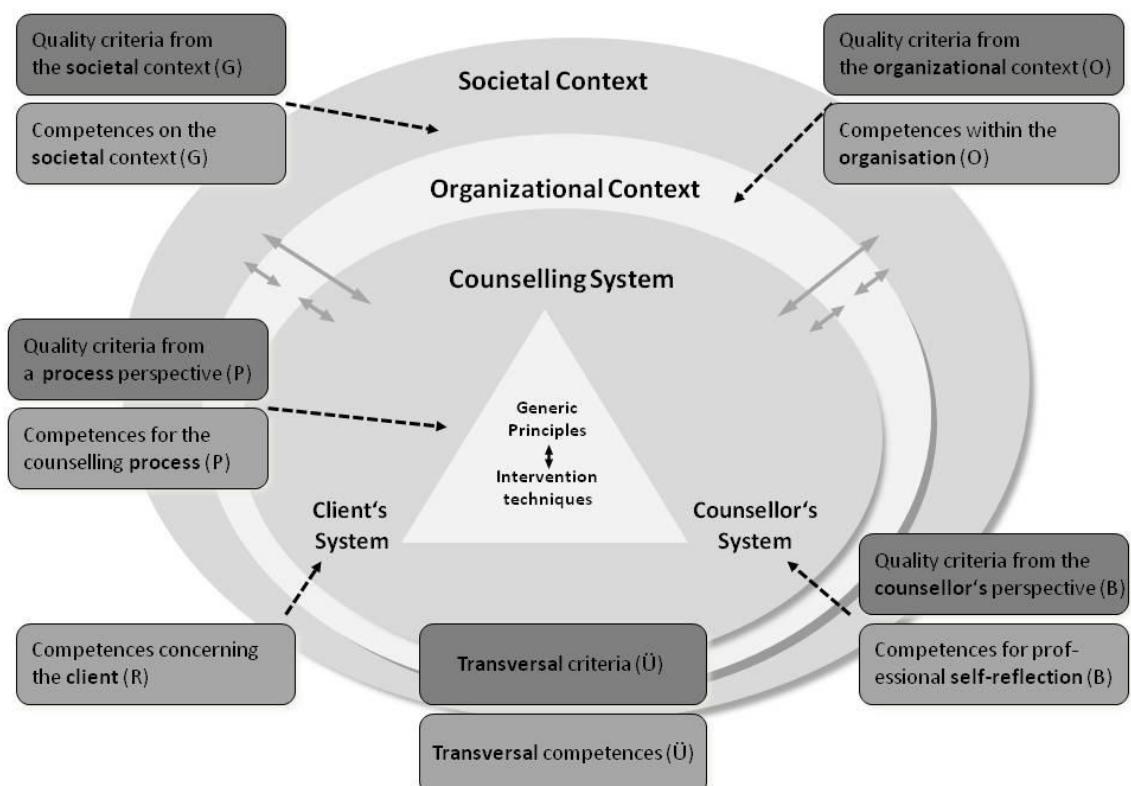
This brochure summarizes the results of the Open Process of Coordination (phase 1) in a short English version for the international professional community. It can be downloaded from the website www.beratungsqualitaet.net. Full German information and publications can also be downloaded from this website (see also the *sources* listed on page 15 of this brochure).

2. Background and basic definitions

- Systemic context model of career guidance and counselling

The systemic context model of career guidance and counselling underlying the results of the Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development is based on the idea that career guidance is not an isolated process between the practitioner¹ and the client/user. Rather, guidance is embedded in a wider organizational and societal context. Hence, the requirements for quality in guidance do not only refer to the interaction between the client/user and the guidance practitioner, but to all actors responsible for guidance provision: practitioners, clients/users, provider organisations and the society as a whole including policy makers, legislation, etc. For any quality considerations, whether the focus is on enabling wide access to guidance, on the quality of provider services, or the competence of practitioners, all of these levels need to be taken into consideration.

