

Career Counseling in North Macedonia: The Design, Implementation, and Sustainability of the  
YES Network

By

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This dissertation examines a case of an international development initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the United States and implemented in North Macedonia. The specific initiative was a youth development program including a substantial career counseling component called the Macedonia Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network. Historically, international development initiatives funded by USAID have struggled with implementation with fidelity to policy prescriptions and sustainability (AKIpress, 2020; Drummond & DeYoung, 2003; Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). While the United States continues to fund numerous international initiatives through USAID, at a substantial cost to American taxpayers, projects are typically implemented and sustained with highly variable, and often disappointing, success in the recipient nation (AKIpress, 2020; Drummond & DeYoung, 2003; Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000; USAID, 2022). Consequently, in this dissertation, I trace the development of a specific career counseling program, the extent to which it was implemented with fidelity, and the extent to which it was sustained over time in order to illuminate rationales for the variable degrees of success experienced by this particular initiative in each of the aforementioned areas.

Drawing from institutional theory, specifically, the concepts of institutional logics, institutional complexity, and institutionalization, I assess the components of a new educational initiative, the process by which it was implemented, and the extent to which the initiative was sustained. The dissertation is based on interviews with 62 stakeholders located in both the United States and in North Macedonia, 11 months of fieldwork in North Macedonia, and substantial document analysis.

## Statement of the Problem

USAID spends billions of dollars annually to help developing nations around the world with development projects such as those related to improving education systems and opportunities (USAID, 2019). Specifically, President Biden requested 60.4 billion dollars for USAID for the 2023 fiscal year (USAID, 2022). However, prior research indicates that USAID initiatives are often not in accord with the local context to which they diffuse, nor are they adopted with fidelity by organizational actors (Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). Additionally, following the cessation of USAID funds, these initiatives tend to dissipate given that they are often not embedded in institutional practices in the recipient nation. The exception to this rule comes when USAID initiatives are funded for extended periods of time, which allows the practices to become institutionalized (AKIpress, 2020; Drummond & DeYoung, 2003).

This divide that often exists between policy and practice in international education development (Day, 2019; Gubser, 2017; McNeil, 1986; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000) is demonstrated at the practitioner level. Given the inherent autonomy of practitioners in education, much discretion is left to these individuals to interpret and enact policies, resulting in divergences between policy and practice (Coburn, 2001; McNeil, 1986; Spillane & Anderson, 2014). Research on how individuals interpret policies in the creation of practices is typically associated with the sensemaking literature (Coburn, 2001; Liao-Troth & Dunn, 1999; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011; Spillane & Anderson, 2014; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). The sensemaking literature tells us that individuals mediate and adapt policies based on their own personal and professional histories and local contexts (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). More recent studies have also shifted towards incorporating an institutional logics framework to better enable researchers to understand the influence of broader organizational

norms on individual sensemaking processes (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Coburn, 2004; Diehl, 2019; Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Hallett, 2010; Lounsbury & Pollack, 2001; Marsh, et al., 2020; Spillane & Anderson, 2014). Institutional logics, broadly, are the general concepts or principles that influence the institutionalized norms of practice (Woulfin, 2016). Logics often exist at multiple levels, such as the institutional and organizational levels (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Diehl, 2019; Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). The contribution of institutional logics to sensemaking is that institutional logics incorporate how policies are adapted to not only fit the beliefs and values of individuals but are also adjusted to align with institutional norms. Thus, institutional logics will be particularly useful to the present study as this framework will allow for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the process by which a new professional logic, or an institutional logic for the professional field of interest, is introduced into a new context with pre-existing professional norms (Hattke, Vogel, & Woiwode, 2016).

The specific program of interest, the YES Network, was funded by USAID and implemented by the American education firm Education Development Center (EDC) to reduce youth unemployment in North Macedonia. Following its establishment as an independent nation, North Macedonia struggled with unemployment. Unemployment reached its apex in 2005 at 37.3% (The World Bank, 2022). Unemployment among youth, ages 15–24, was particularly high, reaching 65.4% in 2003. These numbers have since come down significantly and as of 2020, rest at 17.2% nationwide and 36.9% for youth. However, these figures are still substantially higher than the aggregate figures for Europe and Central Asia of 7.2% for unemployment and 18.3% for youth unemployment (The World Bank, 2022). Given the



unemployment figures for young people, career services in Macedonian schools are of particular importance.

The YES Network began in September of 2010 and ran until June of 2016. The program had four major goals: to encourage dialogue on youth unemployment, to enhance career preparation for students, to improve workforce preparedness, and to support youth with disabilities. Part of the effort to enhance career preparation was the revitalization and expansion of career counseling services. Prior to the implementation of USAID career counseling initiatives, North Macedonia lacked structures of career counseling within schools. Thus, the professional expectations of career counseling diffused to an environment that lacked preconceived professional expectations for the field of career counseling. Accordingly, this case affords a unique opportunity to study how organizational actors interact with a new institutional logic that enters a field defined by pre-existing logics that did not include career counseling.

The present study will thus illuminate the process of implementation and sustainability of the YES Network, including illuminating barriers to success resulting from conflicting institutional expectations. Because most studies of international development programs are evaluations that measure quantitative outcomes, there has been limited attention given to the inherently qualitative processes by which these policies and programs are interpreted and implemented by locals. Given the problems with implementation and sustainability found in many USAID initiatives, investigating how organizational actors interpret these initiatives during initial implementation and over time is essential to understanding why individual locales have difficulties implementing initiatives with fidelity and with sustaining practices over time, and in understanding how future policies might better anticipate and address these difficulties.

## Objective

The objective of the present study is to examine a case of an international education development initiative to determine three aspects of the initiative: 1) the goals and origins of the program, 2) the fidelity with which these goals and content were implemented, and 3) the extent to which the goals and content of the initiative were sustained in practice five years after the cessation of funding. Understanding these three components will deepen our knowledge of how education practitioners mediate policy to create practices and what factors influence this process. This case study of the YES Network provides the opportunity to observe the divide between policy prescriptions and the resulting practices, and to examine how this divide developed and changed over time.

In this study, I found that while the career counseling program was developed with substantial input from Macedonian individuals, the information provided was not sufficiently prioritized within schools and relevant institutions at the time of implementation. Consequently, there was substantial variation among career counselors regarding the extent of implementation with fidelity. This variation was largely the result of institutionally complex environments in which career counseling was relegated to a lower priority for many counselors. Furthermore, few career counselors continue to practice career counseling at present, largely due to lacking institutional support, including few organizational or institutional regulations requiring or encouraging such practices. Specifically, given the limited amount of time during which career counseling was formally implemented as well as the lack of institutional structures to replace the influence of the YES Network upon its cessation, there was little external motivation for career counselors to maintain their practices following the YES Network. Thus, it is necessary that for future initiatives to achieve superior sustainability in North Macedonia and other developing

nations, they must include additional institutional changes, such as formal policy shifts and the establishment of an independent and unique position. Additionally, it would be beneficial for a similar program to receive continued funding from local sources in order to ensure that the desired practices continue after the external source or sources of funding cease.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions guide this study:

- 1) What were the goals, practices, and assumptions of the new institutional logic structuring career counseling in North Macedonia? What were the sources of these components?
- 2) How did high school career counselors in North Macedonia initially interpret this new logic and implement it along with their everyday practices? How did they balance this new logic with existing institutional logics?
- 3) To what extent has this new institutional logic been sustained over time in career counseling practices in Macedonian high schools?

### **Significance**

This study will help shift the focus within the educational development literature from specific, quantitative outcomes to more nuanced perspectives of meaning-making within organizations (Suddaby, 2010). Very few studies explicitly use institutional theory, including institutional logics and complexity, to investigate implementation and institutionalization, to explore sustainability, or to examine the impact of an international educational development initiative. Those studies that do discuss institutionalization, such as studies exploring the international diffusion of education policies, typically take a more limited approach (Dungan,

2017; Murphy, 2005; Schriewer, 2009). This dissertation is one of the first case studies to bring together multiple institutional frameworks to explain the degree of success experienced by an international education development initiative.

This approach is important to the understanding of such initiatives because institutional theory can help education researchers understand the process of how new initiatives compete with existing norms, practices, and values during implementation, and can help in understanding how the processes of institutionalization influence sustainability. By studying the process by which individuals implement and sustain an international education policy, I will gain a more complete understanding of how organizational actors create and maintain their practices from international development initiatives. Because policy creation often exists independent of actual decision making by educational practitioners (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Coburn, 2001; McNeil, 1986; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011), this information will better enable policy makers to account for the interpretation of educators in the creation of international development policies. More specifically still, using an institutional logics framework will help illuminate competing ideals that may interfere with the implementation and sustainability of international development programs. Additionally, given that this dissertation begins with the design phase of a specific initiative, using institutional theory will help demonstrate how and why certain aspects of the design contributed to the success or failure of the implementation and sustainability phases. This will allow future programs to better account for obstacles to implementation and sustainability that could be created by competing logics or practices.

The specific case of the YES Network is a particularly interesting case to provide insights related to the policy to practice divide within international educational development for multiple reasons. First, the YES Network is a program thought by those involved in its development to

have spent too short a time in implementation. In conversations with USAID and EDC representatives, the duration of the YES Network was substantially shorter than is typically necessary to achieve permanent results. Investigating the sustainability of this program, or the obstacles to sustainability, will help clarify the extent to which this is true and the rationale for why this might be so. The notion of USAID initiatives being too short in duration is a common theme among many USAID initiatives (Drummond & DeYoung, 2003; Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000).

The second reason for the importance of this case is the lack of institutional grounding for the profession of career counseling as North Macedonia lacks career counseling structures apart from those implemented by USAID. This study can inform as to how international development efforts are implemented and sustained in nations that lack institutional structures geared towards those practices. Thus, this research will demonstrate how policies translate into practice when the content of the policy is novel to the nation adopting it. This is in contrast to a USAID initiative that adjusts the organizational practices for an institution already in existence. Research as to how a policy is interpreted in an environment with little or no foundation for that practice will better enable future initiatives to account for potential obstacles to successful implementation and sustainability.

In addition to providing relevant information to the field of international education development, this investigation of the YES Network will also be informative to the Macedonian educational landscape. While there are program evaluations of the YES Network in general, the information provided about the success of the implementation and sustainability of the career counseling component of this initiative is minimal. Providing a better understanding of how local educational practitioners in North Macedonia adopt policies, such as the career counseling

component of the YES Network, into practice will improve the ability of future educational policy efforts to achieve their goals. This is particularly relevant as, according to discussions with USAID contractors and affiliates, career counseling in North Macedonia remains an area of interest for future initiatives.

## **Background**

This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first explores the context of North Macedonia and the second looks at the role of USAID in establishing career counseling initiatives in North Macedonia.

### **Education in North Macedonia**

North Macedonia became an independent nation in 1991 (U.S. Department of State, 2022). North Macedonia established independence following its secession from the former nation of Yugoslavia. Unlike relationships between other former-Yugoslavian nations, North Macedonia maintained relative peace with its neighbor states throughout the independence process. Consequently, according to personal communication with an individual at USAID's North Macedonia office, many of the educational practices of Macedonian schools were originally carried over from Yugoslavia. As part of Yugoslavia, and for the first eleven years of independence, Macedonian schools offered professional orientation services for students. These services largely provided an overview of available jobs for students in the Macedonian economy; however, these services lacked both depth and individuation. There were no career counseling services available to students until the advent of the USAID initiatives discussed next.

The system of education in North Macedonia has been improving of late, but still lags behind its neighbor countries in terms of student performance and attendance (OECD, 2019). Beginning in 2008, education became compulsory for all students from the beginning of primary school until the conclusion of secondary school. Primary school in North Macedonia is for students ages six to fifteen while secondary school is for students ages fifteen to nineteen (OECD, 2019). Education is obtained primarily at public schools with 97% of students attending public secondary schools. Enrollment in secondary schools is improving but is still below that of its neighbor states: 79% of eligible students are reported to be enrolled in secondary schools. Additionally, the secondary graduation rate remains particularly concerning at 47%. These numbers vary across different populations in the country with underrepresented minority students and students in rural locales less likely to attend and graduate from secondary school (OECD, 2019). In total, approximately 275,000 students are enrolled in secondary schools across the country (European Commission, 2019). These students are enrolled in one of 130 secondary schools in North Macedonia (Makstat, 2018a). Of these schools, 119 are public. Of the public secondary schools in North Macedonia, nineteen are located in the capital city of Skopje (European Commission, 2019; Makstat, 2018b).

Additionally, similar to many other European nations, students are tracked earlier in North Macedonia than in countries like the United States. Students are tracked into academic or vocational pathways as they enter secondary school. The academic, or general track, is known as gymnasium, while the vocational track is known as VET (Vocational Education and Training) (European Commission, 2019). While students can pursue higher education from either track, the gymnasium track is designed for students to pursue academics following secondary school. Conversely, the vocational track is designed for students to pursue employment immediately

following secondary school. The tracking decision is made with input from students and teachers as well as a review of the student's academic performance (OECD, 2019). This is a somewhat subjective process and presents an opportunity for more advantaged students to receive favorable treatment in terms of pursuing the academic track. In total, approximately 56% of students attend VET schools and 44% attend gymnasiums.

### **USAID Career Counseling Initiatives in Secondary Schools**

From 2001–2019, the United States disbursed between 14 and 63 million dollars per year to North Macedonia as part of various USAID efforts (USAID, 2020b). Many of these efforts were designed to combat youth unemployment (USAID, 2015). One component of USAID's efforts to reduce youth unemployment was career counseling. Three specific initiatives addressed the establishment of career counseling in secondary schools in North Macedonia: the Secondary Education Activity, the Macedonian Competitiveness Project, and the YES Network.

Beginning in 2002, partially in an effort to create a formal career counseling program, USAID funded a program called the Secondary Education Activity (SEA) (USAID, 2008). This program was implemented by the American firm Booz Allen Hamilton. Included in this program was the implementation of career guidance services in 70 high schools across North Macedonia, where at least two teachers were trained in career counseling practices. Teachers were trained to help students with skills such as writing resumes and applying for jobs. Similar to the YES Network initiative, these teachers were not full-time career counselors. However, part of the sustainability goal for the SEA initiative was the establishment of career counselors as an independent position. The SEA itself ran for five years from September of 2003 until September of 2008.



The second program was called the Macedonia Competitiveness Project (MCP). This project ran from 2007–2012 (USAID, 2012). The MCP was funded by USAID and implemented by the American firm Caranna. This program was less specific to education and more geared towards improving North Macedonia’s economic activity in general. However, a major component of this project was the improvement of the workforce’s ability to meet the needs of the Macedonian economy. Part of this effort included training career counselors using a curriculum known as the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF). This curriculum was used to train career counselors to develop skills they could use to assist students with career selection. At the conclusion of the MCP program, there were 28 GCDF-trained counselors who were able to utilize the GCDF model with students. Additionally, there were 12 master trainers who could train other potential counselors to use the model. In addition to implementing the GCDF curriculum, the MCP program also established a professional organization for career counselors.

The third career counseling initiative funded by USAID for secondary schools was the YES Network. As previously mentioned, the YES Network ran for nearly six years, from September of 2010 until June of 2016. The program received \$6.7 million dollars of funding from USAID (USAID, 2015). The YES Network was comprised of four components: “Support municipality-based Local Economic and Social Councils to encourage public-private dialogue addressing youth unemployment”; “Enhance career preparation in secondary schools through work readiness training, career counseling, and work-based learning for senior students”; “Strengthen the capacity of Employment Service Agencies to prepare unemployed youth with work readiness skills and to connect them with employment opportunities”; and “Support inclusion of youth with disabilities in partnership with civil society” (Education Development

Center, Inc., 2016, p. 1-2). Initially, USAID and EDC did not budget for a career counseling aspect for this program. However, the career counseling component was added in 2013 due to demand from the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science. The career counseling component was then piloted during the 2013–2014 school year in both gymnasium and VET schools. In the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school years, it was fully implemented in VET schools but discontinued in gymnasiums. However, many individuals who were employed in gymnasiums indicated that while formally discontinued during the latter two school years, educational practitioners who worked in gymnasiums were eligible for participation and attended the trainings along with their VET counterparts. Similar to its predecessors, the YES Network largely focused on training existing educators, including teachers, pedagogues (or curriculum experts), and psychologists, to provide career counseling to secondary students. These skills were largely communicated in regional trainings sessions attended by individuals interested in learning such skills.

I will focus on the YES Network for the present study given that it is the most recently enacted career counseling initiative and because it combined aspects from the two previous career counseling initiatives. Thus, the YES Network serves as a culmination of career counseling initiatives in North Macedonia.

## **Overview of Chapters**

This dissertation is presented in a total of nine chapters. The following chapter will lay out the theoretical framework of the dissertation as well as provide a review of institutional theory literature. The third chapter highlights the research methods including both how the data was collected and how it was analyzed. The fourth through seventh chapters present my findings.

Specifically, the fourth chapter demonstrates how the YES Network was established including an assessment of the various sources involved and how they collaborated with one another. The fifth chapter highlights how the YES Network changed practices at the time of implementation. The sixth chapter explores institutional logics and complexity. This chapter utilizes this theoretical framing to explain the process by which career counselors engaged with a new institutional logic and how this logic affected the environment of institutional complexity. The seventh chapter explores the sustainability of the YES Network including an exploration of the factors which promoted and inhibited institutionalization. The eighth chapter then provides a discussion of lessons learned from the YES Network including elements which are generalizable to North Macedonia as well as the rest of the developing world. Finally, the ninth chapter presents the conclusions including the contributions this dissertation makes to international development literature and institutional theory.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

This dissertation will be largely guided by institutional theory. Institutional logics and institutional complexity will guide the implementation sections, while institutionalization will be used to investigate sustainability. These three concepts will be reviewed in the following sections, and I will discuss how each concept will be used in the dissertation.

### **Institutional Logics**

Institutional logics are the norms, beliefs, values, assumptions, and rules that provide meaning to organizations and the individuals who work within organizations (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Logics are shared across individuals in the same profession or organization and help these individuals rationalize the decisions they make based on one or more logic (Dunn & Jones, 2010). Logics vary substantially in terms of their specificity. For example, Woulfin (2016) examined the logics of two different reading and literacy programs in one urban school district to understand how both the formal and informal rules contained within these logics influenced the behavior of educators. Alternatively, Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017) identified the market accountability, professional bureaucracy, and communal sentiment logics to understand how these logics influenced teachers' interpretations of policy reform efforts. Thus, Woulfin (2016) used the institutional logics promoted by two specific programs of interest while Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017) used three more general institutional logics.

In addition to the degree of specificity possible for logics, logics exist at both the institutional and organizational levels (Thornton et al., 2012). At the institutional level, the logic is established by applicable parties for the entire institution, field, or profession of interest, while

at the organizational level, the logic is established within a singular organization. Additionally, individual motivations influence the process by which the institutional-level and organizational-level logics are perceived and enacted (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Thus, logics can exist at multiple levels and are established by different sources depending on the level of the logic.

In this dissertation, I use the concept of institutional logics to describe the content and influence of both the career counseling professional logic of the YES Network and the professional logics of the career counselor's other responsibilities in the school. Similar to the subjects in the work of Woulfin (2016) and Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017), career counselors used both logics in the creation of their practices, necessitating an investigation of each logic. In this case study, the ideas developed as part of the YES Network created a professional institutional logic that advocates for the inclusion of career counseling activities in the repertoires of educational professionals while the incumbent professional logic, or the professional logic of the career counselor's other position, is an institutional logic that promotes teaching, psychology, or pedagogy, depending on the position and responsibilities of the specific individual. The content of both of these institutional logics, along with additional secondary organizational and individual influences, is detailed in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. Additionally, the same chapter investigates how the career counseling logic of the YES Network institutional influenced the goals, practices, and assumptions of career counselors.

