
APPENDIX 6

INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores how the Gatsby Benchmarks for career guidance have been adopted and adapted in Hong Kong, Spain, and Norway, demonstrating their relevance beyond England. Each has tailored the benchmarks to its educational and cultural needs: Hong Kong and Spain have expanded the framework to a ten-point structure, allowing for localised focus areas, while Norway has adopted the benchmarks as they were, finding that they complement their existing systems.

The international implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks highlights its adaptability to diverse educational systems, validating both the core principles and the possibility for customisation. The establishment of data-tracking tools in Hong Kong and Spain, inspired by England's approach, also reflects the benchmarks' role in promoting measurable career readiness outcomes. As Gatsby Benchmarks continue to develop and evolve, an international community of practice could enhance global collaboration, sharing best practices and further building an evidence base to ensure the benchmarks continue to evolve in line with distinct cultural needs which would reinforce the benchmarks' integrity and contribute to a globally informed understanding of quality career guidance.

INTRODUCTION

In 2023 the Gatsby Foundation embarked on a significant programme of research and consultation to capture innovation, unpick challenges and assess what, if any, refinement might be needed to the Gatsby Benchmarks. Gatsby is also reviewing evidence that has emerged since its original report in 2014. This included engaging with overseas organisations who were inspired by the benchmarks and have adapted and adopted them for their own national contexts. This stream of work involved examining the adaptation of the Gatsby Benchmarks in various locations, but focused on the special administrative region of Hong Kong and on two countries, Norway and Spain. It is anticipated that the insights from this research will be crucial for the effective review and potential refinement of the benchmarks.

METHOD

This report presents three case studies: from Hong Kong, Norway and Spain. The research predominantly drew on anecdotal data provided by those directly involved in the implementation of the benchmarks in the countries/special administrative region. This approach provides invaluable insights from a ground-level perspective.

Online interviews took place with six participants, who acted as representatives for their organisations. The purpose of these interviews was to better understand their knowledge and experience of adapting and using the Gatsby Benchmarks. The three types of organisations that participated in the research were key in the implementation of benchmarks in their countries/special administrative region and are:

- **Hong Kong** – the Hong Kong Jockey Club
- **Norway** – Viken County Council and Trøndelag County Council
- **Spain** – the Bertelsmann Foundation

Relevant documentation shared by the participants was reviewed to understand any adaptations they had made and the resources they had developed to support implementation.

For the case study countries/special administrative region, the implementation of the Gatsby-inspired benchmarks is still in the preliminary stages and has been introduced on a modest scale. Initial observations hint at promising outcomes, including increased investment, which has led to proposals for broader implementation. However, it is essential to note that comprehensive evaluations to substantiate these impacts are yet to be undertaken.

HONG KONG

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is a philanthropic organisation in Hong Kong. It has established itself “as a major social partner in fostering a caring and inclusive community in Hong Kong. It accomplishes this through donations made to its community partners via the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, various Trust-initiated projects; and by organising its own events”.¹ The trust focuses on five different areas of social need: elderly care, youth development, healthy community, sports and culture, and talent and sector development.

One of their youth development initiatives is the ambitious CLAP@JC project, which aims to support young people in Hong Kong transition from academic life to professional environments through specialised career and life development programmes. “In the first five years of its activity, CLAP@JC has successfully engaged with 30,000 youths and trained over 4,000 teachers and 1,800 social workers”² by developing a framework based on the Gatsby Benchmarks. These are known as the Hong Kong Benchmarks for Career and Life Development (HKBMs). The initial plan was to implement the framework in a third of secondary schools in Hong Kong. Alongside their use in schools, the benchmarks are also being implemented in mainstream youth services and pre-employment training.

¹ The Hong Kong Jockey Club (accessed 2024) *The Charities Trust*.

² CLAP@JC (2021) *Hong Kong Benchmarks for career and life development toolkit*. p.53.

The Education Bureau in Hong Kong has developed the Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools³ for schools that are planning career guidance services. The six principles of life planning and career guidance are:

- “To provide different services that could align with the developmental needs of students
- To provide to all students, irrespective of their abilities, orientations and levels of study
- To be [a] means of empowerment for students to make informed and responsible choices on their learning, career goals and other aspects of life
- To encourage students to make study/career decisions in accordance with their interests, abilities and orientations
- To promote career development that will help students actualise their potential.
- To assist students in managing and adapting to the transition from school to work, and prepare them for life-long learning”⁴.