The systemic context model of career guidance and counselling:



Quality criteria and practitioner competences assigned to the 5 systemic levels of the model
(Source: Schiersmann, C. et. al 2008)

Following the systemic context model of career guidance and counselling the 19 quality criteria are assigned to 5 groups according to the system levels (see diagram above). Following this systemic approach, a competence profile with 20 single practitioner competences based on the quality criteria was developed and assigned to 6 categories.

¹ The term practitioner includes all professional descriptors such as career adviser, career counsellor, guidance counsellor, career professional etc. The term “user/client” stands for all individuals looking for advice, guidance, counselling and career support.

- **A common understanding of career guidance**

The common understanding of career guidance, which was agreed by the involved actors, has been the basis for the work on quality and professionalism:

The Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development deals with personal guidance in education, career and employment. Guidance is an offer which supports individuals in all phases of education, career and employment to identify their interests, abilities and competences, to deal with problems and to take decisions in order to manage their educational and vocational biographies responsibly. In doing so, guidance services are not restricted to transitions, special situations or crises in the life course. Guidance rather focuses on potentials and resources of clients and possible opportunities. It may be preventive and thereby understood as a continuous, lifelong provision.

The common understanding of guidance is based on the following key elements:

- The guidance practitioner acts professionally. This involves an explicit guidance setting including environment, clarification of guidance request, contract and transparency.
- Guidance is usually a voluntary, temporary and process-type interaction between the user and the guidance practitioner which is sensitive to interests and open to the outcome. Contexts in which guidance is obligatory and may even result in sanctions are also subject of this definition.
- The user's/client's interests, resources and circumstances of life are central to the intervention. However, guidance always takes place in a context of shared responsibilities in which the user/client, the practitioner and the guidance organisation take responsibility for the guidance process.
- The interaction between the guidance practitioner and the client/user exceeds mere information. It involves a reflection of relevant facts which enables the client/user to make well-founded decisions.
- Guidance includes various activities and forms of which some may be combined. In addition to individual face-to-face provision group guidance, online provisions or mobile services exist in order to provide all citizens with easily accessible guidance services.

(see: Nationales Forum Beratung und Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität, 2012).

3. Quality criteria for good guidance

This short version only lists the criteria with their basic definition. The German full version contains a more detailed description. Based on the ‘multi-actor approach’ for quality implicit in the context model; for each criterion a list of indicators addresses the responsibilities of practitioners, providers and policy makers (see: Nationales Forum Beratung and Foschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität, 2012). In addition, measuring instruments to provide evidence are suggested for each of the five groups of quality criteria.

- **Transversal Quality Criteria (Ü)²**

- Ü1: Client/User-centeredness: The guidance activities as well as the relevant organizational and political activities focus on the request/concern and resources of the clients/users.
- Ü2: Transparency of guidance provision: Transparency (e.g. regarding access, offers, costs etc.) has to be guaranteed by all activities taken by guidance professionals and by provider organisations as well as in the relevant policy field.
- Ü3: Ethical aspects: Ethical considerations lead the guidance and counselling activities, the organizational and the political activities.
- Ü4: Quality strategies: The guidance and counselling activities as well as the relevant organizational and political activities are continuously developed in accordance with a well founded quality strategy.

- **Quality criteria referring to the guidance and counselling process (P)**

- P1: Building relationships: Together with the clients/users, the guidance practitioners build a relationship which is appropriate to the subject and the context of the guidance concern. This is an inevitable basis for the entire guidance process.
- P2: Clarification of the guidance request/concern and the contract: Together with the clients/users, the guidance practitioners adequately clarify the clients' request/concern, the expectations and the motivation for the guidance.
- P3: Analysis of the situation and clarification of resources: Together with their clients/users, guidance practitioners review the situation and the objectives in relation to the client's request/concern.
- P4: Developing possible/prospective solutions: Together with their clients/users guidance, practitioners develop (perspectives of) possible solutions.