### **Institutional Complexity**

Institutional complexity refers to the environment of multiple, competing institutional logics (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Diehl, 2019; Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Greenwood et al., 2011; Marsh et al., 2020). Institutional complexity is important for the current

study as it highlights the fact that career counselors are often faced with multiple sources of influence in the creation of their practices. These sources often promote conflicting activities resulting in a difficult environment in which to determine best practices.

The concept behind institutional complexity was first introduced by Meyer and Rowan (1977) when they noted that many organizations contain multiple, incompatible structures. This pluralistic scenario was later dubbed institutional complexity by Greenwood et al. (2011). Institutional complexity describes a situation in which organizational actors are unable to fully comply with the content of multiple institutional logics.

Contemporary institutional logics and complexity literature investigates the degree of compatibility of multiple logics as opposed to a binary measure of compatibility (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Diehl, 2019; Marsh, et al., 2020; Spillane & Anderson, 2014). This is an important distinction as a truly incompatible relationship between two institutional logics would likely result in a situation where one had to choose one logic or the other with less space for negotiation and nuance. The current study examines a number of ways in which organizational actors can engage with multiple logics. These different approaches are based on the form of institutional complexity.

### **Types of Institutional Complexity**

Besharov and Smith (2014) note four types of institutional complexity: contested, estranged, aligned, and dominant. Besharov and Smith (2014) present centrality and compatibility as the two primary factors determining the type of institutional complexity and the degree of conflict present between logics. Centrality refers how important each logic is towards the organizational mission while compatibility refers to the degree to which both logics can be

utilized in tandem. A high degree of centrality indicates that the logic is central to the functioning of the organization whereas a low degree of centrality indicates that the logic in question is less important to organizational functioning. In terms of compatibility, low compatibility indicates that it is difficult to comply with two logics in practice. Conversely, high compatibility indicates that the logics are easily combined.

The different degrees of centrality and compatibility lead to different forms of institutional complexity and different degrees of conflict between the logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Spillane & Anderson, 2014). When centrality is high and compatibility is low, the logics are *contested* (Besharov & Smith, 2014). This results in extensive conflict as both logics are core to the organization's mission and are incompatible with one another. When centrality is low and compatibility is low the resulting type of complexity is called *estrangement*. This results in moderate conflict as one logic will become dominant and the other subsidiary with the more central logic taking precedence. The moderate conflict is a result of the lack of compatibility between the two logics. However, the conflict is mitigated given the non-central nature of both logics, which results in enhanced flexibility for the organizational actor. When centrality is high and compatibility is high, the logics are *aligned* and minimal conflict exists. This is because compatibility allows organizational actors to abide by multiple institutional logics. Thus, while both logics are important to the organization's mission, and it is likely that one has to be prioritized to some extent, it is possible to incorporate both logics into practice. Lastly, when the degree of centrality is low and the compatibility is high, no conflict emerges as one logic takes a *dominant* role and little pressure is exhibited from the secondary logic. The compatibility is thus natural given the primary and secondary nature of the logics.

Chapter 6 examines how individual career counselors balanced multiple institutional logics —specifically, the career counseling professional logic shaped by the YES Network and the counselor’s incumbent professional logics. In accord with Besharov and Smith (2014), I examine the centrality of each logic to the goals of each school as well as the compatibility of the logics with one another. These factors determine the extent to which the logics are contested, aligned, or estranged, or whether a singular logic is dominant. I use the form of institutional complexity to help frame the individual responses to complexity demonstrated by individual organizational actors and to help explain why individuals deviated from the program as designed.

### **Institutionalization**

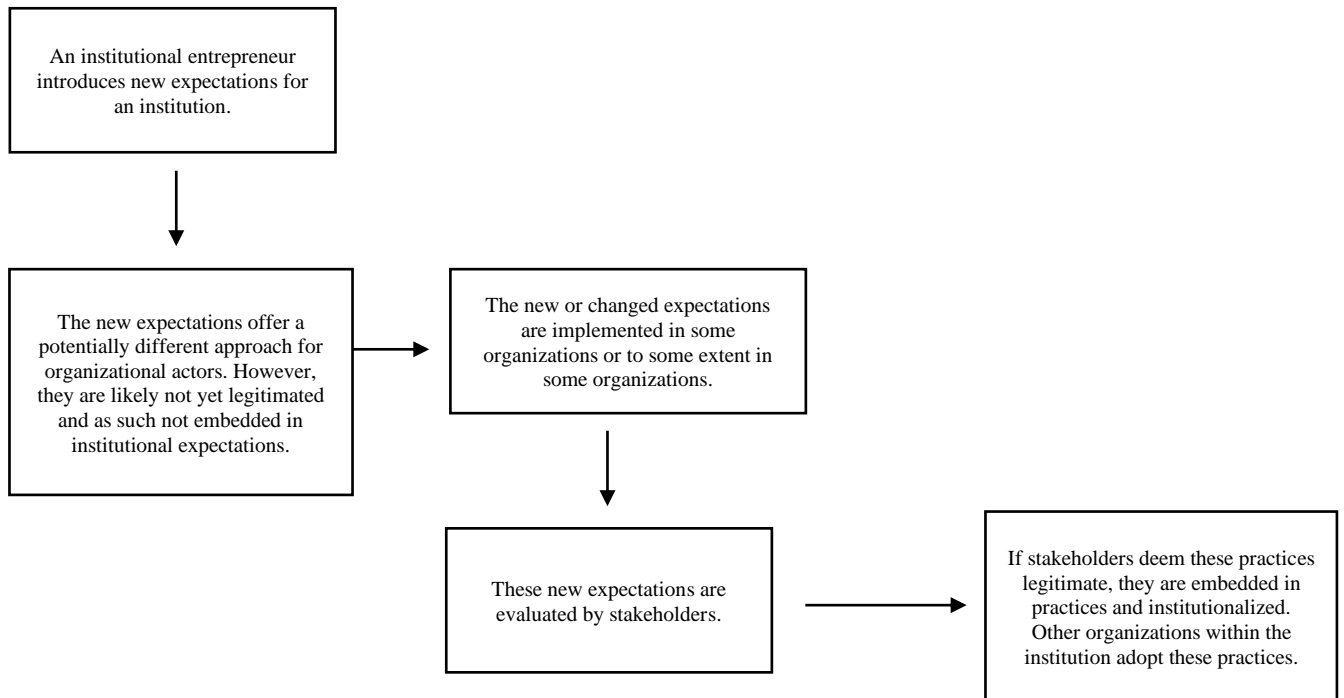
Institutionalization refers to the process by which macro-level rules at the institutional level become ingrained in culture and influence many or all organizations and organizational actors in a specific field (Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Jepperson, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), “Institutional rules function as myths which organizations incorporate, gaining legitimacy, resources, stability, and enhanced survival prospects” (p. 340). These myths gain legitimacy through continued use and the assumption that the accepted practices are rational and efficient (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1980; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) or appropriate (March & Olsen, 1998). Such myths or expectations become the dominant source of organizational and individual decision-making as institutionalized rules have legitimacy. In an effort to survive as an organization, many organizations adopt the legitimized rules, which in turn further embeds these rules into institutionalized constructs (DiMaggio & Powell, 1980).



Within the current context, institutionalization of the career counseling components developed and forwarded by the YES Network would mean that these rules and practices became considered “appropriate” or “correct” for secondary school environments in North Macedonia regardless of the extent to which they are actually rational or efficient. Or more broadly, institutionalization would indicate that the idea of career counseling itself became an assumed part of what happens in secondary schools. Career counselors and school administrators would thus likely continue to conduct and encourage these practices in an effort to appear legitimate.

In addition to its role in the establishment of practices, legitimacy is also a key component to change in the institutional landscape (Deepphouse et al., 2017). When a shift to the institutional landscape takes place, whether in the form of a policy change or a change in institutional expectations, the desire to maintain legitimacy is a major driver in organizational and individual behavior in response to this change. Typically, a shift in institutional expectations comes from a person or group known as an institutional entrepreneur. However, for this shift to change the behavior of organizations and organizational actors, the institutional stakeholders must accept the new rules as legitimate for the institution (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Deepphouse et al., 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1980; March & Olsen, 1998; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). If the change in institutional practices is deemed legitimate, organizations and organizational actors respond to these new expectations which, in turn, embeds these expectations into practices (Deepphouse et al., 2017; Suddaby, 2015). The continued use of these practices over time by organizational actors further legitimates and embeds these practices into institutional expectations. The process by which a shift in institutional expectations becomes institutionalized is depicted in **Error! Reference source not found.1**.

**Figure 1: The Process of Institutionalization From Entrepreneurship to Institutionalization**



One model used to investigate the extent to which institutionalization has taken place is the MoRe institutional framework developed by Anderson and Colyvas (2021). They contend that practices have been institutionalized when activities are replicated without external influence. Their model includes seven mechanisms of institutionalization, or modes of self-activated reproduction: formal policies, stable stakeholder interests, organizational routines, performance metrics, students' identity categories, professional norms, and resonant frames. These mechanisms help encourage institutionalization by facilitating the reproduction of a pattern of practice, which eventually leads to the self-activation of such practices. Thus, in order to achieve institutionalization, both a specific pattern of behavior must be created, and these behaviors must be replicated without continued assistance from an outside source.

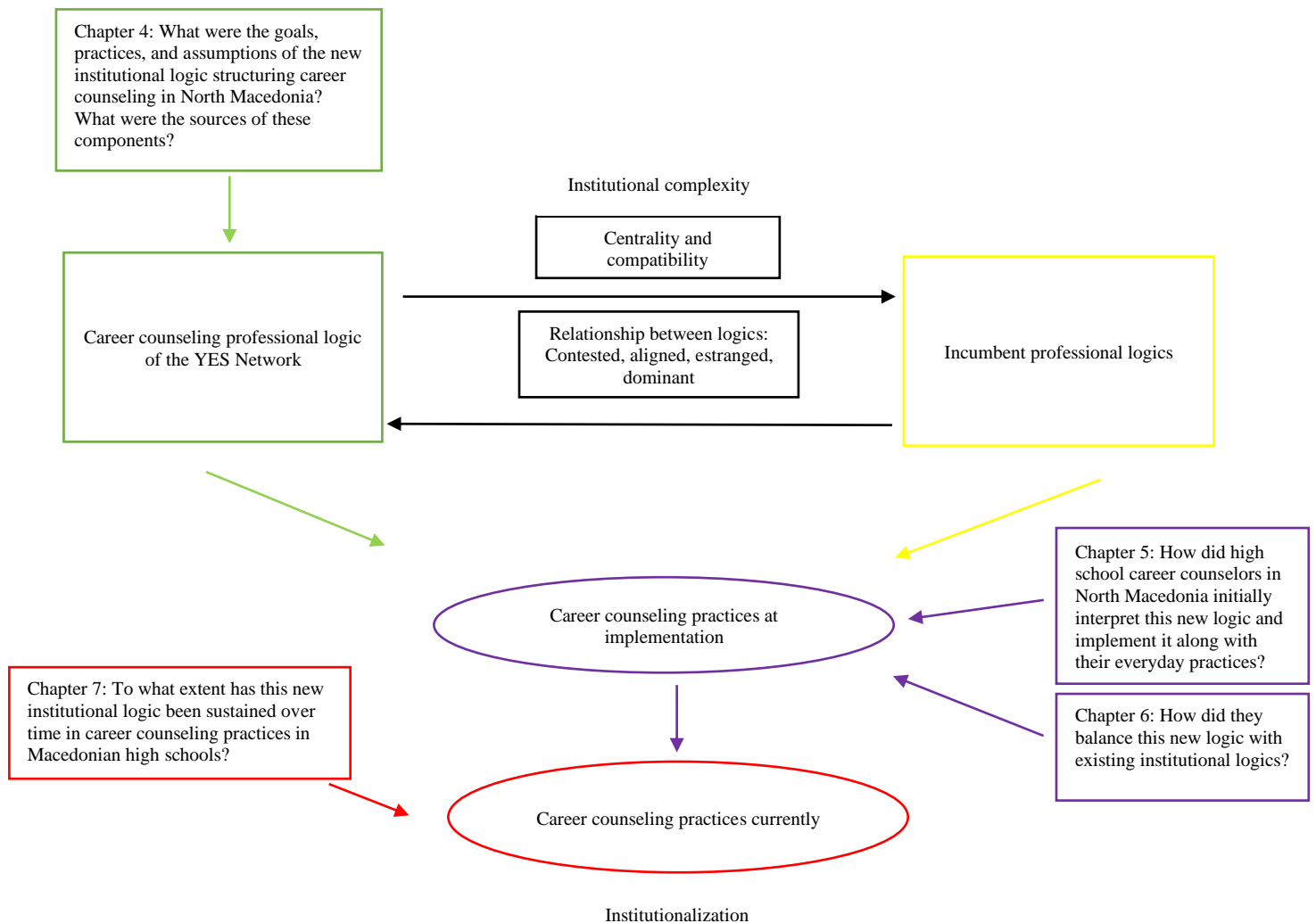
In chapter 7, I apply the MoRe model to identify mechanisms that promoted and inhibited institutionalization in the case of the YES Network. This allows for analysis of the extent to which the career counseling practices were institutionalized and are currently reproduced given the removal of the external influence of the YES Network. A high degree of institutionalization would indicate that the YES Network practices became ingrained in the expectations for career counselors and that there was substantial sustainability (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021; Greenwood, Jennings, & Hinings, 2015). A low degree of institutionalization would of course indicate that the YES Network practices were not self-replicated in the absence of overt external support from the YES Network itself and that there was minimal sustainability.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Given the multiple components of institutional theory utilized in this dissertation, **Error! Reference source not found.**<sup>2</sup> succinctly describes the framework of the research. This concept map shows the process by which Macedonian secondary schools adopted and sustained the career counseling practices developed by the YES network, and demonstrates both how the research questions and each component of institutional theory correspond to each chapter of the dissertation. Beginning in the upper left corner, this concept map shows the content and development of the YES Network, as a new institutional logic. The design and the process by which the YES Network was designed are described in the fourth chapter of the dissertation. This new logic was then introduced into secondary schools across North Macedonia, resulting in changes to the practices of educational practitioners who attended YES Network trainings. The resulting practices from the introduction of this new logic are discussed in the fifth chapter. When introduced, the new career counseling logic of the YES Network contended with pre-

existing, or incumbent, professional logics creating an environment of institutional complexity. This environment is shown below between the two primary logics along with the possible relationships that could develop between these two logics. This environment, and the resulting conflict for career counselors, is described in the sixth chapter. Finally, at the bottom of the diagram are current career counseling practices. This represents the investigation of the sustainability of career counseling. This portion of the study investigates the extent to which the practices of the YES Network were institutionalized and is discussed in the seventh chapter.

**Figure 2: Concept Map of the Dissertation**



## **International Development**

The contribution of this dissertation to the international development literature is its use of institutional theory, including the use of institutional logics, institutional complexity, and institutionalization, to explain an instance of the development, implementation, and sustainability of an international development initiative. Previous literature has explored the development of other international development initiatives and provided insights into elements related to implementation with fidelity as well as sustainability.

One previous assessment explored a USAID-funded education initiative in Guatemala (Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). This initiative was designed to improve education retention for females by providing scholarships to incentivize attendance, promoting parental groups and communities to increase parental support, and providing gender-specific educational materials to improve sex education for female students. Ultimately, this effort was found to improve female education in specific instances where USAID was most directly involved in implementation. However, on a larger scale, very little reform took place. Specifically, across the country, Guatemalan attitudes towards female education did not change substantially and policy initiatives geared towards improving female access to education were not supported. This was largely due to a lack of support from the Guatemalan government as well as the rest of Guatemalan society. Specifically, despite an agreement on behalf of the Guatemalan government to match the financial support of USAID, the funds from the Guatemalan government were never secured. As such, there was little sustained change in Guatemalan education retention for girls at the conclusion of the USAID effort as there was no permanent policy shift.

Additionally, in Nigeria, USAID implemented two plans to improve educational opportunities: the Literacy Enhancement Assistance Project (LEAP) and the Community

Participation for Action in the Social Sectors (COMPASS) Project (Gubser, 2017). These projects took place in 2001-2004 and 2004-2009, respectively. The projects were implemented as sequential programs with LEAP beginning in three locations within Nigeria and COMPASS designed to take the more successful aspects of LEAP and implement them on a broader scale.

LEAP was a \$12 million effort comprised of three main components: training teachers, encouraging community involvement, and improving education management and information systems. LEAP was largely implemented successfully; however, it was a very small program and only provided services to three communities within Nigeria. Thus, to implement COMPASS, the protocols established for LEAP had to be scaled-up substantially. Specifically, the transition from LEAP to COMPASS included a shift from 110 to 605 schools. Ultimately, the transition to a larger program resulted in a more distant relationship between individuals from USAID and local Nigerian officials which lessened the contextual appropriateness of the program. This in turn led to less community support for the initiative during implementation and little sustainability for COMPASS.

These studies both demonstrate the established importance of contextual appropriateness and local support in the development of a foreign initiative in order to facilitate successful implementation and sustainability. This dissertation will provide a more in-depth exploration of the process by which an initiative developed with substantial local input and support was implemented and sustained in order to illuminate the specific mechanisms responsible for implementation with fidelity and sustainability. Additionally, given that in many instances the YES Network was not implemented with fidelity or successfully sustained, this research will examine additional elements necessary to facilitate successful implementation and sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

As demonstrated in the conceptual framework, this dissertation provides a sequential and chronological analysis of the development, implementation, and sustainability of the YES Network in North Macedonia. This work is largely guided by institutional theory with particular emphases on institutional logics, institutional complexity, and institutionalization. This dissertation demonstrates how a new institutional logic, developed in the United States and implemented in North Macedonia, contended with local logics in the creation of individual practices at the time of implementation. Additionally, this dissertation discusses how well the practices of a new institutional logic are institutionalized and sustained, focusing on how the process of implementation influences the extent of sustainability and the mechanisms that contribute to and inhibit institutionalization. The findings of this dissertation will contribute to the understanding and achievement of implementation with fidelity and sustainability for future educational initiatives in developing nations.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

I use a case study methodology to investigate the development, implementation, and sustainability of career counseling practices in North Macedonia. Case studies are used to investigate “how” and “why” something takes place (Yin, 2002). In this case, I investigate how an education development initiative was adopted and adapted into practice and why it failed, in large part, to be sustained. Case studies typically use a single instance or a small number of instances to explain a larger phenomenon (Yazan, 2015). They are typically deep and particularistic analyses of specific programs and policies (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are best used when the research is interested in accounting for interrelationships between a program or phenomenon and the context in which it takes place (Stake, 1995). Thus, a case study is appropriate for the present project as it will provide an in-depth exploration of the YES Network, paying particular attention to the context in which it was implemented and sustained.

#### **Data Collection**

The data collection for this project involved conducting interviews and observations and collecting documents. While some of this information was collected via internet research and online video calling, the bulk of the research was gathered during a nine-and-a-half-month field visit to North Macedonia. This visit took place from mid-August of 2021 until late-May of 2022.

As much of my research was retrospective in nature, the primary method of data collection for this case study is interviews. To gather information about the development, implementation, and sustainability of the YES Network, I conducted 69 interviews, including twenty-three with career counselors, three with school administrators, two with USAID



representatives, nine with employees of the Education Development Center (EDC), the implementing contractor for USAID, and two with the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science, along with multiple interviews with other relevant sources such as professional organizations and international development companies.