Schools are given this guide so they can understand the expectations for career guidance and how they can ensure students know how to plan for their future.

VALUE OF THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

In Hong Kong, before the introduction of the benchmarks, there was no comprehensive standard of what was meant by good career guidance. Adapting the Gatsby Benchmarks into their own HKBMs enabled the special administrative region to develop a systematic approach to career guidance, providing a tool for schools and careers teams to design their career guidance sessions and activities.⁵ Prior to the creation of the HKBMs, many schools did not engage with key aspects of what was expected of them for career guidance, such as linking careers to curriculum subjects, or getting senior management support for the implementation of careers development and guidance. The HKBMs were seen to align with the Hong Kong Education Bureau’s existing education policies, which strengthened government support for the new framework.

³ Education Bureau (2021) *Guide on life planning education and career guidance for secondary schools*.

⁴ Education Bureau (accessed 2024) *Life planning information – six recommended principles of life planning and career guidance*.

⁵ Yip, S.Y.W (2021) *How compatible are the Hong Kong Benchmarks for Career and Life Development (HKBM) and the Education Bureau’s Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance?* HKBM Articles.

ADAPTING AND IMPLEMENTING BENCHMARKS

In 2019, Hong Kong started developing its own version of the Gatsby Benchmarks (see Figure 1). While career guidance was already being provided in school settings, the creation of a specific framework, similar to Gatsby's, was identified as the way to ensure schools understood the government-set expectations of career development and guidance in Hong Kong.

Figure 1: Hong Kong Benchmarks for Career and Life Development⁶



⁶ Holman, J. and Yip, S.Y.W. (2020). *Developing benchmarks for career and life development in the UK and Hong Kong*. CLAP@JC Position Paper.

Before implementing the HKBMs, a pilot project was undertaken with senior management in schools. The project revealed that the HKBMs could have a huge effect on getting senior management, including school principals, directly involved in career guidance and not simply acting as the suppliers of resources.

The cultural characteristics of Hong Kong were considered when creating the HKBMs. The direction a young person takes in their career, life and education is not only influenced by the support they receive from their school but is also strongly influenced by their parents. As a result, an additional benchmark, Benchmark 10 (Parent engagement and support), was added to the HKBM framework. Benchmark 10 is not only about students discussing careers with their families, it also encourages parents to develop their own knowledge of career and life development. Schools give parents advice and encourage them to have discussions with their children about career opportunities. So this benchmark is also about schools engaging with parents, updating them on career opportunities and helping them to break down their traditional views and stereotypical attitudes about different career paths.

Traditionally schools careers teams in Hong Kong work in silos. The HKBMs aim to change this, and change the way schools think about building relationships and partnerships outside the school environment. Careers teams have started to expand their horizons beyond the school boundaries, actively creating employer networks in schools and seeking external opportunities. Preliminary feedback suggests that this proactive approach is creating a more collaborative and externally engaged school culture, which aligns with the initial aspirations of the HKBMs initiative.

In development of HKBMs, the Student Career Readiness Index (SCRI)⁷ developed by the University of Derby is used to compare schools actively using the benchmarks with those schools who are not. Analysis has found that the schools using the benchmarks have seen SCRI levels increase, suggesting that the HKBMs help students to be career ready. There is also a Hong Kong government instrument called the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO),⁸ which is a self-evaluation tool for schools to use to understand the development needs of their students. In those schools using the benchmarks the APASO has found student motivation for achieving their career goals is increasing.

Some of the benchmarks are proving more difficult than others to implement, for example, HKBM 8 (Meaningful encounters with the workplace). While many schools have been working on this benchmark with the support of resources from employers and the Jockey Club, no school has fully achieved the benchmark – although, between 2020 and 2022, the average achievement of HKBM 8 did increase. It is particularly difficult in Hong Kong to organise work experience. There is no official government guidance or requirements for businesses to accommodate schools and provide work experience opportunities, and this is something that is unlikely to change in the future. While there is some interest from employers, particularly those with corporate social responsibility targets, there is no coherent and functional infrastructure that supports work experience.