² The numbering of the quality criteria follows the German abbreviations: Ü – Transversal quality criteria (Übergreifende Qualitätsmerkmale), P – Quality criteria referring to the guidance and counselling process (Qualitätsmerkmale im Bezug auf den Beratungsprozess), B - Quality criteria referring to the professionalism of guidance practitioners (Qualitätsmerkmale in Bezug auf die Beratenden), O - Quality criteria referring to the organizational context (Organisationsbezogene Qualitätsmerkmale), G - Quality criteria referring to the societal context (Gesellschaftsbezogene Qualitätsmerkmale).

- **Quality criteria referring to the professionalism of guidance practitioners (B)**

B1: Competence and professionalism of guidance practitioners: Through their initial and continuous professional training, guidance practitioners are capable to act professionally in the field of guidance in education, career and employment. The curriculum and training follows a recognized, science-based competence profile.

B2: Orientation towards standards: Guidance practitioners and guidance providers act according to professional standards which are established on the basis of all of these quality criteria. Practitioners and providers substantiate these criteria in a reflective and self-responsible manner. The organisation provides the necessary conditions for doing so.

- **Quality criteria referring to the organizational context (O)**

O1: Mission and Strategy: The guidance provider has a specific mission statement or similar corporate identity document, which refers to the mission of the organisation as well as to the societal context and the needs of its target groups.

O2: Formal management and procedures: Structures, functions and central processes of the guidance organisation have been identified and are optimized when required.

O3: Organizational culture: The organizational culture is actively developed by the executives as well as by guidance practitioners and other staff members.

O4: Staffing and provision of material resources: Appropriate and sufficient personnel, as well as material equipment are available for the service delivery.

O5: Interaction with the societal context: Cooperation and networking with the environment of the guidance organisation and of the clients/users are actively promoted.

- **Quality criteria referring to the societal context (G)**

G1: Societal references and information; information delivery: The actors responsible for the guidance provision define how the guidance service is delivered according to the societal references and areas of professional knowledge relevant for the guidance needs of the clients/users (educational and vocational systems, labour market, educational opportunities, job profiles, economy, financial support structures etc.)

G2: Supporting the self-organisation of career management and development processes: The actors responsible for guidance provision define how the guidance services in the context of their respective organizational objectives support the clients/users to cope with their educational and career management tasks in an increasingly self-organised way. They also define which actions are necessary in order to gather evidence about the outputs and impact of the interventions.