The career counselors were largely selected via snowball sampling in order to maximize the number of career counselors interviewed. The career counselors were from six secondary schools across North Macedonia, including four schools in Skopje and two schools in more rural areas to the south and east. One of the schools was strictly a gymnasium, two were both gymnasiums and VETS, and three were strictly VETs. The schools varied in terms of students' socioeconomic status (SES) and academic performance, with two of the schools in Skopje serving a largely high performing and high SES student body. One of the other schools in Skopje served a largely middle-income student body with middle to high academic performance. The final school in Skopje predominantly served lower- to middle-income students who were somewhat lower performing. The two schools outside of Skopje largely served a low- to middle-income student body with low to average student performance. The specific career counselors who took part in the study, identified by pseudonyms, along with their schools and other identifying information are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Career Counselors' Characteristics**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Other Position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School/Organization</b>	<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Location</b>
Angela	Psychologist	F	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Sara	Pedagogue	F	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Dusana	Psychologist	F	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Mirjana	Psychologist	F	School 2	Gymnasium/VET	Skopje
Trena	Teacher	F	School 2	Gymnasium/VET	Skopje
Danica	Psychologist	F	School 3	VET	Skopje
Luka	Teacher	M	School 3	VET	Skopje
Rumena	Teacher	F	School 3	VET	Skopje
Rosa	Teacher	F	School 4	VET	Skopje
Petka	Teacher	F	School 4	VET	Skopje
Sofija	Teacher	F	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Adriel	Teacher	F	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Cynna	Teacher	F	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Zoran	Teacher	M	School 6	VET	Central North Macedonia
Thetima	Teacher	F	School 6	VET	Central North Macedonia

I primarily used snowball sampling because of difficulties in contacting career counselors. Snowball sampling is frequently used when participants are difficult to track or if the subject matter in question is potentially deviant in nature (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). In this instance, while the subject matter is not deviant, career counselors are part of a very specific, and largely informal, niche within schools. This makes it somewhat difficult to identify and contact career counselors as it is typically difficult to gather information about who conducts career

counseling in schools. Thus, I used the strategy of finding a small number of participants and utilizing their professional networks to grow my sample. However, it is of note that due to the nature and size of the sample, fifteen career counselors in six different schools, the generalizability of this study is limited. Consequently, the results must be interpreted as specific to the career counselors in the sample as opposed to North Macedonia or Skopje more broadly.

When engaging with the professional networks of career counselors with whom I made contact, I purposefully sought career counselors from different types of schools, whether academic or vocational, and counselors from schools that served a variety of different student populations according to both SES and student performance. Additionally, I included some gender variation despite the predominance of female career counselors in the profession. This purposive strategy is known to ensure a wider variety of participants (Maxwell, 2012).

While my research is primarily focused on Skopje, I broadened my scope somewhat by including two schools from more rural locales located outside of Skopje. The original intent of the focus on Skopje was the presence of a large proportion of the nation's schools in a relatively small geographic area. Specifically, of the 119 public secondary schools in North Macedonia, nineteen are located in Skopje (Makstat (2018b), p. 24-31). Thus, I was located in Skopje for much of my fieldwork period. However, in an effort to reduce bias towards career counseling practices in a singular urban area, I added multiple schools outside of Skopje to my sample.

Geographic diversity is important for this case study given the distribution of the population in North Macedonia. In a country of 1.83 million inhabitants, nearly one-third of the population lives in the capital of Skopje, with well over 500,000 residents (Reuters, 2022). Additionally, there is a substantial internal migration towards Skopje at present as Macedonians are fleeing less affluent, rural areas for the opportunities of a major metropolitan area (Eurydice,

2022). Given the growing proportion of Macedonian residents in Skopje, and the presumed inequities between opportunities available in Skopje and the regions outside the capital, it is particularly crucial to include schools both within and outside of Skopje.

The differences between Skopje and rural North Macedonia were quite apparent in my site visits. While Skopje is a relatively modern city with many of the amenities and the infrastructure of a Western city, albeit designed in a distinctively Eastern European and Communist style complete with extensive Brutalist architecture, rural North Macedonia appears far more like a developing nation. In more rural areas, particularly villages neighboring secondary cities, there are far fewer institutions and organizations. Many villagers are either self-sustained on small farms or must travel to nearby cities or towns in order to find basic goods and services, including hospitals, food stores, and schools. Thus, schools in rural areas serve students from far larger geographic areas than do schools in Skopje, as students in rural areas travel substantial distances to attend school. Additionally, given the differences in backgrounds for students from different geographic areas in schools outside of Skopje, educators in more rural schools must be prepared to teach students from a wider variety of backgrounds and levels of academic preparedness.

## **Interviews**

I conducted interviews with all 15 participating career counselors during the 2021-2022 school year. The semi-structured interviews lasted between one and two hours. Many of the career counselors were interviewed multiple times with the later interviews focusing more specifically on sustainability as the dissertation research progressed towards its conclusion. The interviews typically took place in the office of the career counselor or in a private classroom.

When the interviews and observations overlapped, the interviews often took place in multiple locations as I progressed through my prompts before, during, and after specific events or classroom activities that I observed. The interviews were recorded with the Apple Voice Memos application and were transcribed using Otter Software. I then reviewed and edited the resulting transcripts. The interviews were primarily conducted in English with the occasional use of a translator.

In addition to career counselors, I also interviewed several school administrators. I attempted to interview the school administrator for each school included in the sample. However, I was only able to conduct interviews with two of the administrators from the six schools. The other four were busy during the times I was in their schools and unresponsive to requests for interviews. Additionally, I conducted a third interview with a principal from a school which was not part of my sample.

Interviews of career counselors and school administrators focused mostly on the implementation and sustainability of the YES Network. For career counselors, these interviews utilized prompts pertaining to how they interpreted the YES Network at the time of implementation, between 2013 and 2016, and what practices remain at present. The specific prompts inquired as to the changes to each counselor's educational practices and routines that resulted from the YES Network as well as how the YES Network changed their practices at present given the cessation of the program in 2016. For school administrators, the prompts focused on the expectations of the administrators for career counselors both at present and during the implementation of the YES Network. However, given the high turnover among administrators, and the fact that none of the school administrators were in their current roles at the time of the YES Network implementation, the focus of these interviews was on current

practices. The interview guides, along with the list of participants, are available in Appendices A and B.

The other individuals included in the research were selected purposively according to the needs of the research. These individuals typically possessed areas of expertise directly related to one or more of the research questions. For example, when researching the design of the YES Network, I conducted interviews with a number of individuals involved in the creation of the initiative including those at both USAID and EDC. I selected specific individuals who were particularly engaged with various elements of the YES Network in order to explore how multiple individuals and entities contributed to the development of this initiative and what sources they utilized.

In the interviews with USAID and EDC, I first inquired about the goals, content, and assumptions of the YES Network logic. Identifying the content of the institutional logic as designed is an inductive process and often involves identifying categories of practice and specific elements within each category (Weber, Patel, & Heinze, 2013; Woulfin, 2016). I used probing questions to identify specific practices within pre-identified categories. Additionally, in the same interviews, I requested information about the sources of the YES Network. This involved questions probing how each goal, practice, and assumption was designed or selected and the source of each element.

In addition to the predetermined interviews, many interviews became necessary due to the constructivist nature of the research (Charmaz, 2006). As new theories and information were established, my sample of participants grew according to the various needs of the paper. For example, while investigating the source of the career counseling elements of the YES Network with USAID and EDC, I was also directed towards the ASK professional group that had also

contributed directly to the career counseling model of the YES Network. ASK both provided me with original documents, including specific sources of materials they utilized in the development of the YES Network, and also directed me towards the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF), another key contributor to the career counseling model of the YES Network. I then spent a significant amount of time researching and conducting interviews with the Center for Credentialing and Education, the parent company of the GCDF, in order to determine the elements that this source contributed to the career counseling model of the YES Network. As demonstrated by this example, I was often unaware of who my research participants would be until I discovered information directing me towards certain individuals or organizations necessary to include in my research. Given this constructivist design, my research aims with many of these sources were often specific to certain areas of interest and required more narrow lines of questioning. While interview guides were still utilized, these interviews were typically more focused and specific than interviews with predetermined sources like career counselors, school administrators, or representatives of USAID or EDC.

Interviews with individuals involved in the design and development of the YES Network largely took place beginning in mid-June of 2020 and continued through the beginning of 2021. These interviews, of course, took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and were mostly conducted via Zoom and other video conferencing software. Following the conclusion of the design and development interviews, I began interviewing career counselors, other educational practitioners, professional organization members, Ministry of Education and Science employees, and other relevant sources in early to mid 2021. These interviews largely pertained to the implementation of the YES Network. These interviews began online as I remained in the United States until August of 2021. In August of 2021, I arrived in North Macedonia and continued my

interviews in-person. Additionally, I began to switch my interview prompts to focus more on sustainability. The sustainability interviews primarily took place during the fall of 2021 and the beginning of the spring of 2022, with my final interview taking place in April of 2022.

## **Observations**

In addition to interviews, I conducted a total of seven observations, including observations of five of the fifteen career counselors whom I interviewed. Each observation typically lasted between one and two hours. The observations focused on routine counselor behaviors to determine the activities counselors engaged in on a daily basis. The content and format of the observations ranged substantially depending on the counselor who was being observed. For example, observations included sitting in on career counseling sessions, observing career counselors conducting classroom lessons, shadowing career counselors to student-led events, and even in one instance, providing an impromptu career counseling lesson myself as a guest lecturer for a career counseling event. These observations provided an opportunity to observe the breadth of activities conducted by career counselors and the substantial variation between career counselors in different schools in North Macedonia. While more observations would have been preferable, career counselors with whom I had not previously established a significant relationship were less amenable to allowing me to observe their activities. As a result, most of my observations were with career counselors with whom I had conducted multiple interviews. Despite my desire for an increased number of observations, because of the substantial number of interviews conducted combined with my limited observations, I achieved a substantial, if not saturated, understanding regarding the activities conducted by career counselors.



During these observations, I either audio recorded the content of the event and later crafted fieldnotes, or, depending on the environment and the appropriateness of recording, simply crafted fieldnotes immediately following the activity. These observations supplemented interviews about activities conducted by career counselors and added depth to the conclusions drawn regarding the sustained influence of the YES Network. Additionally, observations allowed for a better understanding of the differences in sustained practices between teachers and psychologists as teachers were more likely to conduct classroom lessons while psychologists were more likely to conduct one-on-one services in their offices. Observations often helped to clarify and provide detail to the conclusions I reached via interviews.

## **Documents**

I also collected documents and artifacts pertaining to the YES Network. I worked with career counselors and representatives from EDC, USAID, and the professional association for career counselors (ASK) to collect documents related to the content and development of the YES Network. The documents collected were relevant to both the developmental process of creating the YES Network as well as the final product. More specifically, some of the documents collected were indicative of the sources utilized in the creation of the YES Network while others were those which were provided to career counselors in the training sessions conducted by the YES Network.

The most important documents regarding the development of the YES Network were those provided by EDC and the professional association for career counselors (ASK). These documents were largely either items used in the design of the YES Network, such as documents about other influential career counseling models, or background research conducted by these

entities before creating the program, such as documentation of case studies of the career counseling models used in nearby nations. These documents helped to identify the content of the career counseling component of the YES Network as well as the sources of specific elements of the initiative by providing information as to various models and countries consulted in the development of this program. For example, one document provided information from four case studies that were used to help develop the career counseling component of the YES Network. This document is excerpted and shown below in Figure 33.

**Figure 3: Artifact Indicating the Involvement of Multiple Countries in the Creation of the YES Network**

*5.1 Вовед*

Ова поглавје содржи четири студии на случај кои претставуваат извештаи за состојбите во одредени држави. Овие примери беа одбрани за да ги демонстрираат начините на кои различните земји им пристапија на состојбите кои се однесуваат на услугите за кариерно насочување. Ниту една студија не нуди универзален план за дејствување, но сите нудат вредни увиди засновани на тоа што досега било постигнато и како тоа е сторено.

This excerpt translates to

This chapter contains four case studies that report on the [career counseling] situation in certain countries. These examples were [presented] to demonstrate the ways in which different countries have approached . . . career guidance services. No study offers a universal plan of action, but they all offer valuable insights based on what has been achieved so far and how it has been done.

The document goes on to discuss four specific case studies in Europe—Bulgaria, Poland, Denmark, and Ireland—and how the experiences of these countries in developing career counseling models are applicable to North Macedonia’s efforts. The same document goes on to examine both the European Union’s approach to career counseling as well as the American model of school counseling in order to evaluate which models might be most applicable to the

Macedonian context. This document helps to show which countries were utilized as sources, or potential sources, in the development of career counseling in North Macedonia. Such documents were particularly helpful in answering the first research question regarding sources of the YES Network's career counseling model.

Other documents were collected from career counselors themselves and exemplified the materials provided directly to career counselors during their trainings. These materials were more formal documents and were designed to assist new career counselors in learning the materials of the career counseling component of the YES Network. An example of such a document is shown in Figure 44.

#### **Figure 4: Excerpt From the YES Network Materials Provided to Career Counselors**

##### **2. ЦЕЛИ НА ПРОГРАМАТА**

По совладувањето на програмата *Планирање на кариера* ученикот стекнува знаења, вештини и се оспособува да:

- ја сфаќа потребата од планирање на кариера;
- развива визија за личен кариерен успех;
- користи услуги, ресурси, информации и совети кои се нудат во кариерниот центар;
- учествува во промоција на работата и услугите на кариерниот центар;
- користи услуги на кариерен советник во училиштето и ја следи структурата на индивидуален кариерен план;
- развива сопствен кариерен план;
- дефинира јасни кариерни цели;
- изработува акциски план за реализација на поставените цели;
- користи алатки за проценка и самопроценка на личните афинитети и способности;
- врши самопроценка, анализа и подобрување на личните способности;
- изработува сопствена SWOT анализа;
- пишува мотивациско (пропратно) писмо за конкретно работно место;
- изработува сопствена професионална биографија - CV;
- ја сфаќа важноста на интервјето за работа и неговото значење при регрутација на кадри;
- стекнува искуство за интервју за работа;
- ја разбира поврзаноста меѓу CV- то и интервјето за работа;
- идентификува извори на информации за слободни работни места;
- идентификува занимања кои нудат најголеми можности за вработување со завршено средно и високо образование;
- истражува високообразовни институции каде може да го продолжи образованието во РМ и надвор од неа;
- изработува сопствен план за активно барање на работа;
- идентификува работни места согласно избраното занимање;

The translation of this document is provided in Figure 5.

## Figure 5: Translated Excerpt From the YES Network Materials Provided to Career Counselors

### 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

After mastering the *Career Planning* program, *the* student acquires knowledge, skills and is trained to:

- understands the need for career planning;
- develops a vision for personal career success;
- uses services, resources, information and advice offered at the career center;
- participates in the promotion of the work and services of the career center;
- uses the services of a career counselor at the school and monitors the structure of the individual career plan;
- develops his / her own career plan;
- defines clear career goals;
- prepares an action plan for realization of the set goals;
- uses tools for assessment and self-assessment of personal affinities and abilities;
- performs self-assessment, analysis and improvement of personal abilities;
- prepares its own SWOT analysis;
- writes a motivation (cover) letter for a specific job;
- prepares his / her own professional biography - CV;
- understands the importance of the job interview and its importance in recruiting staff;
- gains experience for a job interview;
- understands the connection between the CV and the job interview;
- identifies sources of information on vacancies;
- identifies occupations that offer the greatest employment opportunities with a high school diploma education;
- researches higher education institutions where he can continue his education in the Republic of Macedonia and abroad;
- prepares its own plan for active job search;
- identifies jobs according to the chosen occupation;

This document shows the knowledge and skills that students should have after attending career counseling sessions conducted by career counselors. This document also provides information to career counselors as to what skills they should be teaching and what activities they should be conducting with students. Thus, the documents provided to career counselors were particularly useful in establishing the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network.

### Data Analysis

Following the collection of interview, observation, and document data, I analyzed the data in order to draw conclusions pertaining to my research questions. Multiple methods of data analysis were used in order to analyze the collected data. I wrote memos to draw conclusions

from and between various sources of data, and I coded interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and documents in order to understand the development of the YES Network, the process of implementation, and the extent of sustainability.

## **Memos**

One of the primary forms of data analysis was analytic memoing. In accordance with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), I used analytic memos in order to draw connections between multiple data sources and to create preliminary conclusions according to information garnered via interviews, observations, and document analysis. Typically, I wrote memos immediately after interviews and observations, or immediately following reviewing a document or collection of documents. These memos often reflected on ideas and conclusions reached based on the topic of the interview or the position of the individual interviewed. Additionally, information which confirmed or deviated from previous conclusions or memos was noted and addressed. Memos were particularly useful as I crafted my initial findings for each dissertation chapter given my limited hypotheses and knowledge of both the YES Network and the Macedonian context.

## **Coding**

In addition to memoing, I used coding processes in order to organize and draw conclusions from my data. Coding was used for all sources of data, including interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and documents and artifacts. The coding was largely conducted with NVivo software and used a two-step coding process of index codes and focused codes (similar to the process detailed in Charmaz, 2006). From the coding process, I was able to

compile information from multiple data sources in an effort to thoroughly answer my research questions and minimize sample bias.

### ***Transcription***

Prior to coding, I transcribed the interviews with an online transcription program called Otter. This process involved uploading the audio file from the Voice Memos application on my phone, where they were originally recorded, and into the Otter software on my computer. Otter would then provide an automatic transcription of the audio file, which I reviewed. Oftentimes, my interviews were conducted in English with subjects who were non-native speakers. Other times, I had an English-Macedonian translator present providing English translations from Macedonian responses. In either case, because of the variety of languages, nontraditional word choices, and foreign accents, interviews were typically transcribed with minimal accuracy. Consequently, I spent a good deal of effort editing many of the transcripts by hand. Once the transcripts were uploaded, transcribed, and edited, they were moved to NVivo where I coded them.

### ***Index and Focused Codes***

In addition to my interview transcripts, documents and fieldnotes were also uploaded into NVivo to be coded. For all data sources, I used both index and focused codes. The index codes, or initial codes, were used to categorize my data into multiple themes. For example, when coding documents and interviews pertaining to the development of the YES Network, some of the index codes used were: “historical practices,” “USAID goals, practices, and assumptions,” and “source of practices or goals.” These three codes helped me to categorize information according to historical practices in North Macedonia that predated the YES Network, the practices that were

developed by USAID and EDC, and the sources which contributed to these practices. These categories assisted in making sure that my data was grouped into meaningful categories that would facilitate later retrieval. I conducted a similar process for all research questions.

The index coding was largely a deductive practice as I had predetermined categories in which I was interested in gathering data. I created index codes pertaining to subcategories of my various research questions before I conducted substantial research. For example, the previous example codes of “historical practices,” “USAID goals, practices, and assumptions,” and “source of practices or goals” were all created as subcategories for my first research questions in order to better understand the design and creation of the YES Network. Using these codes, I was then able to collect and group information pertaining to the context in which the YES Network was created, the content of the YES Network, and the sources of this content, respectively, by using the three aforementioned codes.