⁷ Dodd, V., Hanson, J and Hooley, T. (2021) *Increasing students' career readiness through career guidance: measuring the impact with a validated measure*. Informa UK Limited.

⁸ Education Bureau (accessed 2024) *Assessment program for affective and social outcomes* (2nd version) (APASO-II).

HKBM 10 (Parent engagement and support) is also proving difficult to implement. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, parental engagement has not been part of education guidelines for over 30 years and is not part of current government guidelines or policy. This creates tensions for schools who are trying to implement the standard but who have no support. Furthermore, at the start of the project two years ago, teachers were asked to rank the importance of each benchmark and HKBM 10 ranked as the least important. These factors taken together mean that the project, schools and careers teams are having to start from scratch with the implementation of this benchmark; having to build interest and demonstrate its importance.

The benchmark considered the easiest to implement is HKBM 6 (Personal guidance for developing career roadmaps) because this is already embedded in careers provision in Hong Kong schools.

IMPACT OF THE HONG KONG BENCHMARKS

The implementation of the HKBMs has encouraged training for teachers to help them understand the basics of career counselling and how the world of work is changing so they can better support their students, this was described as “strengthening the distributive leadership of career education and school” by a case study participant.

There has also been an increase in students’ participation in career-related activities. This is a consequence not only of schools creating opportunities but also of students attending them and enjoying them. Schools are using older students to talk to their peers about careers and futures, providing advice about career development and learning. There has also been an increase in students wanting to pursue their own interests and not necessarily those of their parents or families. This shows a clear change in the attitude of young people and also confirms the need for the implementation of HKBM 10.

Influenced by the UK, Hong Kong has introduced enterprise advisers to link schools to the world of work, both for students and teachers, and this is supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. There is a developing dialogue between enterprise advisers and the schools about the range of support schools can access in terms of experiences or activities, but this also includes support with the evaluation of the implementation of the benchmarks.

REFLECTION

CLAP@JC in Hong Kong has worked to create their own benchmarks based on the Gatsby Benchmarks. The aim of the HKBMs has been to develop a formal framework of career and life development, which can be used in secondary schools across Hong Kong. The adoption of the benchmarks has created a systematic approach to monitoring career guidance for careers teams in schools to follow and achieve. When adapting the Gatsby Benchmarks to develop the HKBMs, clear consideration was given to the relevance of each benchmark to the Hong Kong cultural context. As a result of this, 10 HKBMs have been developed, including an additional benchmark focused on parental involvement.

The benchmarks, in many instances, aligned seamlessly with existing Education Bureau policies, which aided their introduction into schools. While there were challenges in the implementation process of certain benchmarks, overall the framework has been recognised as a valuable addition to the educational landscape in Hong Kong. Many schools have acknowledged the tangible benefits of the HKBMs, noting improvements in career guidance provision, enhanced student engagement and a clearer direction for curricular goals.

SPAIN

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Originally founded in Germany in 1977, the Bertelsmann Foundation has operated in Spain for over 25 years to identify the needs of society and propose innovative and sustainable solutions. The Foundation is a non-profit organisation which works with the national Ministry of Education, local ministries of education as well as with employers and schools. In the last 10 years, the Foundation has had a particular focus on career guidance, technical education and training.

In Spain, the traditional approach to career guidance was focused on the transition to work. Schools work with 16-year-olds at the end of their secondary education, as well as 18-year-olds who are looking to progress to university or technical education. While career guidance exists in schools, there is often no opportunity for in-depth discussions looking at pathways for young people because of the workload of the career professionals, who often have multiple responsibilities in the schools.

There is a legal requirement in Spain for schools to provide career guidance, but the policies lack definition and rigour in terms of the delivery of services and have a simplistic view of what guidance should be provided. The Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education⁹ establishes the national legislation and defines career guidance as a student's right and a factor in the quality of education. One of the principles of this law is that education and professional guidance is a pathway to personalised training and should be part of a comprehensive education of knowledge, skills and values. All regional administrations are required to provide specific services and resources, including specialised professionals, to assure academic success. Issues arise when local education systems working across regions are different, which creates challenges in defining career guidance at a national level. For example, education authorities and schools of the autonomous regions have their own bodies responsible for education, technical and professional guidance. Likewise, schools providing compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate, technical education and training, and universities have their own guidance services providing information, support, guidance and advice.