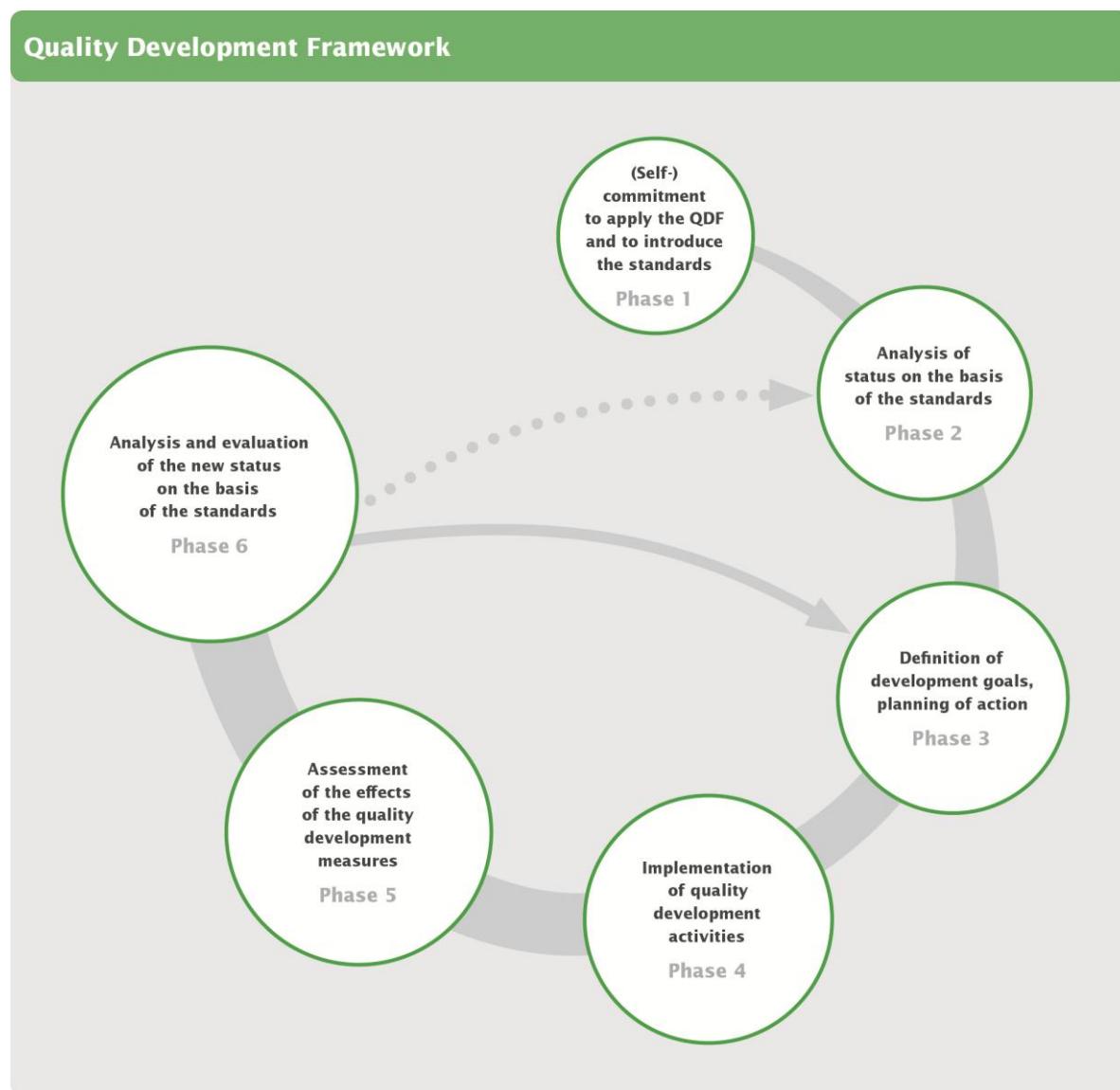
G3: Supporting educational and vocational development: The actors responsible for guidance provision define how the guidance services in the context of their respective organizational objectives support the educational and vocational progress of their clients/users. They also

define which actions are necessary in order to gather evidence for the impact of the interventions.

G4: Promotion of social inclusion: The responsible actors define whether and how the guidance services within the context of their respective organizational objectives contribute to the improvement of social inclusion and societal participation, to the enhancement of educational chances, and increased labour market participation as well as to the prevention of discrimination. They also define which actions are necessary in order to gather evidence for the impact of the interventions.

4. Quality Development Framework (QDF)

For the provision of high quality career guidance continuous and sustainable quality assurance mechanisms are essential but also a challenge for service providers and the practitioners. In the scope of the “Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development” a Quality Development Framework (QDF) was designed and piloted in order to support service providers in their efforts to improve their service quality (see: Nationales Forum Beratung and Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität, 2012). Following a general process model frequently used in organisations the proposed procedure for quality development on the basis of the beforehand developed 19 quality criteria was divided into six phases (see diagram below).



Source: Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung e.V. (nfb), Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg 2012

- Phase 1

First, the organisation has to take the fundamental decision to use this model and commit itself to apply the model and the quality criteria, to implement both successively and to make the results

transparent. All relevant actors shall be involved in the decision and the relevant resources must be provided. This includes developing a common understanding of guidance quality and of the quality culture of the organisation.

- **Phase 2**

A thorough analysis of the current situation is done on the basis of the quality criteria for good guidance and the related indicators.