After using my index codes to categorize my data, I created and used focused codes to identify core themes and concepts of the development, implementation, and sustainability of the YES Network as determined by synthesizing information from interviews, observations, and document analysis (a procedure proposed by Charmaz, 2006). Unlike the index codes, which were largely pre-established, the development of focused codes was primarily an inductive process. I was mostly unaware of many of the processes that took place affecting the development, implementation, and sustainability of the YES Network prior to conducting my research. Therefore, I did not begin my coding processes with preestablished focused codes, rather I created focused codes that became progressively more specific as I developed ideas and theories (Charmaz, 2006). By creating progressively more specific focused codes, I was able to more precisely identify elements and themes pertaining to each research question. For example,

using the same example as the initial codes, after I had categorized my documents and interview transcripts into the index code category of “source of practices or goals,” I developed and used focused codes such as “United States” and “European Union” to specifically identify individual sources of influence. Eventually, I created even more specific focused codes, or at least codes pertaining to smaller geographic regions, such as “Bulgaria” and “Slovenia.” In total, I created fifteen focused codes for the “source of practices or goals” index code, thirteen of which were individual countries. This process allowed me to identify the countries, or conglomerations of multiple countries, that were the most influential sources in the development of the career counseling component of the YES Network.

I utilized a similar process with the rest of my index codes, creating inductive focused codes within preestablished categories as I continually gathered additional information. This process often involved adding codes and establishing themes as I reviewed my interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and relevant documents. For example, I used focused codes to identify the various goals of the YES Network from different sources as understood during both the design and implementation. This process allowed for the identification of overlap and deviations between the goals as defined by sources involved in the design of the YES Network and sources involved in implementation. For example, while USAID and EDC indicated that the YES Network goals were exclusively related to career counseling, career counselors indicated more comprehensive goals including social and emotional, college, and academic counseling in addition to career counseling. Thus, this deviation provides an example of the types of relationships one can identify between or within index code categories when using focused codes (Charmaz, 2006). Other focused codes were more descriptive in nature and identified phenomena such as the location of where career counselors conducted counseling practices or the influences



on career counseling practices other than the YES Network. The different focused codes in these categories continuously expanded over the course of my research and provided the opportunity to both create, confirm, and amend theories of action in accordance with my theoretical framework.

## **Validity Checks**

Multiple validity checks were used over the course of my research in order to confirm and amend my theories of action to better ensure accuracy. The three specific checks used most frequently were member checks, discrepant cases, and triangulation. These checks will be discussed in the following sections.

### ***Member Checks***

I used member checks periodically over the course of my fieldwork in order to solicit opinions and feedback as to the direction and accuracy of my study. Member checks typically involve “taking ideas back to research participants for their confirmation” (Charmaz, 2016, p. 111). Member checks were thus key components in the aforementioned confirmations and amendments to my theories of action. I also used member checks to gather additional information as new questions arose over the course of my fieldwork.

Member checks took place with many of the individuals included in my fieldwork including career counselors. With career counselors who participated in multiple interviews, my second and third interviews would typically begin with checking my conclusions thus far in order to confirm their accuracy. When conclusions were not confirmed, I either reworked my conclusions or added increased nuance to consider the individual experiences of the multiple

counselors involved in the study. The career counselors who participated in member checks included Angela, Mirjana, Danica, Sofija, and Rosa.

Additionally, other individuals involved in the study took part in member checks. These checks involved both assessments through repeat interviews and formally sharing sections of my dissertation. For example, I sent drafts of specific sections of my dissertation to both Petre, who worked in a leadership position with EDC, and Vera, who worked in a leadership position with ASK, in order to confirm the conclusions I had reached regarding the development of the YES Network. Additionally, at the invitation of Tanya, a professor at a local university in Skopje, I presented my findings as of April 2022 to a gathered audience of Macedonian individuals including students, professors, and other community members. Much of the feedback from this presentation was provided by Tanya, who helped me to think about additional factors contributing to the successes and failures of the YES Network outside of institutional complexity and institutionalization.

### *Discrepant Cases*

In addition to member checks, I used discrepant cases in order to confirm or adjust my conclusions. I assessed discrepant cases, or those that did not align with my conclusions, in order to assess whether the case in question was an outlier or if I needed to add increased nuance to the conclusions reached (this approach is suggested in Maxwell, 2012). Alternatively, particularly in the earlier stages of my research, discrepant cases sometimes resulted in wholesale changes to my conclusions. For example, as I began my document analysis on the YES Network, I reached the conclusion that it was only fully implemented in VET schools. However, a discrepant case arose when I interviewed a gymnasium counselor who implemented the YES Network with her students. While investigating this discrepant case, I interviewed more educators at gymnasiums

and realized that many of these individuals implemented the YES Network despite the fact that it was not formally designed for gymnasium schools. As such, this discrepant case pushed me to further investigate my findings and in this case, reach a different conclusion.

Other discrepant cases were milder and involved adding nuance to my conclusions or simply understanding that different career counselors interpreted the YES Network differently. For example, my conclusions about the practices career counselors adopted following participation in the YES Network trainings are properly nuanced to include numerous individual-level factors such as the career counselors' other position in the school, the extent of flexibility in their work, and the extent to which the content of their previous work overlapped with the concepts of career counseling. These nuanced conclusions were partially developed based on discrepant cases. Specifically, my initial interviews were largely with psychologists who, as it turned out, typically implemented the YES Network practices differently than teachers. Thus, the first teachers I interviewed indicated different experiences in implementing the YES Network practices. As I interviewed more teachers, and the number of discrepant cases increased, I realized that there was more variation in the practices conducted by career counselors than I had previously thought and that such variation should be included in my findings. Thus, the discrepant cases in this instance were an indication that my sample of career counselors had not yet reached saturation given the underrepresentation of teacher experiences (Charmaz, 2006). Discrepant cases were typically a good indicator that either more research was needed in a particular area or simply that my conclusions needed to leave more space for variation.

### ***Triangulation***

A third validity check used in my research was triangulation. Triangulation involves collecting data from not only multiple sources but also using multiple methods. By collecting

data from individuals involved in various ways with and stages of the YES Network along with gathering data using multiple methods including interviews, observations, and documents, I was able to minimize biases that could have developed from individual sources or methods (Maxwell, 2012).

The best example of triangulation from the present study is in the use of multiple sources to understand the extent of institutionalization that has taken place as a result of the YES Network. This will be discussed further in chapter 7. Briefly, when investigating institutionalization during an interview with Jovana at the Ministry of Education and Science, I was informed that an imminent change to the law governing secondary education activities would mandate career counseling. This was, of course, a vital piece of information for the sustainability chapter of the dissertation. However, when I informed a local professor, Eva, of this statement, she laughed and told me that they would of course say that, but that there were no plans to pass such a law. As it turned out, Eva was correct, and the law was not passed. What Eva knew, which I did not, was that the Ministry of Education and Science was attempting to appear more responsive and legitimate and that their representatives would likely answer my questions in the manner that portrayed the Ministry most favorably. Thus, by interviewing multiple sources with different allegiances and areas of expertise, I was able to avoid drawing conclusions that incorporated the desirability bias from my interview with the Ministry of Education and Science. I used similar triangulation strategies with the other research questions as well in order to minimize the influence of biases in my findings.

## Positionality Statement

Many of the aforementioned validity checks were designed to help ensure that my positionality, or the positionality of others, did not influence my findings and conclusions. Understanding one's relationships to both the content matter as well as the research participants is of the utmost importance in qualitative research given the dangers from biases in utilizing methodologies or deriving conclusions based on personal identity and experiences (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, it was necessary to assess my own relationship to the research in order to better identify aspects where I would be most likely to incorporate my own biases.

My largest connection to the research is my background as a high school counselor in the United States. I am a licensed school counselor in the state of Colorado and possess a master's degree in the field of school counseling. I practiced as a school counselor in both New Hampshire and Colorado prior to beginning my studies at Vanderbilt University. My experiences as a school counselor led me to my desire to research the process by which school and career counselors create their practices based on the multiple sources of influence to which they are exposed. As a practitioner I grew frustrated with the administrative influences that pull school counselors in the United States away from data-driven activities designed by the American School Counselor Association to aid students in their academic, social/emotional, and college and career development (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Consequently, as I approached the present research, I made sure to be wary of my personal feelings about the negative influence of school administrators and other entities who, in my opinion, often negatively influence the time expenditure of counselors, when drawing my conclusions. This was a difficult position to maintain given the importance of understanding the influence of various sources on the practices of career counselors. However, I attempted to remove predetermined

conclusions from my research by remaining open to conclusions that did not fit my personal frame of reference during my fieldwork.

Additionally, as an American researcher in North Macedonia, I was aware of my predispositions as to what school or career counseling “should” look like based on my own experiences in the United States. The United States has a more developed and comprehensive model of school and career counseling at present than does North Macedonia, and so my impulse in many instances was to defer to the U.S. model and wonder why Macedonian counselors did not attempt to incorporate this model into their practices. However, it was imperative to maintain an awareness that my understandings of best practices from the United States were not based in the cultural context of North Macedonia. Systems of counseling designed for the United States would likely be ineffectual in North Macedonia. Thus, it was important that I recognize that my American-centric perspective was both unhelpful in the development of my research methods and would likely bias my conclusions if gone unchecked.

While my own experiences and characteristics undoubtedly had the potential to bias my conclusions, by maintaining an awareness of my positionality during the design of my research and the development of my conclusions, I was better able to avoid incorporating my predispositions into my work. While my positionality helped to inspire the present research, its presence is limited in the findings and conclusions drawn.

### **Funding for Research**

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## **Chapter 4: The Development of Career Counseling in North Macedonia**

This dissertation explores the design, implementation, and sustainability of the career counseling professional logic in North Macedonia, which was designed to help reduce unemployment among Macedonian youth. The first research question specifically investigates the design of this logic, including its various components and the process by which these components were created. The career counseling professional logic in North Macedonia is of particular interest as the Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network, a career counseling initiative funded by USAID, introduced this logic to a context where no such logic, or at most a very limited logic, existed prior to this program. This chapter examines the various components of this newly created career counseling professional logic as well as the source or sources of origin for each component. Additionally, this chapter investigates the process by which domestic sources collaborated with international sources in the creation of this logic. This will better enable future aid efforts to understand the process by which collaboration with and adaptation by local sources influence the design of international projects.

The professional logic is one of many logics that influence organizational and individual practices (Greenwood et al., 2011; Yu, 2015). The professional logic, in conjunction with other institutional logics, such as the market, government, and democratic logics, shapes the expectations of organizations and the actions of individuals within specific institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991). However, the focus of this dissertation is the career counseling professional logic as it is the only institutional logic specific to career counseling that affects expectations and practices. While other institutional logics, such as the market, government, or democratic logic, indirectly influence the individual actions of career counselors, the professional logic directly affects the actions of these individuals. As such, the design of the



professional logic will have an outsized influence on career counseling practices and thus is a vital component in the development of this profession and institution.

A number of different sources and organizations were closely involved in the design of the YES Network. The design stage offered the first opportunity for domestic sources to collaborate with international sources to begin the development and adaptation of the professional logic to meet local standards. Because influence from both international and domestic sources is common for projects funded by international funding organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank, this case study will provide an example of what takes place after an international cooperative funding approach including different organizations from different countries is established. Specifically, this study will highlight several aspects of an internationally funded humanitarian initiative, including the extent to which the funding and recipient nations—the United States and North Macedonia in this instance—collaborate, and the different understandings of each nation as to the purpose and goals of this initiative. This chapter is a unique contribution to the international aid literature as it provides an in-depth investigation of a single case of multinational collaboration providing specific instances of the influences of different nations in the development of this initiative. The specific policies and practices adopted from each nation, as well as the policies that were designed locally without outside influence, are summarized on Table 4 on page 89.

### **The Influence of USAID Initiatives on Career Counseling**

In an effort to understand the development of the career counseling logic, it is imperative to start with USAID as the primary funding source for the establishment of career counseling—many of the components of the professional logic of career counseling in North Macedonia

primarily come from prior USAID initiatives. USAID spends millions of dollars annually on development initiatives in North Macedonia on programs targeting a number of different areas, including political accountability, civic engagement, and youth career development (USAID, 2020c). In an effort to improve upon the area of youth career development, USAID initiated four major projects that helped young people find gainful employment. Included in these employment initiatives was career counseling. Career counseling did not exist in North Macedonia prior to USAID's involvement in youth career development.<sup>1</sup>

While the formal content of three of the individual initiatives was touched on previously, this section will review in more detail the components of the four specific USAID initiatives. This section, compared to the Background section, provides more information on the content of these four programs from the perspectives of the individuals who helped design them. The relevant interviews took place with USAID employees, EDC employees, and ASK members.

USAID began their career counseling efforts in North Macedonia in 2003 with the SEA initiative (USAID, 2008). The SEA was the starting point for the practice of career counseling in secondary schools. As part of this initiative, schools began designating spaces for career counseling to take place. However, these spaces were largely in undesirable locations or of low quality. Petre, who was involved in the creation of this program on site in North Macedonia, noted that these spaces were often in basements or closets. Petre also indicated that this program

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<sup>1</sup> The secondary school career counseling initiatives, including the YES Network, designed counseling programs to take place in two separate locations—the employment services agencies and career centers. The employment services agencies were located within communities to provide services to unemployed youth while the career centers were located in high schools to provide career services to students. Because of the different priorities of these two separate institutions, they had different and unique professional logics. Specifically, the employment services agencies were designed to help unemployed young people who were not students find employment opportunities while the career centers were designed to help secondary students find or prepare for future employment. The focus of this research is on the career centers located in high schools and the logic utilized by career counselors in these centers in the creation of their practices.

focused on very basic career skills, such as writing resumes and cover letters. There was some emphasis on interview practice as well.

The PEP began shortly thereafter, in 2006, with a similar goal to the SEA. The PEP was designed to improve the employability skills of students from a younger age in primary schools (Warrick, Ivanoski, & Nikoloski, 2008). Primary schools in North Macedonia serve students in grades one through nine, or those aged approximately seven to fifteen years old. According to Vera, who worked closely with the development of this program, the PEP began at a very basic level by providing career information to students in a digestible format. For example, the PEP established “career corners” in primary schools where students could learn about different career opportunities. The “career corners” were designed to be similar to the career centers located in secondary schools. Students were also taught about the importance of selecting an appropriate high school, whether academic or vocational, to facilitate their career goals. Thus, while this program did not focus substantially on actual employment skills, it did introduce the idea of career fit and career opportunities from an earlier age than the SEA. Petre, who worked closely with the YES Network project, also helped develop the PEP. He later brought concepts he developed with the PEP to the YES Network.

The third USAID program was the MCP, which was implemented in 2007. The MCP provided increased professionalization to the career counseling structure created by the SEA and PEP. According to individuals with the ASK professional organization as well as the American-based company the Center for Credentialing and Education, the primary manner in which professionalization was added was via the adoption of international standards for career counseling. These standards were those included in the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) model, a curriculum and certification provided by the Center for Credentialing and

Education. The GCDF is a standardized curriculum that is utilized in sixteen different countries including North Macedonia. This program represented the first formal model of career counseling utilized in North Macedonia. While not specifically designed for use in schools, the GCDF program further normalized the practice of career counseling and brought a standardized model of counseling that could be used in schools. As will be discussed in the ensuing sections, this model eventually served as a template for the school-specific model of career counseling formally introduced into secondary schools.

In addition to establishing the first career counseling standards, the MCP led to the founding of the first and only professional association (ASK) for career counselors in North Macedonia. While the MCP did not initially provide funding for a professional career counseling group, several members of the first group to receive the GCDF certification to become GCDF certified trainers collaboratively formed ASK. ASK later received a small amount of funding from MCP and is maintained at present through volunteer work and donations. This association provided and continues to provide a space for career counselors to discuss best practices and organize relevant trainings. Individuals in this group come from a number of different backgrounds including human resources and education.

The fourth and most recent USAID-funded source that influenced the professional logic of career counseling in North Macedonia was the YES Network. As discussed previously, the YES Network was the most significant contributor to the career counseling logic. This significance is particularly of note given that career counseling was not originally included in this initiative. According to James, who held a leadership position with EDC, in the beginning, the initiative included trainings for career coaches and psychologists to work with students, but these trainings were not substantial. However, following the addition of career counseling to the

YES Network in 2013, which took place after local requests to reestablish the practice in 2012, there was a substantial effort made to formalize the profession of career counseling to increase the legitimacy of career counselors. The formalization efforts included the revitalization of the career centers in secondary schools originally established by SEA but discontinued in the interim between SEA and the YES Network. Additionally, the YES Network focused on certifying a greater number of career counselors in North Macedonia by conducting career counselor trainings specifically designed for this initiative. As part of the certification effort, individuals from the ASK group were tasked with developing a secondary school career counseling curriculum designed for the YES Network. This curriculum was then delivered to aspiring career counselors across the country. Additionally, because of their involvement with the YES Network, the ASK group was revitalized as it became relevant to a larger number of counselors as the profession expanded. Finally, the YES Network provided specific career counseling goals for career counselors, which were individualized by region. The regional differences accounted for differences in labor markets across North Macedonia. This indicates a more regionally tailored approach to career counseling than was found in previous initiatives or with the GCDF.

Thus, while the SEA, PEP, MCP, and YES Network all contributed to the establishment and development of the professional logic of career counseling in North Macedonia, the career counseling component of the YES Network was the culmination of these efforts and the most influential source on this logic. Additionally, the YES Network was designed as a compilation of many of the components of the SEA, PEP, and MCP. As such, while all four initiatives influenced the development of career counseling in North Macedonia, these initiatives are all represented within the YES Network.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> One note regarding the influence of previous initiatives on the YES Network is that they were primarily influential on the career counseling component of the YES Network as opposed to the YES Network more generally.

Additionally, the previous initiatives developed a pipeline of employees as these individuals worked as contractors for multiple initiatives. For instance, both Petre and another EDC employee, Lilijana, who worked with EDC monitoring the initiative's efficacy, were part of previous USAID initiatives prior to joining the YES Network. These individuals built upon their previous experiences with USAID initiatives in the design of the YES Network. Additionally, James noted that many of the Macedonian employees of EDC previously worked on other USAID initiatives. Thus, both the content and the staff of the YES Network represented a culmination of USAID youth development initiatives.

Another important aspect of the previous USAID initiatives is that according to James with EDC, they were largely considered failures. James believed that the USAID initiatives preceding the YES Network failed to adequately establish the practice of career counseling in North Macedonia. The YES Network was partially an attempt to rectify certain aspects of these previous initiatives that were not implemented in a sustainable manner.

In addition to the influence of previous USAID initiatives, other aspects of the YES Network came from previous EDC programs. Specifically, James mentioned that EDC began to look at their own previous programming efforts to include in the YES Network because of some of the limited success enjoyed by the previous USAID initiatives. For example, James mentioned that the concept of career coaching, which was a position utilized in North Macedonia prior to the implementation of career counseling, came from a similar program implemented by EDC in Guyana. Additionally, Alfred, who succeeded James at EDC in a supervisory role, indicated utilizing a soft skills employability curriculum in North Macedonia that was previously used by

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Specifically, individuals who worked more directly with the career counseling component of the YES Network, such as Vera with ASK, noted a greater influence of previous USAID initiatives, while individuals who worked more generally on the YES Network, such as James with EDC, noted a cursory effect. Thus, the influence of these initiatives was more specific to the development of career counseling practices than to the initiative more generally.

EDC in Rwanda. In addition to the programming borrowed from previous EDC initiatives, James indicated that EDC also added some programming that was unique to the YES Network, including Work Based Learning and Work Ready Now. These curricula were used neither in previous USAID initiatives nor previous EDC initiatives. The YES Network is thus comprised of components originating as part of previous USAID efforts and previous EDC efforts, and as unique elements designed exclusively for the YES Network.