⁹ Gobierno de España (2020) *Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education.*

VALUE OF THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

The Foundation became aware of the Gatsby Benchmarks in 2016 and understood their value during a trip to London in 2017 to meet with Sir John Holman. The team at the Foundation were aware of the pilot carried out in the North East of England. Following this visit, the Bertelsmann Foundation worked for several years to adapt the Gatsby Benchmarks into a Spanish standard, known as the Xcelence model.¹⁰ To ensure consistency of application across the Spanish system, the Foundation held focus groups with various experts to develop an online tool to measure schools' progress with the Xcelence framework.

The Foundation saw the potential in the benchmarks and that they could be adapted to suit the needs of Spain and its schools. They also saw the work as a way to explore the career education provisions in other countries/special administrative regions: not only England but also the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Hong Kong and Norway.

The Foundation recognised several strengths in the Gatsby Benchmarks. Providing a way for schools to measure their own progress and enabling flexibility in implementation were major strengths. Both factors give schools independence in their approach to achieving the benchmarks, allowing them to make their own decisions about the best way to achieve the benchmarks in their school's specific context. Other strengths highlighted were connecting the curriculum to careers guidance and also to the needs of the labour market and the world of work.

The benchmarks were also seen as accessible for career guidance professionals, teachers and businesses, helping them better understand their role in supporting the delivery of career guidance activities.

Between 2017 and 2019, the Bertelsmann Foundation engaged in a rigorous collaborative endeavour with educational experts, dedicating significant efforts to examining and defining the model's 10 fundamental benchmarks and their associated quality indicators. This development process resulted in a pilot programme involving 68 educational institutions across Madrid, Catalonia and Andalusia.

¹⁰ Fundación Bertelsmann (accessed 2022) *Xcelence, guidance in educational centers*.

ADAPTING AND IMPLEMENTING BENCHMARKS

The Xcelence model is based on the Gatsby Benchmarks, but also draws directly from guidance systems in Finland, the Netherlands, Hong Kong and Ireland. The Xcelence model is outlined in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Xcelence model

KEY 1 THE ACADEMIC-PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE SYSTEM UNDER A QUALITY FRAMEWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the guidance system have the explicit support of the management team? • Are the teaching team, students and families aware of the academic-professional guidance plan?
KEY 2 STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL COORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a team responsible for academic-professional guidance? • Does the centre have a coordinator of academic-professional strategies?
KEY 3 ADAPTATION TO THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the teaching team detect the diverse needs of each student at the different educational levels? • Do the students take orientation tests and interpret the data together with a professional?
KEY 4 PERSONAL GUIDANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students have at least one personal interview before finishing Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO)? And another before finishing high school or a training cycle? • Do tutors receive specific training to incorporate guidance in tutorials?
KEY 5 FAMILIES AS AN ACTIVE AGENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the centre involve families in the orientation and decision-making process of the students? • Are there career guidance resources and activities for families?
KEY 6 LINKING THE SUBJECTS WITH PROFESSIONAL FIELDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the teaching staff have the support of the guidance team to link the subjects with the professional context? • Do the orientation activities foster the interest of students, especially female students, in subjects related to the STEM fields?
KEY 7 MEETINGS WITH FORMER STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the centre plan meetings with former students and professionals from 3rd year of ESO? • Is there a record of contacts of former students and professionals?
KEY 8 EXPERIENCES IN WORK CONTEXTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the centre organize experiences in real work environments? • Do the students prepare these experiences beforehand in the centre with a tutor/or adviser?

<p>KEY 9 USE OF LABOR MARKET INFORMATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students and families receive understandable and reliable information on trends in the professional world? • Do tutors and advisers know sources of information about professions and do they know how to interpret and use them?
<p>KEY 10 PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSITION TO POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the centre inform about all the post-compulsory itineraries, even if they are not taught at the centre? • Do counselors and tutors contribute to dismantling stereotypes associated with training cycles?