- **Phase 3**

Development targets are agreed and the necessary activities are planned in accordance with the tasks and objectives of the organisation; corresponding with the thorough analysis of the strengths and present weaknesses from the prior phase.

- **Phase 4**

The required activities are put into practice with regard to the available resources.

- **Phase 5**

The outcomes of the development activities are measured with reference to the application of the quality criteria (in Phase 2).

- **Phase 6**

Finally, the development targets are assessed once again on the basis of the results and further measures, broader or new targets are agreed – the circle is closed, and a new round of quality development may begin. If several aims, which have been derived from the analysis of the current situation in Phase 2, are realized through the implementation of quality measures, it may be appropriate to carry out a thorough analysis of the current situation once again (see the broken line to Phase 2).

The implementation of the QDF in service organisations is supported and facilitated by a manual for the organisations involved (“QER-Kompendium”) as well as through direct organizational development consulting. In the pilot, this support was provided by the experts of the IBW (Heidelberg University) who are responsible for the QDF and the pilot. An important element of the concept is to train and coach the practitioners to gain the knowledge and competence for the autonomous realization of quality activities in their service organisation.

The QDF combines common quality assurance procedures with *career guidance specific quality standards*. It is a flexible instrument which can be used by service providers who so far have no quality assurance mechanism in practice, yet. Additionally, it can be used as a *guidance specific supplement* in organisations where a general quality assurance procedure is already in operation. The QDF provides a common framework for all service providers in career guidance and improves comparability and transparency on the guidance market for users as well as for funders and policy makers.

5. Competence Profile for Guidance Professionals/Practitioners

The competence profile is based on a comprehensive definition of competence: Competence is the ability of a person to identify requirements in complex situations and to solve complex tasks through the activation of specialist knowledge, skills, experiences, feelings, values, interests and motivations and to act independently and purposefully according to the analysis of the situation. Competence further comprises the ability to (self-) critically reflect and assess one's own activities regarding the situation and results in order to learn for future challenges. Last but not least, competence involves the ability to take responsibility for one's own activities (see OECD, 2003; Weber, 2012, p. 11f.).

This short version lists the competences with their basic definition. The German full version gives more details for each competence clearly defining the required abilities for guidance practitioners.

- Transversal Competences (Ü)

Ü1: Focusing on clients: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to align their guidance activities as well as organizational and political activities to the requests/concerns and resources of the clients/users.

Ü2: Creating transparency of offers and processes: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to create transparency regarding the structural circumstances of the guidance service as well as the concrete guidance process.

Ü3: Acting in accord with ethical principles: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to act according to ethical principles in their guidance activities as well as in their organizational and political activities. Additionally, they are willing and able to contribute to the further development of such principles.

Ü4: Engaging in quality development: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to align their guidance and counselling activities as well as their organizational and political activities with a quality strategy. They are willing and able to collaborate in the development and realization of this quality strategy.

- Competences for designing guidance and counselling processes (P)

P1: Creating a sound relationship: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to build a sound relationship together with the clients/users which is appropriate to the subject and the context of the guidance request/concern. They work towards an active and fearless participation of the client/user.

P2: Clarifying the request and agreeing on a contract: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to adequately clarify the request/concern and the expectations of the client/user through a dialogue. Also, they are willing and able to develop an agreement with clients/users which forms a basis for the guidance process.

P3: Situational analysis and clarifying of resources: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to review clients'/users' situations in relation to their requests/concerns together with them, and to support clients'/users' insights to enable a reassessment of their situation.

P4: Developing a prospect of resolution: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to develop possible solutions together with the clients/users and to jointly devise action plans with them, if necessary.

- **Competence for professional self-reflection (B)**

B: (Self-) reflexivity of guidance-related actions: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to reflect their guidance activities – also taking into consideration their organizational and societal context.

- **Competences with regard to the client/user (R)**

R1: Embracing knowledge on career- and work-related questions: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to apply their knowledge about biographical transitions and development processes in the course of life in their guidance interventions, referring to the specific cases of the client/user.