Prior to investigating these components further, the following table provides a brief overview of the timeline of development for this initiative.

**Table 2: Timeline of the YES Network/Career Counseling Events**

<b>2003</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Secondary Education Activity (SEA) was introduced in North Macedonia.</li> </ul>
<b>2004</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA initiated the concept of career counseling in secondary schools, including designating spaces for career centers.</li> </ul>
<b>2006</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Primary Education Project (PEP) was introduced into primary schools. This project included trainings for teachers focused on improving employability skills for students in primary grade levels and helping students select secondary schools.</li> </ul>
<b>2007</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Macedonian Competitiveness Project (MCP) was introduced and began with the goal of creating GCDF-certified master trainers. These trainers were taught to train future GCDF-certified career counselors.</li> </ul>
<b>2008</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A contractor for USAID conducted market assessments of local economies in four different regions of North Macedonia in preparation for the YES Network.</li> <li>These assessments were later used to determine the careers towards which students were oriented by career counselors.</li> </ul>
<b>2009</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first Macedonian career counseling master trainers received certifications to provide GCDF trainings to future career counselors.</li> <li>The first cohort of GCDF-certified career counselors began trainings.</li> </ul>
<b>2010</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first cohort of GCDF-certified career counselors received certifications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These individuals were trained by the Macedonian individuals who received master trainer certifications in 2009 as well as by GCDF-certified master trainers from Bulgaria.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The ASK professional association was formed. This was a private professional group that later worked with USAID in the development of YES Network competencies and trainings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Founding members were those who received GCDF certifications either as master trainers or as career counselors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- EDC began to implement the YES Network program.
    - Career counseling was not part of the YES Network at this time.
- 2012**
- Work began to incorporate a career counseling component following input from the Ministry of Education and Science and the ASK group.
    - As part of this process, USAID reached out to ASK in order to solicit feedback regarding which standards should be incorporated into the career counseling model.
      - These competencies were largely derived from the GCDF curriculum originally implemented as part of the MCP.
- 2013**
- EDC used the recommendations of ASK to begin crafting a career counseling model for use by YES Network career counselors (See Table 3 for this model).
  - ASK created training modules for career counselors that corresponded to each element of the career counseling model.
    - Training modules were created by ASK for career counseling tasks such as working with student families and conducting career counseling specifically within secondary schools.
    - These trainings were conducted in multiple cohorts and were led by ASK members.
    - The first wave of trainings was conducted in four initial regions selected based on demographic characteristics and regional diversity.
    - Trainings spread from the initial four regions to neighboring regions.
  - The people selected for training as career counselors were psychologists, teachers, and pedagogues.
    - These individuals received certifications for each training they completed.
  - While the trainings were designed for VET schools, they were taken up in both VETs and gymnasiums.
- 2014**
- The BIPO career inventory was created to offer a testing battery that determined potential careers for students.
    - This battery was created by Macedonian academics and was specifically designed to indicate careers applicable within the Macedonian economy.
- 2016**
- The YES Network was discontinued.
    - Little formal policy was adopted to take its place.

### **Goals, Practices, and Assumptions of the YES Network**

Because the YES Network was primarily responsible for the components of the career counseling logic, I use the terms “Yes Network logic” and “career counseling logic” interchangeably in this dissertation. Following Woulfin (2016), I identify an institutional logic by its goals, practices, and assumptions. In this section, I thus review the goals, practices, and



assumptions of the YES Network. These components along with their sources is summarized in Table 4.

### **Goals of the YES Network**

The overarching goal of the YES Network was to reduce unemployment in North Macedonia (EDC, 2016). However, this goal had many individual sub-components. According to interviews and relevant documents, the career counseling component of the YES Network was designed to reduce unemployment by improving the labor market of North Macedonia, by improving the workforce skills of youth, by improving student satisfaction in their careers of choice, by improving student understanding of career elements and planning, and by decreasing emigration from North Macedonia. These individual goals will be discussed in the following sections.

#### ***Improve Labor Market***

The reestablishment of career counseling as part of the YES Network was initiated following a labor market assessment conducted by an independent contractor working for EDC. This contractor was the aforementioned James, who was later hired by EDC to oversee the implementation of the YES Network program. The labor market assessment he conducted was specific to North Macedonia and even included sub-evaluations of individual regions within the country. The career counseling component of the YES Network was then specifically designed to meet the needs of North Macedonia identified by these evaluations, including training modules created to meet the unique labor market needs of individual regions and municipalities. Thus the labor market assessment was conducted and incorporated into the YES Network so that career

counselors would be able to orient students towards careers that were needed within the country and their individual regions.

### ***Improve Workforce Skills of Youth***

Career counselors were tasked with helping students develop skills that would translate to the workforce. According to James, career counselors were asked to help students learn general workforce skills that would not be part of a typical academic curriculum. Specifically, James indicated that teaching communication skills and how to work as part of a team were encouraged topics for career counselors. Alfred, James's successor, indicated a similar goal and termed these workforce skills, "soft skills," referring to the skills that are not directly related to a specific job, but rather related to general workforce suitability. Additionally, according to Vera with ASK, career counselors helped students reflect on job experiences, such as internships, in order to determine what sort of education or career preparation would be most appropriate for students to best prepare for their careers of choice. This process included exploring different higher education opportunities and understanding the connection between education and employment.

The connection between education and work was a major component of the YES Network and was furthered by the inclusion of two relevant curricula in the initiative, Work Ready Now and Work Based Learning. The content of these curricula will be detailed in the practices section; however, both curricula were designed to help students learn job skills and apply on-the-job experiences to their education. The use of these curricula demonstrates the importance of the goal of improved workforce skills.

According to Alfred with EDC, one reason the development of workforce skills was so crucial to the YES Network was that many families were still adjusting to the relatively recent capitalist job market. Thus, some families struggled to teach younger generations the skills that

are important when pursuing various employment opportunities. While most parents grew up in a more organized economy, both as part of Yugoslavia and in the immediate aftermath, they were typically accustomed to receiving employment through less merit-based pathways. According to interviews with numerous Macedonians, employment during the communist era in North Macedonia was largely awarded based on political or familial connections. However, as North Macedonia has moved towards capitalism, this form of receiving employment has diminished somewhat. Therefore, young people have had to develop the workforce skills upon which their parents likely placed minimal emphasis.

### ***Improve Student Satisfaction with Employment***

Along with workforce skills, on-the-job experiences were encouraged to ensure that students enjoyed the work to which they were committing their careers. According to James, career counselors were encouraged to help students find work placements in the community so that students would better understand the responsibilities of various careers and would be able to adjust their plans prior to committing to any one career. The hope was that if students enjoy their careers of choice, they would spend more time developing skills that would be beneficial towards these careers, and thus they would become superior employees. Additionally, if students find satisfying careers, they might be more likely to commit to a singular career path and spend less time unemployed looking for more satisfying employment.

### ***Improve Student Understanding of Career Elements and Planning***

Another goal of career counseling for the YES Network was to help students understand the purpose and importance of career planning. This goal was demonstrated via the model of career counseling created by ASK and utilized as part of the YES Network. The first goal for the

career planning program read, “Objectives of the Program: After mastering the Career Planning program, the student acquires knowledge, skills and is trained to understand the need for career planning.” As such, understanding career planning and the connection between career planning and successful careers was a primary goal of the YES Network.

### *Decrease Emigration from North Macedonia*

Finally, by increasing understanding of career planning and satisfaction with employment, the YES Network was designed to decrease emigration. Because North Macedonia struggled with intelligent and driven young people leaving to find work elsewhere, a YES Network goal was to encourage these individuals to remain in North Macedonia. This goal was oriented around the concept that keeping promising young people in the country would help businesses find suitable employees. Thus, this goal looks at youth unemployment from the employer perspective rather than the employee perspective. Petre spoke to this goal when discussing the purpose of the YES Network and career counseling: “A lot of people from Macedonia, they leave the country, young people. The businesses [are] struggling now to find workers. This is something that we have to work on, otherwise...we will have unsatisfied young people with the first objective to get out of Macedonia and go to work in some Western European countries.” This comment, which was echoed by Alfred, indicates that a large number of Macedonian individuals were leaving the country to search for more appealing employment opportunities elsewhere. By increasing student satisfaction with employment opportunities available in North Macedonia, the YES Network hoped to retain promising young people in North Macedonia.

## **Practices of the YES Network**

The practices developed as part of the YES Network were largely designed to help achieve the aforementioned goals. These practices included developing training and certification programs to ensure quality within the profession of career counseling and establishing a unique model of practice to help shape and standardize interactions between students and career counselors. Additionally, career inventories and internships were used by career counselors to help students investigate and explore different careers.

### ***Trainings for Career Counselors***

According to James, the first step of the YES Network was to determine who would conduct the career counseling practices. As previously mentioned, many teachers and pedagogues were selected to work as career counselors. Additionally, because of the prevalence of psychologists in the country, these individuals were also selected as strong candidates to work as career counselors. According to Petre, who played a key role in the on-site development of the YES Network, at least one teacher and one psychologist from each participating school took part in the YES Network trainings. Each school sent multiple individuals to trainings to ensure that all career counselors had an opportunity for collaboration. Larger schools often had more teachers, in addition to psychologists and pedagogues, participate in the trainings.

The trainings themselves occurred in three or four initial waves taking place at different times and in different locations. These original trainings took place either just prior to or during the 2013–2014 school year. Each training incorporated practitioners from between ten to upwards of fifteen schools. More trainings were added as interest in these training sessions increased over time. According to James and Petre, these initial waves of trainings took place in

the individual regions within North Macedonia that were selected to pilot the YES Network. While early trainings were developed exclusively for the specific region in which they took place, the trainings soon spread to neighboring regions, where additional trainings were conducted in the neighboring locales that had similar characteristics as the original sites. For example, career counseling initiatives which began in Tetovo, a predominantly Albanian city, spread to other Albanian regions in the vicinity of Tetovo. Thus, there were multiple waves of career counselor trainings, beginning with the initial trainings in the four primary sites. As per Petre, who was involved in the creation of these programs, the trainings were largely focused on teaching the future career counselors the YES Network model of counseling, which was based on the GCDF model of career counseling. At the conclusion of the final round of YES Network trainings, the majority of Macedonian schools had sent career counselors to these trainings.

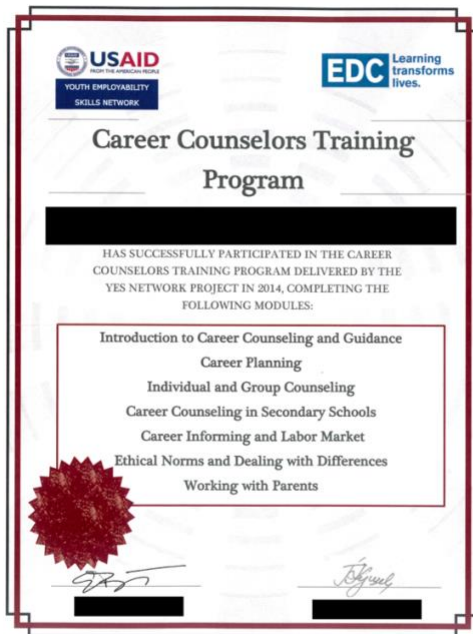
### *Certification System for Counselors*

According to many of the counselors involved, the trainings included certifications at the end to indicate who was trained in what practices. This aspect of the YES Network was designed to ensure that career counselors met minimum standards before providing counseling services. This goal was included in the YES Network because prior to this initiative, some individuals providing career services were unable to adequately direct students towards jobs for which they were well-suited or that they would find enjoyable. Marica, who worked for ASK, noted that the lack of adequate employment matching services was partially responsible for the aforementioned increase in emigration from North Macedonia. Because young people were not pleased with the jobs towards which they were oriented, they often left the country to find better opportunities. Therefore, providing certifications that demonstrated that the individuals conducting career

counseling had the proper trainings in order to provide adequate services was a practice of the YES Network.

Many of the career counselors who were interviewed retained the certifications they earned from the YES Network trainings and were readily able to provide copies upon request. These certifications were the first non-GCDF certifications available for career counselors in secondary schools. Additionally, unlike GCDF certifications, which were generalist career counseling certifications, these certifications were exclusively for career counselors in secondary schools. An example of a YES Network certification is presented in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: A Career Counseling Certification**



*Caption: This certificate was awarded to one of my career counselor interviewees, Svetlana, when she completed the seven YES Network modules listed on the document. This document indicates that she was adequately trained in these areas of career counseling in secondary schools.*

### ***Reestablish Career Counseling Profession***

Perhaps the largest objective of the YES Network was to reestablish the profession and practices of career counseling in secondary schools. While career counseling was practiced in some schools in the years following the cessation of the SEA initiative, it was not a particularly common practice nor was it an officially recognized profession by the Macedonian government. Additionally, career counseling was such a novel concept at the time of SEA that the services offered were very basic and varied substantially between schools. Thus, as one individual who worked with USAID North Macedonia, Nada, noted, the YES Network was really the first time career counseling was implemented with consistency in secondary schools. While specific components of the YES Network were designed to improve the connection between school and the workforce, the first step of the initiative was simply reestablishing career counseling practices in secondary schools.

### ***Career Counseling Sessions with Students***

Once career counseling was reestablished, the YES Network outlined a model of specific practices that counselors were expected to conduct with students. This model was designed to help students identify careers they might be interested in or well-suited to, identify goals and action steps, and then take tangible steps towards achieving their career goals. The majority of the career counselors with whom I spoke indicated their participation in practices conforming to this model.

When using this model, career counselors were to begin by working with students on developing their career ideas. This process began by helping students brainstorm career ideas and



conduct a job search. These steps were designed to help students determine the advantages and disadvantages of different career paths.

Career counselors were then tasked with helping students develop individual career plans. This component had four steps. The first step was helping students discover their career purposes. In this step, students explored different careers and career ideas using visualization tools, such as drawing pictures of their dream careers to highlight career goals and match them with possible career paths. This aided students in making a connection between what they hoped to accomplish in their careers and the tasks that comprise various career options. Career counselors then helped students conduct “SWOT” analyses or similar self-assessments. This was designed to help students identify personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as they pertained to a specific career selection. The third step of the career plan was to help students explore the education and career opportunities related to the previously identified career interests. This step involved helping students discover the education requirements for particular careers to determine logical next steps. Alternatively, career counselors helped students identify careers related to identified interests that would be available immediately following secondary school. The final step of the career plan was to help students develop goals and action plans. This step involved helping students establish goals for the short-, medium-, and long-terms. Career counselors then worked with students to create lists of action steps necessary to achieve these goals.

Following the completion of the career plans, career counselors helped students apply for job opportunities and practice interviews. This step was particularly relevant if the student was planning on pursuing a career immediately following secondary school as opposed to pursuing higher education. Finally, career counselors conducted follow-up assessments with students at a

later date in order to develop feedback on the career counseling program and modify it accordingly.

The following (in Table 3) is excerpted from the model of practice for career counselors that was included with the YES Network. According to sources with ASK, USAID, and career counselors, this model was designed by ASK and provided to USAID, which officially implemented the model in conjunction with EDC. This model was provided to me by a career counselor, Mirjana, who participated in the YES Network trainings. Due to the length of the complete model, the following is an abbreviated version of the model. The original document was titled *Career Planning* and was published in 2013 (Vocational Education and Training, 2013).

**Table 3: Model of Career Counseling in North Macedonia**

<b>Program Component</b>	<b>Selected Student Goals and Activities</b>	<b>Selected Career Counselor Goals and Activities</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	Students build trust with group members, identify expectations within the group, and understand the need for career planning	Counselors conduct exercises to set expectations and communicate the structure and content of the program to students
<i>Services and Resources</i>	Students learn the goals of the career centers, understand the importance of utilizing career services, and encourage their peers to utilize career services	Counselors prepare promotional materials for career centers and organize collaborative events with students, teachers, and parents
<i>Career Planning Process</i>	Students should understand the need for career planning and understand the various steps of planning one's career	Career counselors explain the cycle of career planning, and brainstorm the steps and activities involved in career planning with students
<i>Make a career plan (Step 1: career vision)</i>	Students must create a personal vision for a career plan and monitor the implementation of their career plan	Career counselors present the structure of a career plan and present different ideas for types of careers
<i>Make a career plan (Step 2: self-knowledge and self-assessment)</i>	Student should understand the importance of self-assessments, complete a self-assessment, and enter the results of this assessment into an individual career plan template	Career counselors should provide students with self-assessments and information pertaining to these assessments, help students complete assessments, and analyze the

		results of the assessments for each student’s values, skills, and qualities. Additionally, counselors should collaborate with employers to set up meetings and job observations for careers that match assessment results
<i>Make a career plan (Step 3: research educational and career opportunities)</i>	Students should identify occupations that offer the greatest opportunity depending on their education plans, identify higher education options, identify potential job opportunities, and describe the most desirable career options along with plans for pertinent education	Career counselors should help students learn how to gather information on available career opportunities. This can include helping students learn how to explore available career opportunities, learn about career advancement opportunities, learn how to organize meetings with current employees, and learn how to schedule visits to employment services agencies and colleges
<i>Make a career plan (Step 4: goal setting and action plan)</i>	The student should define goals, differentiate between short- and long-term goals, establish priorities, assess their action plan, and complete their action plan	The counselor should work with students through the career selection process. This includes helping the students reflect on their self-assessments and their identified career possibilities to choose one or more potential career paths. The counselor should also help students create their goals and evaluate their action plans
<i>Active search for work</i>	The student should make his or her own CV, write a cover letter, develop a plan for a job search, and prepare for a job interview	The counselor should help students as they create their own lists of relevant job vacancies. The counselor should also help students as they communicate with employers, complete job applications, prepare CVs and cover letters, and prepare for job interviews. Career counselors should help orchestrate career fairs to help students explore potential career opportunities and make connections with potential employers
<i>Follow-up</i>	Students should convey placement information to career counselors upon graduation and communicate information to career counselors via surveys in order to better the career center services	Career counselors should keep track of and analyze the employment placements of graduates. They should analyze the skills and competencies students learned at career centers via surveys from former students and their employers

## *Student Internships*

In addition to this model of practice designed explicitly for the YES Network, career counselors utilized two pre-established models of counseling designed to facilitate student internships and work experiences. These models were called Work Ready Now and Work Based Learning. According to James, Work Ready Now was a curriculum borrowed from the United States that helped prepare students for employment and work experiences. Work Ready Now helped students develop “communication skills, teamwork skills, [and] literacy and numeracy skills.” This indicates a curriculum that helps students build skills directly related to being a strong employee in addition to more traditional academic skills, such as reading and mathematics. Career counselors used this curriculum to help students develop attributes that would directly contribute to making them successful and desirable employees and interns.

In addition to the Work Ready Now curriculum, James indicated that EDC also incorporated a curriculum called Work Based Learning into the YES Network to help students gain on-the-job experiences. James stated that the on-the-job experiences were incorporated to not only help students develop skills that would be useful in future employment, but to make sure that the careers students chose were ones which they would find satisfying. Towards this goal, James located the developer of the Work Based Learning curriculum in the United States. This curriculum was designed in the United States, but never implemented in any capacity. With the permission of the developer, James implemented the Work Based Learning curriculum in Macedonian schools as part of the YES Network. This program gave students the opportunity to intern at specific jobs of their choosing for limited periods of time. Oftentimes students would work in a specific profession for a period of weeks in order to practice their Work Ready Now skills and to test the fit of the position. Afterwards, they would discuss their experiences with

their career counselors to determine if this job felt like a good match or not. In this way, students could reflect on their job experiences to determine if a specific position was one they were interested in pursuing. James went on to discuss the role of experiential learning opportunities within career counseling as part of a career-search cycle: “[It’s a] circular process. It’s not linear. Because you might have an experience that causes you to adjust your goals, right? I don’t really want to do X, Y, or Z. Okay, come and let us reason together and adjust and decide [what] you really are interested in becoming.” Thus, the experiences as part of Work Based Learning both helped students begin to develop skills they would use in their future careers and helped students determine if a particular career path was truly the one they wished to pursue. Work Based Learning was a practice of the YES Network that was oriented towards the aforementioned goals of improving student satisfaction with employment and improving the workforce skills of youth.