When adapting the Gatsby Benchmarks into the Xcelence model, the Foundation found it necessary to make several changes to ensure they could be implemented into the Spanish context effectively. Firstly, Benchmark 1 (A stable careers programme, as used in the UK) was split into two, separating out quality from strategic and operational implementation. They also believed it important to engage with families because the role of families and parents in young people's careers decisions is central in Spain. Therefore, the role of families was explicitly included in Key 5 (Families as an active agent).

There was a concern that schools in Spain would not accept a framework that came directly from a non-profit organisation. The public and the government had concerns about there being a mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market and the quality of the careers guidance systems. So the Foundation worked with career guidance experts, education policymakers and senior leadership teams to discuss the model they wanted to develop. The implementation of what is known as the Xcelence framework in Spain came from these detailed discussions and from using the UK as an example of how a framework can improve career guidance provision at a school level.

To implement the framework successfully, the Bertelsmann Foundation needed to recruit partners and investment. Having researched the approach taken in the UK, the Foundation linked with an external organisation, a Spanish equivalent of Teach First,¹¹ who adapted the UK's training for careers leaders to suit the needs of Spain. The Foundation believe the training it provided is one of the biggest successes of the project. The Foundation received funding from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation,¹² which enabled the expansion of the project to different regions of Spain.

¹¹ Teach First is an education charity. <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/>

¹² JP Morgan Chase Foundation <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/impact>

After three years of successful engagement with numerous schools, in 2022 the Bertelsmann Foundation made an agreement with the local Ministry of Education in Madrid. This agreement led to further investment in the project, including support for the training of more careers leaders. This commitment to the project from the regional administration shows how successful the project has been. The goal for the next four years is to extend the implementation of the framework to every single school in Madrid, ensuring a comprehensive approach to career guidance that benefits students across the region.

The Xcelence model gives schools access to a self-assessment tool, which they can use to understand their current performance, and to compare themselves with other educational centres nationwide. To enable the Foundation to measure the use of the tools and the framework, the benchmarks are divided into indicators which provide quantitative results. This enables schools to measure each benchmark individually and evaluate their progress from the start of the year to the end of the year. The anonymised data from all participating schools can be downloaded and interrogated to understand the level to which schools are meeting their targets. However the tool does not show the individual activities that are taking place to meet the benchmarks.

To date, the Xcelence model has been implemented in two regions: Madrid and Catalonia. While implementation took place at the same time, the approaches taken by the regions have differed because of the dynamics of the local government. Consequently, in Madrid there has been a top-down approach whereby they are working closely with the Minister of Education. Whereas in Catalonia, there is a bottom-up approach involving City Hall officials and stakeholders. While both approaches are working, the implementation in Madrid is considered more successful: they are working with 200 schools in Madrid, in comparison with 100 in Catalonia. The goal in Madrid is to influence policymakers to establish a career guidance policy that sets the standard for all schools.

Key 10 of the Xcelence framework (Preparation for the transition to post-compulsory educational pathways) has been the easiest to implement because of the post-secondary guidance that already exists in schools across Spain. The majority of secondary schools offer information to students about the different post-compulsory pathways and the bridges between them. Information about the types of undergraduate degrees and the various vocational training cycles and modules are also commonly provided by schools and colleges. Of the schools that are using the Xcelence model, approximately nine out of 10 have reported that they give their students several opportunities to discover a variety of educational paths, regardless of the school's specific educational offerings.

Schools that provide basic vocational training or the equivalent of secondary school (bachillerato) are especially good at this. They are the most likely to report that all of their students (46.7% of schools providing basic vocational training and 40.7% of schools for bachillerato) have opportunities to explore different paths. It should also be noted that there are no reports of schools where there is no access to exploring opportunities.¹³

¹³ Fundación Bertelsmann (accessed 2022) *Xcelence, guidance in educational centers*.

Key 8 of the Xcelence framework (Experiences in work contexts) is proving more challenging. Schools building relationships with businesses, engaging with the world of work and providing work experience for students has not traditionally been part of Spanish culture. Since the implementation of the Xcelence framework, there has been increased awareness that businesses can improve their recruitment by communicating with schools and students and showing the types of jobs available for students once they leave education. Corporate volunteers have been introduced to deliver school-related activities in their local areas; this role reflects that of the enterprise adviser in England. The corporate volunteers have helped improve understanding of the importance of this benchmark. Another strategy introduced to help develop relationships between schools and businesses is a web tool called Inspiran.¹⁴ Inspiran was launched in January 2023 and it connects businesses and schools so they can co-deliver career guidance activities. Companies and schools can advertise and search for opportunities for career guidance activities, and these opportunities can be filtered by geographical areas. The tool also enables companies with a corporate volunteering programme to search for volunteering opportunities.