R2: Embracing knowledge on personality development: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to appropriately apply their knowledge on personality development according to the individual personality traits and behaviours of the client/user in an adequate way.

R3: Considering clients' social environments: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to consider the respective social environment of the clients/users – living conditions, education, belonging to communities, family situation, and professional context.

R4: Dealing with diversity: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to activate relevant knowledge and experience in dealing with diversity.

- **Competences for collaboration in shaping the organisation (O)**

O1: Initiating the development of a vision/ mission statement and strategy: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to initiate and realize the development of organisational mission statements, services and strategic plans.

O2: Designing the formal organisation and processes: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to participate in designing the formal organisation and the relevant processes.

O3: Developing organisational culture: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to support a transparent and vivid organizational culture as well as to actively develop a constructive culture for communication, decision making, cooperation and conflict.

O4: Keeping the resources in mind: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to identify and to convincingly justify the necessary requirements for the guidance provision – in terms of content, duration, objectives, target groups and parameters like opening hours, consultation rooms and infrastructure.

O5: Working and interacting with the social context: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to use and further develop their personal professional network as well as the societal environment in relation to proper and target-group specific information, cooperation and networks.

- **Competences referring to the societal context (G)**

G1: Considering knowledge on the societal environment: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to use their specialist knowledge on the relevant societal environment in their guidance practice.

G2: Considering societal goals of counselling: Guidance practitioners are willing and able to adapt their guidance activities to the relevant societal and organizational goals and to contribute to the development of guidance provisions in line with these goals.

(see: Nationales Forum Beratung and Foschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität, 2012)

This competence profile will be further developed during the project phase 2012 – 2014. In particular, this will be done by developing and testing instruments for recording, documenting, and validating practitioner competences (including those which were non-formally and informally acquired).

6. Outlook - Experiences and Further Steps

The “Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development in Career Guidance” and the products developed during its first phase have initiated a broad nationwide dialogue on quality and professionalism in the field of career guidance and counselling in Germany. Through a number of workshops and conferences as well as through a pilot in several organisations, the quality criteria, the QDF and the competence profile have been disseminated and have gained broad awareness in the professional community. Practitioners and service providers appreciate the open mindedness and flexibility of the QDF as well as the comprehensiveness and practicability of the quality criteria. They report that these instruments assist them in reflecting and improving their own work and make them more confident of their own strengths and help to work on their weaknesses. Participating in the QDF process also raised their professional profile in the perspective of their users as well as in relation to their superiors and relevant policy makers. Nevertheless, the practitioners and experts involved in the process reported a number of weaknesses in the results and products obtained which have to be solved or improved during the next phase. These predominantly refer to the work load and organizational difficulties in implementing the QDF and to the particularly “scientific” terminology of the quality criteria which sometimes is not easy to understand and which might keep managers and policy makers from acknowledging the quality criteria.

A huge concern exists among professionals and practitioners for the sustainable implementation of the obtained results. Therefore, the involved experts and pilot organisations have drafted a “Memorandum and Recommendations for Sustainability and Implementation of Quality Standards and Measures”. They recommend further action for

- More transparency of guidance offers and their quality standards,
- A continuous public discourse on quality inside and outside of the professional community,
- Continuous monitoring, scientific research and evaluation of quality improvement,
- Implementing quality credentials or accreditation mechanisms for practitioners and for service providers,
- Quality standards related to the public funding of service providers
- Establishing an infrastructure or service unit responsible for sustainable quality development and professionalism in career guidance.

The final results of the first project phase and the recommendations were presented at a large conference on January 19, 2012 in Berlin/Germany and discussed with experts, practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers from different levels. One goal was to explore the willingness and readiness of policy makers to commit themselves to the implementation of commonly agreed quality standards for career guidance. The impression from the discussion is that there is much appreciation for the work done so far but that further investigations and policy steps have to be initiated in order to reach the final goal of the “Open Process of Coordination”, i.e. to implement binding quality standards in the field of guidance and counselling in education, career development and employment.