Student internships also served as a catalyst for the aforementioned reestablishment of the profession of career counseling in North Macedonia. The Work Based Learning curriculum was utilized prior to the 2013 inclusion of career counseling in the YES Network initiative.

According to James, EDC originally employed career coaches to conduct the assessments with students after their experiential work opportunities; however, given the importance of discussing work opportunities and deciding upon various career paths, EDC realized the need for more trained individuals in this position to conduct career counseling. Thus, the need to analyze internship experiences was beneficial towards the eventual reestablishment of career counseling in North Macedonia as part of the YES Network.

### ***Career Inventories Conducted by Counselors***

In addition to utilizing experiential opportunities and the career planning model to help students identify and pursue relevant careers, career counselors were expected to utilize career

inventories towards the same end as well. While originally there were a number of different inventories used, including the American Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the YES Network eventually settled on the development of a unique testing battery for use exclusively in Macedonian secondary schools. According to Lilijana, a Macedonian who worked at EDC, this testing battery was designed by faculty members from a local university and was called the Battery of Instruments for Professional Orientation (BIPO). The BIPO is still used by school psychologists and others conducting career counseling services at present. Because this instrument was designed specifically for career counseling in North Macedonia, the careers towards which students were oriented when using this testing battery were specific to the needs of the Macedonian economy. Lilijana noted, “This battery of instruments for professional orientation . . . was made from scratch [and] standardized for our population . . . . We engaged three professors from the Institute of Psychology of our state university, and they created this.” Also, by designing this tool exclusively for use in Macedonian schools, career counselors were and are able to use this instrument without the financial costs of similar, more generalized tools as this tool is free for use by Macedonian career counselors.

### **Assumptions of the YES Network**

The major assumptions of the career counseling logic of the YES Network were that career counseling would benefit individual students and the local economy, that career counseling would be beneficial in VETs and gymnasiums, and that the local adaptations that took place in the development and implementation of career counseling would improve the outcome of the program.

### ***Career Counseling Benefits Students and Local Economy***

The concept that career counseling would benefit students was a crucial assumption of the career counseling logic. In conversations with both career counselors and those responsible for developing the career counseling goals and practices, there was an inherent assumption that career counseling would help students develop career ideals that aligned with their skills and interests. Additionally, it was assumed that the careers towards which students were directed were those that were in need within Macedonian localities. Finally, it was assumed that students would develop skills that would aid in their search for the careers towards which they were oriented. These assumptions were substantial as the effect of school and career counseling practices on student outcomes is difficult to determine (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). While logical, there is little direct evidence indicating that career counseling would help students choose satisfying career paths and develop skills that would help them excel in employment opportunities benefiting the local economy. Thus, all expected outcomes were reliant on rational expectations and assumptions rather than established research.

### ***VETs and Gymnasiums Are Effective Locales for Career Counseling***

Another assumption of the YES Network is that it would have a positive influence on student career selection and employability skills for students at both VETs and gymnasiums. While career counselors indicated that the YES Network was implemented in both types of schools, some sources close to the development of the initiative indicated that it was only formally implemented in VETs. According to James with EDC, VETs were the only schools in which career counseling was implemented. However, according to Petre, a Macedonian working for EDC, career counseling was implemented in both VETs and gymnasiums. This difference in

understanding was likely due to the fact that while the YES Network was piloted in both types of schools during the 2013–2014 school year, formal support from USAID remained exclusively in VETs for the following two school years. However, many of the practices that were piloted in gymnasiums in 2013–2014 remained despite the lack of formal support. Additionally, some counselors at gymnasiums attended later sessions when extra room permitted the attendance of additional educators. For instance, Angela, a psychologist and career counselor at a gymnasium, indicated that she attended these trainings and implemented the YES Network materials at her school. Angela stated that she attended trainings in 2015, which would have been well after the pilot period. She noted that the YES Network reached out to her in 2015 partially because they knew she would be interested in the materials and partially because they had space in the trainings since most interested educators had already attended previous sessions. Thus, while largely designed for VETs, career counseling was piloted in both gymnasiums and VETS, and partially implemented later in gymnasiums due to extra space available in training sessions. There was an assumption that even though career counseling services were not actively designed for use in gymnasiums, they would be effective in these schools, nonetheless.

Another manner in which the assumption of effectiveness of the YES Network at VETs and gymnasiums developed was the fact that many of the schools involved in the YES Network were hybrid VET-gymnasiums. This type of school blended the distinction between the vocational and academic tracks. Approximately one third of the VETs that were formally provided with YES Network trainings also had gymnasiums in the same building, according to Petre. The counselors who went to these trainings worked with students who were on both the VET and the gymnasium tracks. This phenomenon somewhat blurs the distinctions between the two programs, making it more difficult to exclusively implement the YES Network program in



VETs. Thus, by providing trainings to some career counselors who worked exclusively at gymnasiums and some career counselors who worked at combined schools, the YES Network initiative was implemented in many schools with students on the gymnasium track. This demonstrates a commitment to the assumption that career counseling would be effective with these students as educators at both schools were invited to participate.

Interestingly, the assumption of effectiveness at both VETs and gymnasiums was exclusively held by Macedonian individuals, not by American individuals who worked with EDC or USAID. This distinction was best exemplified by the previous example of Petre, a Macedonian with EDC, noting that the program was implemented in both types of schools, while James, an American at EDC, was unaware of this implementation. Given that James did not have an understanding that the YES Network would be effective in both locales, this assumption indicates an on-site adaptation in North Macedonia to the policy developed by EDC and USAID in the United States. These local adaptations were a key component of the YES Network as well as many foreign policy initiatives in general.

### ***Local Adaptations Will Improve the Outcome of the Program***

The implementation of the YES Network in both gymnasiums and VETs by Macedonians was simply one example of a local adaptation. Such adaptations in the creation stage are common practice in international humanitarian efforts. A former employee of the World Bank noted to me that it is common for organizations that help fund and develop programs in different countries to seek the advice and council of individuals and organizations within these countries in the creation of programming. This practice was adopted to help ensure that there is local support for the programming efforts (Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). This approach to international development is likely particularly applicable to the case of career

counseling in North Macedonia as this practice was added to the YES Network due to requests from local individuals. Thus, even the inclusion of career counseling as part of the YES Network initiative was a local adaptation.

One example of the influence of local adaptation during the design of the career counseling component of the YES Network was in the creation of the BIPO, a career counseling practice developed specifically to be used in schools. As previously mentioned, the BIPO was created by Macedonian professors to help students select potential careers from those most in need in North Macedonia. The creation of the BIPO inventory took place after the initial implementation of career counseling as part of the YES Network to meet a need recognized by local individuals. Thus, while the YES Network was largely designed by Americans, the creation of a career inventory specifically for use in North Macedonia to meet a locally established need exemplifies an effective local adaptation.

Other practices included in the YES Network were tailored from practices which existed in other regions of the world, such as the United States, to meet the needs of secondary school students in North Macedonia. This demonstrates a separate form of adaptation in which a pre-existing practice is reformatted to meet a local need. For instance, as previously mentioned, the YES Network adapted the model of career counseling included in the initiative from the already existing GCDF curriculum. Vera, a member of ASK who was involved in the adaptation of the GCDF to fit the school environment, noted the addition of modules into the GCDF curriculum to make it more appropriate for Macedonian secondary schools. She stated,

The next step was to make a more structured [career counseling] program, which was done through the GCDF program and [was] specifically tailored for the schools.... One of the modules was career counseling in schools, which does not exist in [the] general GCDF course, but it's very important for the schools. [This module] explains what kinds of career counseling activities or career development activities you could implement within schools.

Vera indicated that in the development of the YES Network, the already existing GCDF program had to be modified to meet the needs of the school environment. This included keeping some practices which were part of the original GCDF model while adding others as an adaptation specifically for the YES Network. Thus, a pre-existing model of career counseling was adapted by local sources in order to create a more appropriate model of career counseling for Macedonian secondary schools.

The adaptation of practices to meet the needs of local Macedonians is both an example of an assumption of the YES Network as well as a key component of the process of development for this initiative. This latter component is integral to the following section which will trace the origins of the goals, practices, and assumptions of the career counseling logic of the YES Network.

### **The Sources of the Professional Logic of Career Counseling**

Establishing the sources for the professional logic of career counseling in North Macedonia requires an investigation of the process by which this logic was designed. The remainder of the chapter thus explores how multiple organizations and nations collaborated to create an international education and workforce development initiative. This developmental process included input from USAID, EDC, ASK, and the Ministry of Education and Science. These entities helped to develop this logic by exploring career counseling practices in other countries and determining which elements would be included in the YES Network. The transfer of these components from international sources to North Macedonia is known as international diffusion (Gilardi, 2012; Rogers, 1962).

This section will provide additional information about how the components detailed in the preceding goals, practices, and assumptions sections came to fruition, including an investigation of the collaborative process involved in the design stage. This research will provide unique insights about how organizations from different countries, with differing goals for the initiative, interacted in the creation and design of each component of the initiative. Additionally, this case study details the rationales for the components that diffused from different countries and the resulting impact of the collaborative process on the initiative itself. This research will better inform future multinational educational efforts by helping participant members and organizations better understand how the collaborative process influences the establishment of the actual initiative and the corresponding professional logic.

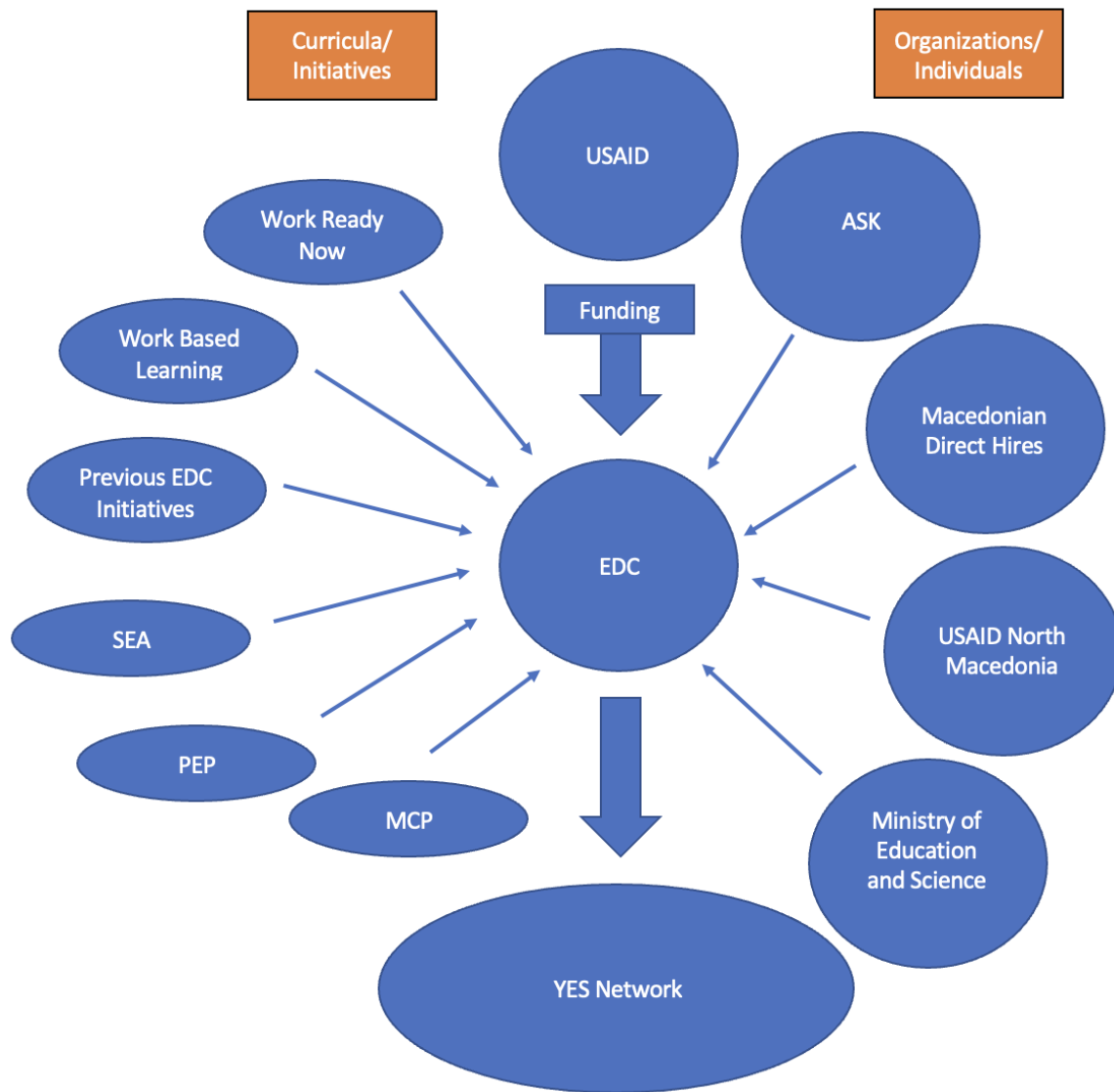
This section first examines the process of creating the professional career counseling logic, including examining the influence of various organizations, individuals, and previous policies. It will then look at the different sources and their collaborative relationships. This section will then trace the components of the career counseling professional logic that resulted from these collaborative efforts and differentiate between the source or sources that influenced the development of the goals, practices, and assumptions of this logic. Finally, the specific nations that influenced the development of this logic, most notably the United States and Bulgaria, will be examined.

### **The Creation of the Career Counseling Logic**

The creation of the career counseling logic established by the YES Network involved a collaboration between a number of different sources including specific individuals and

organizations as well as assorted curricula and prior initiatives. Figure 77 provides a simplistic overview of the sources that influenced the creation of the YES Network career counseling logic.

**Figure 7: YES Network Influences**



According to interviews with individuals involved in the creation of the YES Network, USAID funded EDC to design and implement the initiative. EDC was influenced by past

USAID-funded career counseling initiatives including SEA, PEP, and MCP. EDC was also influenced by previous EDC programs, such as a youth unemployment initiative in Rwanda, as well as unique curricula designed for this program, such as Work Ready Now and Work Based Learning, sourced from the United States. Additionally, EDC contracted out much of the career counseling model development to the ASK professional group. This primarily took place when Petre, a member of ASK, took over EDC's YES Network efforts. EDC also sourced information from local Macedonians regarding what should be included in the career counseling logic. This included hiring local Macedonians as contractors who directly contributed to EDC's efforts to create a career counseling initiative. Additionally, according to Alfred with EDC, EDC collaborated with USAID's North Macedonia office and, to a lesser extent, the Ministry of Education and Science to construct a program that met the desires of local Macedonians. USAID North Macedonia and EDC met regularly to ensure, according to Nada with USAID North Macedonia, that the initiative "aligned with national strategies." These strategies were primarily determined by the Ministry of Education and Science, and were communicated to USAID North Macedonia from the Ministry of Education and Science.

### ***Collaboration***

While there were many individual sources of influence, there were four specific organizations that collaborated on the creation of the YES Network. All of these organizations involved Macedonian individuals collaborating on best practices for career counseling in North Macedonia. These organizations were ASK, EDC, USAID North Macedonia, and the Ministry of Education and Science. EDC, while an American company, hired Macedonian individuals, especially towards the latter half of the YES Network, to ensure local input into the program. USAID North Macedonia is, of course, a local division of USAID that also hires Macedonian

citizens. All of these sources maintained various degrees of involvement in the establishment of the YES Network. Their extent of involvement ranged from direct and substantial to indirect and cursory.

**ASK.** According to Petre with EDC and Vera with ASK, ASK was primarily tasked with developing the model of career counseling used as part of the YES Network along with the relevant career counselor trainings. They then conducted these trainings with future career counselors at the sessions conducted by ASK and EDC in hotels across North Macedonia.

To create the model of career counseling, ASK largely worked independently from other contributing sources but with direct input from EDC. Petre indicated that ASK worked largely as a contractor of EDC. EDC provided ASK with some guidance and structure as to what they wanted the model to resemble. Then, according to Petre and Vera, ASK utilized the GCDF standards as a starting point for a unique model of career counseling for secondary schools to include in the YES Network. ASK then modified the existing GCDF modules and added additional modules in the creation of the YES Network model in order to meet the requirements of EDC.

Following the creation of this model, according to Vera, it was presented to USAID North Macedonia for publication as an element of the YES Network. USAID North Macedonia is staffed by both American and Macedonian citizens and operates under guidance from the primary USAID office in Washington, DC. The collaboration between USAID North Macedonia and ASK was a little more distant than the collaboration between EDC and ASK. According to Vera, there was very little direct communication between USAID North Macedonia and ASK. Rather, both USAID North Macedonia and ASK worked directly with EDC and indirectly with each other. To this point, Vera noted some frustration with finding her work included in the

published model of career counseling from USAID without providing credit to her or ASK. This indicates a somewhat strained line of communication between ASK and USAID North Macedonia, likely as a result of their indirect relationship.

In addition to their role in developing the model, according to Vera and Petre, ASK conducted many of the training sessions for career counselors with input from EDC. However, while ASK was largely in charge of teaching the modules to future career counselors, EDC maintained a role in helping career counselors learn how to integrate the YES Network curriculum into the schools. This distinction was made as, according to Petre, ASK had more expertise in career counseling in general, while EDC maintained more expertise in general education practices. Petre himself was a teacher for nine years prior to contracting with USAID on educational initiatives.

One noteworthy aspect of the collaboration between EDC and ASK is the fact that this arrangement was encouraged by USAID in Washington, DC. According to James with EDC, USAID asked EDC to collaborate with local resources whenever possible. Additionally, Alfred, a first-generation American with EDC, indicated that one of the early goals of the YES Network was to turn it over to local Macedonians. He stated, “USAID had this philosophy or this strategic goal, which I think they called USAID Forward, which was basically experts like myself working myself out of a job.” Towards this goal, after Alfred left EDC, the replacement for his position, Petre, was Macedonian. This indicates a strong desire on USAID’s behalf of creating working relationships with local Macedonians. These individuals, including Petre, maintained a substantial influence on the career counseling logic.

**EDC.** Partially due to the USAID Forward initiative mentioned by Alfred, some of the most collaborative efforts towards the career counseling initiative were initiated by local



Macedonian individuals hired by EDC. In terms of the specific contributions of the local Macedonian individuals, it is of note that the career counseling component was not implemented until Petre, a Macedonian individual, took over the project in December of 2012. Petre, as a certified GCDF master trainer and “distinguished member” of ASK, established the relationship between ASK and EDC in an effort to build the career counseling component. Petre, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Science, decided to formally include the career counseling component to the YES Network. Furthermore, it was Petre’s idea to contract out the career counseling component of the YES Network to ASK because of his familiarity with this group and their focus on career counseling. Thus, the career counseling aspect of the YES Network was really not fully initiated until a Macedonian direct hire took over efforts.