IMPACT OF THE XCELENCE MODEL

The impact of the implementation and use of the benchmarks is being measured in an independent evaluation project being carried out by a national university in Spain, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) This will be the second evaluation of the project.

The Foundation has also adapted the SCRI created by researchers at the University of Derby to measure the career readiness of students. The questionnaire is used at the end of the year with students aged 15. To measure any improvement in students' career preparedness resulting from the implementation of the Xcelence framework, the plan is to apply the localised version of the SCRI which was originally proposed by Hanson and Neary (2020)¹⁵ to 4th-year ESO (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria) students in participating schools over the three years of the project implementation.

The evaluation conducted by UNED shows that the Xcelence program, Inspiring Schools, has played a key role in highlighting the significance of career guidance in educational institutions. It has prompted teaching staff to reflect on the importance of bridging the gap between curriculum and the professional world. This shift in perspective has led to the development of dynamic activities and initiatives aimed at breaking down the traditional boundaries that often separate academic and professional domains. Importantly, the report notes that the implementation of the framework has resulted in a tangible improvement in students' career readiness, they have been more engaged with their schools, and their enthusiasm for exploring diverse professional opportunities has increased. These findings highlight how important effective career guidance is in enhancing both the educational experience and students' preparedness for their future careers.

The evaluations so far have seen an increase in educational settings achieving each of the benchmarks over the two years of the project. This demonstrates that the benchmarks are being used and schools are still participating. The project includes a goal for schools to set up committees for teachers, families and students to talk about 'great guidance'. It is suggested these committees meet twice a year to discuss what good guidance looks like, what guidance currently looks like, and what it will look like in the future.

¹⁴ Companies That Inspire (accessed 2024) *Connecting the educational and professional world through guidance*.

¹⁵ Hanson, J., and Neary, S. (2020). *The Gatsby Benchmarks and social mobility: impacts to date*. IAEVG Conference Proceedings Career Guidance for Inclusive Society. Bratislava, Slovakia 11-13 September 2019. IAEVG: Slovakia, pp.168-185.

REFLECTION

The Bertelsmann Foundation in Spain has developed its own version of the Gatsby Benchmarks, called the Xcelence framework. After having conversations with Sir John Holman at the start of their project in 2017, and carrying out a thorough exploration of how the benchmarks are implemented in the UK, the Foundation developed partnerships to help develop their project, these included working with large organisations such as JP Morgan Chase. The implementation of the benchmarks has been a learning curve, with the benchmarks needing to be adapted to the Spanish context. However, the Foundation has already had some success implementing their framework in Madrid and Catalonia, where they are currently working with 300 schools across the two regions.

The two independent evaluations they commissioned have demonstrated that the benchmarks are being used and that schools are on board with learning and understanding the importance of using the benchmarks for career guidance. The plan is for Spain to expand the Xcelence framework across the country and provide resources supporting career guidance to schools and businesses. The Foundation is also planning to develop video tutorials to help schools and businesses understand how to implement the framework.

NORWAY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In Norway, career guidance is compulsory in lower and upper secondary education and is included in the country's Education Act. There is no formal requirement for individuals to have specific qualifications to be able to provide career guidance, but the Directorate for Education and Training recommends a series of qualifications that are needed to provide guidance, this includes having a bachelor's degree with a minimum of 60 credits in a guidance-related subject. In 2008 the subject Selection of Education was made compulsory in lower secondary education. In 2015 legislation was introduced that 110 school hours over three years must be spent on career-learning activities. As part of this, students are expected to learn and develop career skills, understand opportunities and requirements in the education system and in working life, and develop competencies to help them successfully navigate transitions.

Career guidance is considered a lifelong process in Norway and efforts have been made to ensure guidance is available to anyone who needs it, whether they are secondary school students, adults or prisoners. County councils in Norway have a responsibility to offer a career guidance service to all local inhabitants and that is free of charge to adults over the age of 19. In the last three years, Norway has introduced a law whereby county councils also have to offer career guidance to all refugees as part of an induction programme into the country.