Sources

Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung e.V. (*nfb*) and Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (2012): Ergebnisse des Offenen Koordinierungsprozesses Qualitätsentwicklung 2009-2011. Berlin/Heidelberg: wbv).

(This publication contains the German short versions of the quality criteria, the competence profile, and the QDF as well as a CD with the long version of all relevant publications and papers in German. It can also be downloaded from the website www.beratungsqualitaet.net)

OECD (2003). Definition and Selection of Key Competencies. Executive Summary. <http://www.oecd.org/daoecd/47/61/35070367.pdf>

Schiersmann, C., Bachmann, M., Dauner, A. and Weber, P. (2008). Qualität und Professionalität in Bildungs- und Berufsberatung. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.

Weber, P. and Schiersmann, C. (2009): Quality and Professionalism in Educational and Career Guidance in Germany. In: Revista de Pedagogie/Romanian Revue of Pedagogy, 1-3/2009, S. 21-34.

Weber, P., Katsarov, J., Schiersmann, C., Pukelis K., Thomsen, R. (2012): NICE Tuning Framework. In: Schiersmann, C., Ertelt, B.J., Katsarov, J., Mulvey, R., Reid, H. and Weber, P. (Ed.): NICE Handbook for the Academic Training of Career Guidance and Counselling Professionals. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University, p. 27-39.

Weber, P. (2012): Sources for Guidelines on validation of competence of Career Guidance practitioners. In: Weber, P. and Evangelista, L. (Ed.): IMPROVE - Guide for Validation of Career Guidance Practitioners' Competence. IMPROVE. Improving Validation of Not-Formal Learning in European Career Guidance Practitioners. www.improveguidance.eu (2012-09-25), p. 16-46.

Further Publications of Open Process of Coordination for Quality Development (Phase 1)

Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung (*nfb*) und Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls -Universität Heidelberg (Hrsg.) (2011) „Qualitätsmerkmale guter Beratung -Erste Ergebnisse aus dem Verbundprojekt: Koordinierungsprozess Qualitätsentwicklung in der Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung.“ W. Bertelsmann Verlag, Bielefeld. Berlin/ Heidelberg.

Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung (*nfb*) und Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (Hrsg.) (2012): "Kompetenzprofil für Beratende - Ergebnis aus dem Verbundprojekt: Offener Koordinierungsprozess Qualitätsentwicklung in der Beratung für Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung." Berlin, Heidelberg: wbv.

Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung (*nfb*) und Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (Hrsg.) (2012): Perspektiven guter Beratung. Weiterentwicklung der Qualität und Professionalität in der Bildungs- und Berufsberatung. Dokumentation der Konferenz zum Verbundvorhaben Offener Koordinierungsprozess Qualitätsentwicklung in der Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung, Berlin, 19. Januar 2012. Berlin/Heidelberg: 2012.

Contact and Imprint:

Publishers:

National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung e.V., *nfb*)

Kurfürstenstr. 131 | 10785 Berlin, Germany
Tel: +49 30- 257 937 41 | Fax: +49 30- 2639 80 999
E-mail: info@forum-beratung.de
www.forum-beratung.de

Translation: Judith Frübing, Johannes Katsarov

Website: www.beratungsqualitaet.net

A digital version is available for download on: www.beratungsqualitaet.net.

Sponsored by Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)

Reproduction of contents is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

© Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung e.V. (*nfb*) and Foschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Berlin/ Heidelberg: 2012

Research Group Quality in Guidance at the Institute of Educational Science (Forschungsgruppe Beratungsqualität am Institut für Bildungswissenschaft) of the Ruprecht-Karls- Heidelberg University

Akademiestr. 3 | 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
Tel: +49 6221– 547522 | Fax: +49 6221– 547740
E-mail: forschungsgruppe@beratungsqualitaet.net