Additionally, other Macedonian individuals who worked for EDC, such as Lilijana who managed the finances for the YES Network, contributed to the goals of the YES Network. Lilijana spearheaded the effort to establish and develop the BIPO career inventory, which was used in conjunction with career counseling sessions. In the development of this project, Lilijana worked with other Macedonians employed at a local state university in this venture making this portion of the program exclusively Macedonian-influenced. This is a further example of Macedonian influence on the career counseling professional logic.

Thus, EDC’s direct hiring of Macedonian individuals was a substantial source of influence for the YES Network, especially in regard to the addition of career counseling. The primary form of collaboration that took place with Macedonian individuals was direct collaboration with Americans at EDC and other Macedonians at ASK. This manner of collaboration is included to highlight collaboration that took place between individuals from different countries and backgrounds in the formation of the YES Network. Given that EDC is an

American organization, their hiring of Macedonians to aid in the development of the YES Network helped ensure that Macedonian individuals provided substantial input into this project.

**USAID North Macedonia.** Another direct form of collaboration was that of the work involving USAID North Macedonia and EDC. These organizations worked closely together in formation of the YES Network initiative. Alfred, Petre's predecessor, mentioned that part of his work with EDC was meeting with representatives at USAID North Macedonia to help integrate the goals of USAID North Macedonia into the program development process. Alfred stated,

In the formation of the YES Network, [EDC] decided on how the goals that were set out by USAID [North Macedonia] [would be implemented]. [EDC] would [then] sketch out a skeleton of how the program would work, who it would work with, and that initial outline would be discussed with USAID [North Macedonia] to ensure that both USAID [North Macedonia] and EDC would be working towards the same goals.

Thus, USAID North Macedonia created goals and EDC crafted these goals into an implementable program. This process involved collaboration during both the creation of these goals, and when the program was complete, ensuring that both organizations agreed on the goals and practices of the program.

This collaboration took place particularly frequently in the earlier stages of the YES Network. While James and Alfred both noted a substantial involvement of USAID North Macedonia in the creation of the YES Network, Petre noted a more distant relationship. By the time Petre took over EDC's efforts in North Macedonia, he viewed USAID's involvement in the program as a funding source and noted very little interaction with USAID's North Macedonia office. This is a substantially different view than the one shared by James and Alfred. Thus, as the YES Network moved from development to implementation, USAID North Macedonia's role diminished.

**Ministry of Education and Science.** Finally, the last example of organizational collaboration took place with EDC and the Ministry of Education and Science. Interestingly, this

collaboration was often veiled by USAID North Macedonia. Particularly in the beginning, USAID North Macedonia communicated goals from the Ministry of Education and Science to EDC via collaborative sessions with EDC. Nada, with USAID North Macedonia, described USAID North Macedonia as “the face of [the Macedonian] government,” particularly representing the Ministry of Education and Science when working with EDC. Thus, while the goals of the Ministry of Education and Science were included in the YES Network, these goals were largely communicated to EDC through USAID North Macedonia.

However, in an almost inverse relationship to that of USAID North Macedonia and EDC, EDC’s relationship with the Ministry of Education and Science grew over time. It is likely that communication with the Ministry of Education and Science grew as the Macedonian presence at EDC increased, thus minimizing the necessity of USAID North Macedonia working as an intermediary. While James and Alfred noted limited involvement of the Ministry of Education and Science and significant USAID North Macedonia involvement, Petre indicated that there was often direct involvement with the Ministry of Education and Science and limited USAID North Macedonia involvement. Specifically, Petre noted that there were often ministry members present at career counseling trainings. Petre indicated that this involvement was in hopes that eventually the Ministry would take a role in the development and continuation of these trainings. Unfortunately, this idea never fully came to fruition. However, this arrangement indicates a continuation of the theme of local takeover of the project with the goal of moving leadership from the United States to North Macedonia over time. As EDC gained more Macedonian representation, the need for USAID North Macedonia to work as an intermediary between the Macedonian government lessened and the direct role of the Ministry of Education and Science increased.

## **From What Countries were the YES Network Components Sourced?**

While the previous sections detailed the work of multiple organizations with an emphasis on the contributions of Macedonians in the development of career counseling, the initiative was in fact a multinational effort. Many of the components of career counseling that were developed domestically were created with input from international sources. Furthermore, the aforementioned involvement of the United States, through EDC and USAID, in the YES Network is but one example of an influential international source for this initiative. The various countries named by relevant sources ranged from Canada in North America, to Finland and Slovenia in Europe, to Rwanda in Africa, to Guyana in South America. However, the bulk of the concepts that diffused originated in the United States and Bulgaria. Additionally, and as previously mentioned, much of the YES Network was designed uniquely for North Macedonia, which indicates a lack of diffusion for specific components.

Many of the components that originated outside of North Macedonia were adopted via diffusion. Diffusion explains the movement of concepts within or between nations as the recipient nation or region looks to utilize established structures already in practice (Gilardi, 2012; Rogers, 1962). Diffusion is a mechanism that perpetuates institutionalization. Organizational theorists look at institutionalization as a story of “what works” in a certain field (Golann, 2021; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). The diffusion of institutionalized practices is caused by other countries or organizations mimicking a system that works “correctly” elsewhere in order to add legitimacy to the practices adopted in a new environment. Thus, one explanation for the presence of international structures of career counseling, such as American practices, in North Macedonia is that North Macedonia adopted a system of career counseling from a nation that boasts a legitimated model, such as the United States. The

downside of this approach is that legitimacy and efficiency are often at odds (Golann, 2021; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). The trade-off between legitimacy and efficiency from diffused principles is why many of the diffused principles were adapted to meet the needs of the local Macedonian context and why others were developed exclusively for North Macedonia. The YES Network was ultimately comprised of components from various sources that were adapted to fit the unique context of North Macedonia.

To better demonstrate the influence of each nation, Table 4 identifies each aspect of the career counseling logic, the source of its creation (such as EDC or ASK), the data source identifying the aspect of career counseling (such as the individual interviewed), and the nation of the component's origin (such as Bulgaria or the United States).

**Table 4: The Sources of the Goals, Practices, and Assumptions of the YES Network**

<b>Career Counseling Logic</b>	Source (company, agency, or affiliation)	Data Source (name of individual or documents)	Nation of Origin for Component
<b>Goals</b>			
Improve labor market	EDC	James (EDC) and EDC/USAID documents	USA
Improve workforce skills of youth	ASK and EDC direct hires in North Macedonia	Vera (ASK), Petre (EDC), Alfred (EDC), and EDC/USAID documents	North Macedonia and USA
Improve student satisfaction with employment	EDC and ASK	Petre (EDC) and Vera (ASK)	North Macedonia and Bulgaria
Improve student understanding of career elements and planning	EDC and ASK	James (EDC) and Vera (ASK)	North Macedonia, USA, and Bulgaria
Decrease emigration from North Macedonia	ASK and EDC	Marica (ASK), Alfred (EDC), and EDC documents	North Macedonia and USA
<b>Practices</b>			
Trainings for career counselors	ASK, EDC direct hires in North Macedonia, and EDC	Vera (ASK), Petre (EDC), and James (EDC)	North Macedonia and USA
Certification system for counselors	ASK	Mirjana (career counselor)	North Macedonia
Re-establish career counseling profession	ASK	Vera (ASK) and Nada (USAID)	North Macedonia
Career counseling sessions with students	ASK, EDC direct hires in North Macedonia, and EDC	Vera (ASK), Mirjana (career counselor), and James (EDC)	North Macedonia, USA, and Bulgaria
Student internships	EDC	James (EDC)	USA
Career inventories conducted by counselors	ASK and EDC direct hires in North Macedonia	Vera (ASK) and Lilijana (EDC)	North Macedonia and Bulgaria
<b>Assumptions</b>			
Career counseling benefits students	EDC direct hires in North Macedonia	Petre (EDC)	North Macedonia
Career counseling benefits local economy	EDC	James (EDC)	USA
VETs and gymnasiums are effective locales for career counseling	EDC direct hires in North Macedonia	Petre (EDC)	North Macedonia
Local adaptations will take place and improve the outcome of the program	ASK and USAID	Vera (ASK) and James (EDC)	North Macedonia and USA

As can be seen in Table 4, there were some differences regarding the components of the professional logic of career counseling that diffused from different countries or were developed

uniquely for North Macedonia. The purpose of the components that diffused from the United States differed from those developed in North Macedonia and those that diffused from Bulgaria. In particular, American sources tended to favor components geared towards directly reducing youth unemployment, such as improving the labor market and bolstering local economies, while Macedonian and Bulgarian sources originated components that improved career counseling practices, the job selection process, and job satisfaction. This demonstrates that some contributing nations, including North Macedonia, maintained different goals from one another during the developmental process. These differences led to the establishment of different counseling components developing from the goals of each involved nation. Thus, the professional logic of career counseling includes a diverse array of components indicating different approaches to decreasing youth unemployment.

The different interests of individuals and organizations from each nation were demonstrated particularly well by James and Petre at EDC. While these two individuals held the same position at EDC, James, an American, maintained an acute focus on reducing unemployment while, Petre, a Macedonian, focused more on helping young people find satisfying employment. James discussed the development of the YES Network initiative in terms of the workforce assessments and job placements of young people. This included a focus on how to match students with jobs that were crucial to improving the overall economic functioning of the country. Conversely, in discussions with Petre the focus was more on helping young people learn work skills and find satisfying employment. Thus, Petre was more interested in helping students match with jobs based on interest and satisfaction. The secondary hope for Petre was that this process of matching students with satisfying employment opportunities would improve the economic functioning of North Macedonia. This dichotomy is representative of an overall

difference between Americans and Macedonians involved with the YES Network, with the former advocating for unemployment reducing measures and the latter for job satisfaction measures. Given the familiarity of the latter individuals with the Macedonian context, many of the job satisfaction components were both implemented and sustained with greater fidelity than were the unemployment reducing measures.

### ***Components of the Career Counseling Logic That Diffused From the United States***

Despite these differences in focus, as demonstrated in Table 4, a substantial number of the goals, practices, and assumptions included in the career counseling model of the YES Network originated in the United States. The primary form of diffusion of these American professional logic components was indirect diffusion (Rogers, 1962). This was largely because the school counseling model used in the United States differs substantially from the career counseling model designed in North Macedonia. There is no career counseling professional logic in the United States; there is only a comprehensive school counseling logic (ASCA, 2012). Only part of this professional logic pertains to career counseling. Because USAID and EDC had more career-specific interests, including improving the knowledge of the career process and student understanding of various careers, the Macedonian model designed was substantially more career-focused than is the American model of school counseling. Additionally, because USAID and EDC deferred to local Macedonian sources that were particularly interested in career counseling as opposed to school counseling, these sources encouraged a more career-centric model than that found in the United States. Thus, rather than the United States bringing an established practice to North Macedonia, specific practices from the United States were utilized in the creation of a Macedonian model.



To this end, some Macedonians were adamant that the career counseling model utilized was created specifically by North Macedonia without influence from the United States. When asked if the United States played a role in the design of the career counseling model developed as part of the YES Network, Vera from ASK said, “No, we never had any contact with the United States.” Vera made it clear that the model created by ASK was primarily the work of local Macedonians. As such, there was reluctance to note the involvement of the United States in the design process to any extent. However, Vera’s sentiments were partially a result of the aforementioned differences in Macedonian and American priorities and the transition of the YES Network from American to Macedonian individuals. Because there was very little direct communication between ASK and EDC before Petre took over EDC’s efforts, Vera was never informed as to the influence of Americans prior to this transition. Vera personally did not work with Americans at EDC. Rather, she communicated exclusively with Petre and other Macedonians at EDC. Thus, while the United States did play a major role in the development of the career counseling logic, rather than contributing directly to the model, many of the components sourced from the United States were through an intermediate source. This design somewhat clouded the contributions of the United States for those closely involved with the creation of the model.

**GCDF.** One exemplary indicator of diffusion from the United States is the fact that the career counseling model utilized as part of the YES Network was based on the American GCDF curriculum. The GCDF is a certification and curriculum administered by the Center for Credentialing and Education (CCE), an American-based, not-for-profit company that oversees a number of different counseling credentials and curricula. CCE offers credentials related to the

supervision of counseling, telehealth counseling, distance counseling, career counseling, and human services counseling. The GCDF is the career counseling certification.

CCE offers both an American GCDF credential and an international GCDF credential. For each credential, there is a separate curriculum and credentialing process. The international credentialing process is available to the fifteen countries outside of the United States that offer a GCDF certification. North Macedonia and Bulgaria are two of these fifteen countries (Global Career Development Facilitator, 2022). The international GCDF curriculum is specifically tailored to each individual country in order to meet their specific needs. However, there are consistent elements across all GCDF curricula. These consistent components include a commitment to the GCDF code of ethics, a specified number of supervised counseling hours, and at least 120 hours of training on the 12 core GCDF competencies. The 12 core competencies included in the GCDF training are helping skills, labor market information and resources, assessment, diverse populations, ethical and legal issues, career development models, employability skills, training clients and peers, program management/implementation, promotion and public relations, technology, and consultation. Several of these competencies were mentioned in interviewees by individuals holding different positions in North Macedonia. Individuals involved with both the creation and implementation of the YES Network, as well as career counselors, mentioned the importance of employability skills as part of the YES Network. Additionally, a number of counselors included career development or trajectory as a key purpose of their practice. Other aspects of the GCDF model, such as program management and training peers, are more general aspects of the model. Thus, many of the elements that are part of the GCDF model were incorporated into the YES Network.

***Components of the Career Counseling Logic That Diffused From Bulgaria***

Another country that had an outsized influence on the development of the career counseling logic in North Macedonia was Bulgaria. Bulgaria was viewed by many individuals working with ASK as the most advanced career counseling nation in the Balkans. Additionally, Bulgaria recently created their own model of career counseling. Similar to North Macedonia, Bulgaria created this model with influence from outside nations, such as the United States, rather than adopting a model developed elsewhere or creating an entirely unique model. Given the regional, historical, and developmental similarities between the two nations, the model of career counseling that Bulgaria recently adopted was influential in the development of the Macedonian model of career counseling.

The direct influence of Bulgaria on the development of career counseling in North Macedonia was confirmed when Vera was asked what country had the biggest effect on the Macedonian model. She immediately answered Bulgaria. Vera went on to state,

So ... in our surrounding area, in the Balkans area, Bulgarians are the most advanced ones on the topic of career counseling. They have [established career counseling] on a national level [with] the [government] institutions dealing with the topic. [Additionally] career counseling has been introduced in all the relevant systems.

By this she meant that career counseling was successfully developed and implemented in Bulgaria at both the institutional level as well as within the school systems. The term ‘institutions’ in this instance refers to government policy while ‘systems’ refers to collections of organizations such as secondary schools and universities. Vera went on to say, “[Bulgaria has] studied career counseling, university studies, they have a huge number of certified GCDFs, I think over 1,100.” Thus, Vera viewed Bulgaria as having an advanced career counseling system and as something of a role model for the development of a similar system in North Macedonia.

Vera was also impressed with some of the career counseling technology developed in Bulgaria. In our interview, she demonstrated some of the features from the Bulgarian career

counseling website that were very advanced. These features included a virtual version of someone selecting their career and making other life choices. This process took place with virtual avatars whose fates were determined based on career selections. This feature provided a user-friendly and visually appealing way for students and young people to recognize the connection between career choices and lifestyles. The steps included in this online tool were very similar to those previously detailed as part of the Macedonian model. This tool helped users research employment opportunities, develop career plans, and understand the necessary steps to achieve their desired goals.

Interestingly, the influence of the Bulgarian model on Macedonian career counseling is actually an example of a collaborative effort between Bulgaria and the United States influencing North Macedonia. According to Vera, the United States helped implement career counseling in Bulgaria when they established this profession several years before North Macedonia. The Bulgarian model was then influential in the creation of Macedonian career counseling practices. As Vera pointed out, “USAID helped to introduce GCDF standards in Bulgaria. And when we started the process in [North] Macedonia, the Bulgarians were our master trainers and mentors.” As such, the YES Network incorporated Bulgarian practices, leading to additional indirect involvement from the United States through Bulgaria.

Though Macedonians looked to Bulgaria to provide insights on their own model of career counseling, Bulgaria provided few direct contributions to the model utilized. Rather, they provided mentorship and guidance as North Macedonia created their own model. Thus, Bulgarian sources helped Macedonians establish the GCDF curriculum and develop tools to help individuals explore their careers. Similar to diffusion from the United States, this input was adapted by Macedonian sources and implemented in a manner consistent with the Macedonian

context. For example, rather than using software to help students make career selections, Macedonians established the BIPO testing battery, which guided students in their career selection processes. This is a further example of diffusion with local adaptations utilized in the creation of the YES Network.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Other Influential Countries in the Creation of the YES Network***

Countries besides the United States and Bulgaria were also influential in the creation of the Macedonian model of career counseling in the YES Network. One document that gave some insight into the influence of different countries in the creation of the Macedonian career counseling model was a recommendation provided by ASK to USAID North Macedonia regarding the elements that should be included in the Macedonian model (Velevska, Aleksovska, Stojanovic, Pop-Ilie, & Ivanovska, 2012). ASK conducted an assessment of several different countries' career counseling models to help provide guidance to USAID North Macedonia regarding the components of career counseling programs which would be beneficial to North Macedonia. According to sources at ASK, they were commissioned by USAID North Macedonia

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<sup>3</sup> While largely an indirect influence, the substantial role of Bulgaria in the development of Macedonian career counseling practices is particularly noteworthy given current disagreements between North Macedonia and Bulgaria. According to numerous news sources and individuals, including Boyana, a Bulgarian tour guide, Bulgaria is currently blocking attempts by North Macedonia to join the EU. The primary reason for their objection to North Macedonia's membership in the EU is that Bulgaria feels that the Macedonian language is a derivation of Bulgarian and would like it to be recognized as such. North Macedonia, conversely, claims Macedonian as a unique language from Bulgarian (Brezar, 2022). Additionally, Bulgaria and North Macedonia disagree on some details of their closely related histories including the ethnicity, whether Bulgarian or Macedonian, of the individuals who fought for Macedonian independence from the Ottoman Empire (Brezar, 2022). While Macedonians believed that there were two separate uprisings, one in Bulgaria and one in North Macedonia, with individuals of Bulgarian and Macedonian ethnicities fighting for the independence of their respective nations, Bulgaria contends that there was one larger uprising across both nations. Furthermore, Bulgaria contends that in this collective uprising, Bulgarians, as opposed to Macedonians, fought for Macedonian independence, in addition to Bulgarian independence. Thus, Bulgaria feels the contributions of Bulgarians to Macedonian independence is not sufficiently recognized by North Macedonia's version of events. Because of these linguistic and historical disagreements, Bulgaria, an EU-member state, is requiring North Macedonia to refer to their language as Bulgarian, or a specific dialect of Bulgarian, as well as to adjust their historical teachings before Bulgaria will support their application. Because of these tensions between the two nations at present, the current influence of Bulgarian career counseling policy on Macedonian career counseling policy is a somewhat surprising instance of collaboration.

to conduct this research to aid in the creation and implementation of the career counseling component of the YES Network. The document created included reviews of career counseling models from several different countries including Denmark, Ireland, Poland, Bulgaria, and the United States. Additionally, the more general guidelines for career counseling for the entire European Union were included in this study. Each country (or conglomeration of countries in the case of the EU) represented a unique case study in this report. These case studies were primarily designed to assess how and how effectively other countries approached career counseling. Additionally, in the Bulgarian and Polish cases, the research included an examination of the process by which these countries developed and implemented career counseling models. While the United States and Bulgaria were the most influential outside countries, many individual nations contributed to a lesser degree to the Macedonian model of career counseling.