Norway became aware of the Gatsby Benchmarks through a presentation given by Tristram Hooley and David Andrews at the Inland Norway University for Applied Sciences and through their book, *The Career Leaders Handbook*. This led to an interest in their potential applicability to the Nordic context.

VALUE OF THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

The Gatsby Benchmarks are seen as a valuable guide for the Norwegian system to follow because of its systematic approach. They do not include anything new or radical, but there has been significant buy-in by schools. The benchmarks are seen as accessible and clear in terms of what to do and how to implement them. However, they allow for 'local freedom', so schools can be flexible in their approach to adopting the framework. Considering the framework also raised questions about career leadership, the role of careers leaders, what is being done well and what could be done better.

ADAPTING AND IMPLEMENTING BENCHMARKS

At this point in time, Norway has adopted the Gatsby Benchmarks in the same format as England. However, career guidance frameworks used in other countries/special administrative regions were also explored. There was particular interest in the approach taken in Hong Kong and how parental involvement has been integrated as an additional benchmark. However, in Norway, parents' rights to be part of and influence their children's schooling are already included in governmental education policy and the Education Act. According to the Norwegian Education Act, parents are mainly responsible for children's upbringing at home, and schools are responsible for children's learning, but schools must collaborate closely with parents. Because of this established relationship between parents and schools, Norway has focused on existing strategies to encourage parental involvement, rather than designing and implementing a new benchmark.

The county councils implementing career guidance in their local areas have only been established in the last 3.5 years. It is these councils and steering groups that are introducing the Gatsby Benchmarks. Previous provision is being compared with the benchmarks and it has been found that some benchmarks have been in place for several years. An example is the requirement for encounters with employers, where one network has been organising employer speed networking events with pupils for the last seven years.

An area that needs development is the role of the careers leader in Norway. While some schools have careers leaders, others only have career guidance counsellors. Review of the literature on career guidance shows that schools with a dedicated careers leader implement the benchmarks better than schools that do not. So to support the implementation of the framework, more financial support is needed to develop the role of the careers leader in Norway.

Implementation of the benchmarks in Norway has sometimes proved challenging. Suitable structures do not currently exist in Norway to be able to track, measure or implement the benchmarks nationally. There is also no system in place that enables the collection of pupil destination data, so it is difficult to measure the impact of the benchmarks.

Some staff in some schools are reluctant to implement elements of the benchmarks. For example, some teachers find Benchmark 4 (Linking curriculum learning to careers) particularly challenging to implement. It has been difficult to get all teachers on board with the idea of using the benchmarks and there is often no time 'to fight the cause'. It has also been difficult to get full leadership buy-in. So while many leadership teams acknowledge the importance and understand the benchmarks, getting them involved in practice is challenging. Consequently, county councils have focused on being flexible in implementing the benchmarks, encouraging schools to customise the framework to their specific needs.

IMPACT OF THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

The introduction of the benchmarks in Norway is still at the developmental stage. Impact relies on the ability to implement the benchmarks and, as of yet, there has not been widespread implementation in Norway because of the difficulties with school leadership and investment. However, gradual learning about the benchmarks is taking place, with the acknowledgement of how they can be used in the country. There is an awareness of how the implementation of certain benchmarks, for example Benchmark 4 (Linking curriculum learning to careers), can have huge implications for the school and for the implementation of the remaining benchmarks.

REFLECTION

The benchmarks are beginning to gain recognition among policymakers, county councils, educators and employers in Norway. A report by national authorities on the quality of career guidance in schools referenced the Gatsby Benchmarks, acknowledging their significance and suggesting enhanced methods for their implementation. There is also growing ambition for schools to develop their career guidance.

While Norway is not currently officially using the Gatsby Benchmarks, there are many similarities between the framework and their current careers provision. There is also a push to see how and if the benchmarks can be adapted for use in prison settings.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This paper provides an overview of how two countries, Spain and Norway, and the special administrative region of Hong Kong, have adopted and/or adapted the Gatsby Benchmarks to fit their educational needs. This suggests that the international work that informed the original construction of the benchmarks has resonance and wider applicability. Hong Kong was visited for the international fieldwork and their adoption of the benchmarks provides symmetry. The use of the framework validates not just the work that has been undertaken in England, but the universality of the benchmarks, in that they reflect what good guidance should look like in all countries/special administrative regions.

