

SYNTHESIS – 13th November 2014 – Anne Green

Ten key points were identified: 6 Ms, 3As and 1V.

1. **MAZE** – The context of operation for young people, their parents and other key influencers, and employers is a ‘maze’. Descriptors include ‘complexity’ and ‘opaque’. The institutional structure is changing and this can add to confusion: there are schools, free schools, academies, UTCs, studio schools, FE and HE. FE does HE and FE does HE, etc. The ‘chopping and changing’ of policies means that help in ‘navigation’ is needed; ‘networks’ are important here.
2. **MULTIPLE LOCAL ACTORS** - and different funding streams are part of the maze. There are local authorities, prospects for combined authorities, LEPs, etc. Local actors need to work together across policy domains to help employers and young people ‘navigate’ the maze. They also interface with national policies. There is an issue as to whether local actors can prioritise policies that meet the needs of local areas and population sub-groups.
3. **MESSAGES** – to young people, employers and other are often ‘confusing’; (perhaps not surprising given the context above of changing institutional and funding structures).
4. **MAKING IT** – all of the above means that it is difficult for young people to ‘make their way’ through the system and from education to employment. Some young people are left by the wayside (and are left out of the statistics)– e.g. the ‘hidden NEETs’. Employers have a key role to play in the solution to helping young people ‘make their way’ by helping to address structural issues – e.g. through work experience, programmes such as Future Jobs Fund and Step Up, etc.
5. **MENTORING** – also has a key role to play (as the CIPD speaker illustrated). One-to-one support is beneficial, in building self-confidence, helping to ‘map out’ different pathways to employment and associated skills needs, and in helping young people to present themselves to employers in a positive way.
6. **MAPPING OUT PATHWAYS** –linked to the above, one reason why mentoring is important is that pathways to employment are ‘many and varied’. Some young people know what they want to do/ achieve and research and adopt a strategic approach to get there. For others, what happens is much more happenstance. There is ‘no one size fits all’ hence individualised careers advice and ‘signposting’ to opportunities is important.
7. **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE** – was recognised by all as a key challenge; the current situation was described as “farcical”. A ‘do-it-yourself’ online solution to information, advice and guidance is “insufficient”. Young people need to focus on a ‘career’ and not merely a ‘job’ (i.e. understanding that a particular job may be a useful step on a career pathway). Employers can play a role in the advice and guidance ‘space’ (e.g. going into schools and colleges, providing work experience, etc).
8. **ALIGNMENT** – of services to support young people is crucial; (the demise of Connexions left something of a gap here). Likewise, alignment of young people’s attributes and skills to employers’ needs was raised; there is a need to ‘bridge the gap’.
9. **APPRECIATION** – ‘bridging the gap’ means that employers need to ‘appreciate’ young people and what they can offer, and help them realise their capabilities. Employers’ recruitment and selection practices are important here, since they may not allow what young people can offer to be fully appreciated . Services such as Apprenticeship Hubs and Job Shops can be helpful in facilitating appreciation of young people about what options are available.
10. **VOICE** – there is a need to ‘listen’ to the voices of young people, and also of local stakeholders and employers. Prospective solutions to challenges need to take their ‘voice’ into account.