A key strength identified by all is the flexibility of the framework. Both Spain and Hong Kong have adapted the benchmarks, branding them locally and extending them to 10 benchmarks (referred to in Spain as 'keys') to better reflect the educational and cultural context. Norway used the existing standards because they supported the model of practice already in place. This shows that the benchmarks can retain their core focus but they can flex to meet local needs. This is something which has been commented on previously throughout both this research and the wider Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years project.¹⁶

Teachers reacted by both welcoming but also resisting the benchmarks. Some welcomed the localisation of the benchmarks and recognised that they offer a framework for making the curriculum more careers relevant. In Hong Kong and Spain there has been a focus on training teachers to become more informed about careers and how they can support young people more holistically. However, this is still a challenge and linking the curriculum to careers has met with some resistance, particularly in Norway.

A challenge identified in the countries/special administrative region studied is the lack of alignment between what the benchmarks are trying to achieve and current education policies. This has caused frustration and a lack of leverage with schools. It has been identified as a problem, specifically when working with parents and with employers.

Implementing the benchmarks has improved levels of engagement with employers. This has been an area of careers work that previously lacked stimulus and focus, particularly in Hong Kong and Spain. The benchmarks have offered a structure that is starting to be adopted, and enterprise adviser type roles are being developed (corporate volunteers in Spain). This area of work is still being developed and is one that the countries are carefully trying to navigate. It will take time and a level of cultural change, meaning that schools are finding the benchmarks related to employers the most difficult to achieve.

¹⁶ Gatsby Foundation (2023) *Programmes – Good career guidance: the next ten years*.

The infrastructure for the delivery of the benchmarks is also starting to be replicated. The Gatsby requirements to track data and measure outcomes are being adopted, with Spain developing tools to achieve this, and the SCRI being used in Hong Kong and Spain. Both are already starting to evidence young people's enhanced career readiness by using the benchmarks. This type of data could be used for a comparative study of all participating countries/special administrative regions to understand relationships between benchmarks and career readiness.

An important aspect of the implementation of the benchmarks in England has been the establishment of the careers leader role. This role is now being introduced in Norway and Spain, enabling strategic work to implement the benchmarks. The Ministry of Education in Madrid is also starting to fund training to develop the role.

A theme mentioned by all the adoptees of the benchmarks was the role of families and parents. Hong Kong and Spain have developed additional benchmarks to address this, and Norway is considering this as a development to their current model. All commented on the importance of engaging parents more closely in young people's career decision-making, developing parental knowledge of the world of careers and creating greater alignment between schools, young people and their families in relation to career guidance. Although this is driven by culture, it explicitly acknowledges the role that parents and families can have in career conversations.

CONCLUSIONS

The success of the Gatsby Benchmarks in England is starting to be replicated in other European countries. Anecdotally, we know there is interest from many countries/special administrative regions across Europe and as far away as Australia. This paper has presented an exploration of two countries, Spain and Norway, and the special administrative region of Hong Kong, which are further along their own benchmark journey. Both Spain and Hong Kong have taken the benchmarks and adapted them to their specific needs. This has resulted in localised branding, the merging of some benchmarks, the subdivision of others and the establishment of new ones. The new ones have addressed the cultural needs for more family input into career decisions in Spain and Hong Kong, and recognise the importance of family at this stage of young people's lives. This shows that the benchmarks can be shaped to the needs of different cultural contexts without any loss to their integrity.

Norway is at an earlier stage of its journey and has adopted the original benchmarks for use with schools. All have identified gaps in their existing provision and acknowledge how the Gatsby Benchmarks and the underpinning infrastructure can help to address these. The evidence base and the continued research in England to monitor their implementation and evaluate their impact has contributed to the confidence in the framework.

It may be useful to consider an international Gatsby Benchmarks community of practice that could support countries/special administrative regions with an interest in adopting the benchmarks. It would continue to collect case studies of international implementation, helping those around the world learn from each other and ensuring that the benchmarks continued to develop and adapt to different cultural contexts. An international community of practice would extend the available evidence base and capture international impact data to contribute to a more global definition of 'good guidance'.

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