### **Conclusion**

While North Macedonia developed a unique model of career counseling, there was influence from numerous other countries and sources. Most notably, the United States and Bulgaria played a role in the creation of these practices. However, the practices that were adopted from these countries were adapted or developed to uniquely fit the needs of North Macedonia. While individual concepts diffused as guiding principles for the establishment of goals or practices, much of the actual model was developed with local input or adapted at the local level. This indicates a process whereby North Macedonia found a compromise between the legitimacy of international models of career counseling and the efficiency of a locally developed model (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). The influences of these nations reached the YES Network through numerous organizations including ASK, EDC, USAID North

Macedonia, and the Ministry of Education and Science. These organizations sourced their input and model components from multiple sources, including various career counseling models, curricula, and initiatives. Thus, the process of creating the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network was a multinational and collaborative effort involving many individual nations and various collaborating entities in North Macedonia. The extent to which the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network as designed were replicated in the goals, practices, and assumptions of the same program at the time of implementation will be discussed in the ensuing chapter. The presence, or lack thereof, of these elements during implementation will help inform as to the shortcomings present in the design of the YES Network despite the substantial collaboration which took place during the development of the initiative. This indicates that collaboration and contextual appropriateness alone are likely not sufficient for implementation with fidelity for a new professional logic.

## **Chapter 5: Implementation and YES Network Practices**

This chapter provides an overview of how the YES Network career counseling logic affected the development of career counseling practices in six Macedonian secondary schools. This chapter will detail how this initiative changed the behaviors and activities of individual career counselors. Thus, this chapter will provide information as to how well the program design, explained in the previous chapter, influenced career counseling practices in the manner intended. This chapter also provides grounding for the sixth chapter, which will explore the influence of institutional complexity in the creation of practices. Thus, the present chapter investigates the actual goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network as understood at the time of implementation while the next chapter uses institutional complexity to explore how career counselors arrived at these understandings.

In order to assess the goals, practices, and assumptions at the time of implementation, I asked career counselors how they interpreted the goals of the YES Network, how their jobs changed in the period immediately following the implementation of the YES Network, whether their career counseling activities exclusively took place in the career centers or whether it spread to other aspects of work, and whether or not they felt implementation was successful. Although there is likely some recall bias in asking career counselors to recall events that took place between six and nine years ago, career counselors generally provided rich and nuanced information regarding the changes wrought by the YES Network. Nonetheless, in an effort to combat recall bias, I used probes and follow-up questions asking career counselors to recall specific experiences related to the implementation of the YES Network as opposed to general changes in practice. Thus, this chapter presents an opportunity to examine the experiences of



how the YES Network, as designed and presented in chapter 4, translated into practice at the time of implementation for these specific career counselors.

### **The YES Network Logic**

To understand the career counseling practices resulting from logic established by the YES Network at the time of implementation, it is useful review some elements of the logic particularly relevant to implementation. This section will review the trainings themselves, the selection process for YES Network participants, and the importance of selecting existing educators for these trainings.

#### **Practice-Oriented Trainings**

The content of the YES Network was communicated to individual career counselors over a series of in-person trainings. According to those interviewed, the YES Network trainings were heavily focused on practice over theory. Mirjana explained,

[The YES Network gave] a base of [practices]... what should we do [with students]. We have a ready[-made] document with steps. First you do this with the children and then these are [the] activities. That was very [well] organized. We have a lot of tests that we could do and use with the children. It was very structural, very nice plan. In the program, we have the theory, but we [focused on] practice: how to talk with children, what to say, how to conduct a conversation with the children. And it was very, very useful for us. Thus, Mirjana indicated a generally positive view of the way career counseling was presented at the trainings. She felt that the focus on action steps, including how to talk with the students and what activities to conduct, was appropriate. Additionally, Mirjana appreciated the resources provided, including one that provided step-by-step instructions for working with students. The practical approach to trainings left little vagueness for career counselors about how practices

were best implemented, instead opting for a clear and formulaic conveyance of best practices in career counseling.

### **Modulated Trainings**

In addition to being practice-oriented, the YES Network also presented practices in individual modules in order to break up different practices into different training sessions. For example, the training on working with parents was independent from the training on individual and group counseling. One career counselor, Danica, indicated that the YES Network training was divided into two modules. While in reality, there were more modules, in Danica's experience, there was one module for general career counseling practices and one module for the BIPO training. Danica stated that while she did not attend any career counseling practice-oriented modules, she participated in the BIPO training in order to be able to use this career inventory as part of her practice. According to Danica, this training was two days long and provided participants with the skills necessary to administer and interpret the BIPO inventory. Danica went on to state that she attended this specific training as she was more interested in using the YES Network as an opportunity to add skills, the BIPO in this instance, to her repertoire rather than learning a new practice. She said,

Me and some other teachers from the school, we applied for the [YES Network] workshop, but I wasn't able to do all [of it]. It was divided into two modules. The first one was to learn the whole process of career counseling. And the second one was to gain skills for the [BIPO] test for professional orientation that our Ministry of Education has done. So, I didn't [go to] the first module. I don't have that kind of skills for the whole counseling thing. But I have the certificate to do the tests on the students. I have access to the to the database of tests.

This statement indicates that the trainings were divided into multiple modules with one specifically designed to help counselors utilize the BIPO career inventory. While not the original intention of the program, the modulated approach to the trainings allowed career counselors to

pick and choose the skills that they were most interested in developing. While most career counselors attended all sections, many individuals reported that the BIPO module was the most influential on practices.

While not the norm, the experience of attending only part of the YES Network training was not unique to Danica. She mentioned that there were other teachers in her school who also only attended one module of the training. While the trainings were designed to be attended in their entirety, there were a number of individuals who attended specific modules in order to bring individual skills back to their schools. This suggests that some individuals attending the YES Network trainings sought to build skills as educational practitioners rather than to transition to the role of career counselor. However, the individuals referenced by Danica, who only attended part of the trainings, did eventually work in career centers to some extent. It is likely that these individuals substantially adapted the policy prescriptions of the YES Network given that they were not present for a significant amount of the YES Network training.

### **Selection Process**

The selection process of who participated in the trainings of career counselors included significant influence from the candidates themselves. Through interviews it became apparent that career counselors had substantial discretion in whether or not they were selected to attend trainings. According to Petre with EDC, “Career counselors were officially appointed by school directors, but they had first to express interest for this program.” For example, Mirjana stated that she decided that she wanted to be selected for the YES Network. She then advocated for herself with the director of her school prior to her selection as a formal candidate for the training. When asked if she was selected or decided to join, Mirjana said, “I decided. And I did everything [I

could] to be selected. I thought that I should tell my boss that this is the thing that I should do, because it's something that I want to and it's about my degree.” Thus, while the director had the final say, Mirjana substantially influenced the selection process.

Danica, who worked as a career counselor at a VET school, stated that she underwent more of a formal application process. She indicated that she and some of her colleagues were interested in attending the trainings and had to apply to take part in them. However, according to Danica, the application process was not particularly rigorous. In fact, Danica’s experience corroborated that of Mirjana’s in that the application process was more of a formalized manner of expressing interest in the trainings. After completing the application, individuals from Danica’s school who had expressed interest in expanding their career counseling repertoires were uniformly selected to attend YES Network trainings. Thus, the application process was essentially no more than expressing interest in attending the sessions.

Danica also discussed an interesting dynamic of the selection process in that psychologists were a later addition to the YES Network trainings. Originally, only teachers and pedagogues who were planning on working in the career centers were included in the trainings. As Danica was a psychologist, she was not originally eligible for selection. However, over time, the YES Network began inviting psychologists like Danica for whom the skills could be useful but would likely not be used in their entirety within career centers. These individuals would potentially add the career counseling skills they learned to their existing practices as opposed to creating an independent practice of career counseling. Angela, another psychologist, also reported a similar phenomenon of not being invited to participate in trainings until long after many teachers had already participated. These experiences indicate multiple purposes for the content of the YES Network in terms of training both educators interested in providing career

counseling services in the career centers and educators interested in adding career counseling skills to their existing psychologist practices. This difference was reflected in the implementation of the YES Network by individuals in both careers and is explored further in the institutional logics and implementation chapter.

### **Training Existing Educators Rather Than New Hires**

Perhaps the most important element of the implementation of the YES Network trainings was that all individuals involved were already employed as educators in schools. This was an important element of the trainings as, according to Petre with EDC, the USAID funds allocated for the YES Network did not financially compensate career counselors for their work. The USAID financing was instead put towards developing the career counseling training modules and implementing these training modules with career counseling trainees. Additionally, schools were not in a position to hire individuals exclusively as career counselors or even to pay individuals working as career counselors extra for working multiple roles. Thus, career counselors were exclusively paid from their other positions in the schools. For example, individuals who worked as teachers remained paid as teachers without additional or alternative compensation as career counselors. This is an important distinction as it indicates that rather than training individuals to work independently in this new position, individuals already employed as educators were retooled to include career counseling in their positions.

The approach of adding a new component to the practices of existing educators was necessary due to the lack of formal change by the national government to include a new position of career counselor as a formal educational position, which would be required before individual schools could hire for such a position. Because the career counselor position was not approved

by the Macedonian government, rather than create a new full-time career counselor position within schools, the YES Network helped to add career counseling responsibilities to the existing practices of already employed teachers and psychologists. This phenomenon was a source of institutional complexity for career counselors. Because individuals working as career counselors maintained their previous positions of employment, they had multiple, competing professional logics to contend with, alongside additional institutional and organizational logics and sources of influence, as they created their practices. This dynamic will be discussed further in chapter 6.

The fact that the YES Network did not formally introduce a new, exclusive position of career counselor that was outside of teaching or psychology was the biggest complaint of nearly every career counselor interviewed. The lack of recognition from the national government and the impact of this lack of recognition on sustainability will be discussed in greater detail in the seventh chapter.

### **The Influence of the YES Network on Actual Practices**

Despite this major shortcoming, the YES Network substantially changed the practices conducted by many career counselors in North Macedonia, according to interviews with and observations of career counselors. Despite many career counselors indicating that the incumbent professional logic, or the logic of the primary position of each counselor whether psychologist, teacher, or pedagogue, was prioritized, nearly every counselor noted a substantial change to their educational practices as a result of the YES Network. Thus, the YES Network at the time of implementation was indeed successful in changing the practices of educational practitioners to include additional career counseling practices that had previously not been conducted.

The specific changes wrought by the YES Network, and the extent to which they were present, are shown in Table 5. This table includes the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network identified in the fourth chapter. Additionally, this table includes columns for whether or not each element was present during, or in the immediate aftermath of implementation, along with an explanation of the degree of presence. While this chapter focuses on these goals, practices, and assumptions during implementation, the seventh chapter examines the sustainability of the initiative at present, approximately eight years later.

**Table 5: The Sources of the Goals, Practices, and Assumptions of the YES Network**

<b>YES Network logic</b>	<b>Present during implementation</b>	<b>Explanation of presence</b>
<b>Goals</b>		
Improve labor market	Minimally present	This was not mentioned frequently by career counselors. However, some career counselors made references to decreasing emigration. This is a separate goal but related to the overall labor market.
Improve workforce skills of youth	Somewhat present	The desire to improve workforce skills was mentioned occasionally by counselors. However, actual work skills were mentioned less frequently than job application skills.
Improve student satisfaction with employment	Present	Many career counselors implied that student satisfaction was the purpose of improving job application skills. Student satisfaction was directly mentioned on occasion.
Improve student understanding of career elements and planning	Present	Career planning in particular was frequently mentioned by counselors. Career counselors were very attentive to the process of securing employment and the necessary steps involved.
Decrease emigration from North Macedonia	Somewhat present	As previously mentioned, career counselors occasionally noted the importance of decreasing emigration. However, this was not a primary concern. In fact, career counselors also indicated that they supported students with their applications should they be interested in studying or working in different countries.
<b>Practices</b>		
Trainings for career counselors	Present	All career counselors indicated they attended at least one YES Network training. These trainings were largely available for counselors who expressed interest.
Certification system for counselors	Present	Counselors were readily able to produce certifications secured during the YES Network. These certifications improved the legitimacy of the profession and indicated specific skills for which counselors were trained.

Reestablish career counseling profession	Not present	No career counselor indicated an awareness of the profession prior to the YES Network. Thus, reestablishment was not indicated. Establishment, however, was frequently mentioned as career counselors indicated the importance of the profession.
Career counseling sessions with students	Present	All career counselors indicated the presence of career counseling sessions with students, whether individual or group.
Student internships	Minimally present	Student internships were mentioned occasionally by career counselors, but this was infrequent.
Career inventories conducted by counselors	Present	Career counselors noted the frequent use of the BIPO career assessment as well as other career inventory tools. This was often indicated as the favorite element of career counseling.
<b>Assumptions</b>		
Career counseling benefits students	Somewhat present	Career counselors indicated generally positive feelings about the influence of career counseling on students.
Career counseling benefits local economy	Not present	Career counselors themselves largely did not consider the influence of career counseling on the economy.
VETs and gymnasiums are effective locales for career counseling	Present	All career counselors, whether at a VET or gymnasium, indicated that the YES Network was effective. Thus, career counseling was assumed to be effective at both locations.
Local adaptations will take place and improve the outcome of the program	Somewhat present	While career counselors indicated some adaptations to the model of career counseling put forth at trainings, none explicitly indicated the importance of including local adaptations.

As demonstrated, the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network, as laid out in the development stage of the initiative, were present to varying degrees during implementation. The following sections will explore each larger category individually, including specific subcategories of each category where appropriate.

### **Goals of the YES Network**

The numerous goals put forth by the YES Network itself were not frequently indicated by career counselors as their personal goals. Rather, career counselors were largely interested in achieving two of the goals of the YES Network: 1) helping students understand career elements and career planning and 2) helping students find job satisfaction. Career counselors noted that



they were interested in helping students with the process of career planning, including finding jobs of interest. This counseling included tasks like helping students discover jobs of interest and secure employment in these career paths. These goals were much more emphasized than the more macro-level goals of improving the labor market, improving workforce skills, and decreasing emigration. This phenomenon is likely due to both a greater interest in the well-being of students as opposed to the economic health of the country, as well as a general ambivalence towards development projects. Primarily due to the sheer number of development projects, career counselors frequently noted program fatigue. Given their interests in student well-being along with program fatigue, career counselors were typically more focused on the immediate tasks of career counseling, which they interpreted as helping students to understand the career process and secure employment, rather than higher-order tasks such as those related to the labor market.

### ***Job Satisfaction and Career Planning***

Specific instances of counselors prioritizing the goals of job satisfaction and career planning were numerous. One career counselor, Angela, mentioned that she utilized visualization activities to help students identify enjoyable careers. She believed that visualization helped students imagine their future careers and improve their ability to take steps towards meeting their career goals. Angela stated,

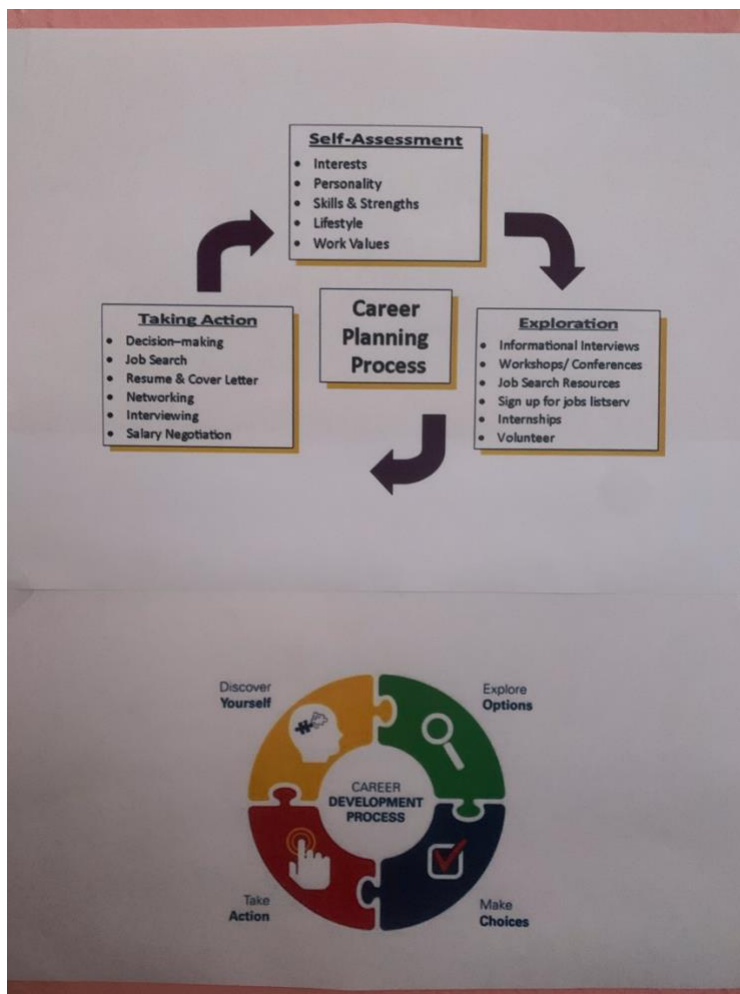
I'm asking them please imagine your future working place. So, their eyes [are] closed [and I ask], 'What do you see? Are there other people? Are you in an [open] office or are you separated with a personal office for you? Are you inside or outside?'" This is similar to the career visualization steps included in the YES Network model and suggests that Angela utilized this model with fidelity. Angela went on to state that she helped each student create "a personal plan ...and [conduct] a SWOT analysis; we [also] used several tests or surveys or interest [inventories]." Thus, Angela's efforts to help students identify potential careers

through visualization and planning indicate a strong alignment of her own career counseling goals and the job satisfaction and career planning goals of the YES Network.

Another career counselor, Sofija, also indicated that she prioritized job satisfaction and career planning in her work. The following document, in Figure 88, was located in Sofija's career center and demonstrates the importance placed on the career planning cycle.

The model presented emphasizes the connections between self-assessment, career exploration, and action steps. The categories of this model are populated with various tasks that indicate the importance of understanding the role of self-interest in selecting a career. While this document was at Sofija's school at present, as opposed to during implementation, Sofija mentioned that her career counseling program has maintained the same goals of the YES Network and GCDF curriculums. Thus, the job satisfaction and career planning goals found at present are likely similar to those found during implementation.

**Figure 8: Career Planning Process Diagram From a School in North Macedonia**



## **Practices of the YES Network**

The practices of the YES Network were consistently more closely aligned with those laid out during the design of the program than were the goals of the counselors. Career counselors indicated the presence of many of the same practices as those stated by the individuals who designed the program. In particular, career counselors all noted that they attended trainings and received certifications. Additionally, while the career counselor identity was not previously

ingrained enough to warrant a “re-establishment”, many counselors reported they participated in efforts to establish a professional career counseling identity. Also, all career counselors noted that they conducted career counseling sessions with students and used career inventories, particularly the BIPO, in their practices. The only practice that was referenced in the design of the YES Network but seemed to be seldom used in practice was assistance in securing student internships. This practice was mentioned on occasion, but infrequently.

### *Certifications and Legitimacy*

A major component of the YES Network was the legitimization of the practice of career counseling. One manner in which this was accomplished was through the use of certifications in order to establish who was qualified to conduct career counseling. All career counselors received certificates at the conclusion of their YES Network training sessions in order to identify which practices they were certified to conduct. Each certificate listed the specific practices of the model put forth by the YES Network in which the recipient was now certified. Some individuals were certified in a multitude of practices while others received certifications to conduct individual practices. Regardless, the certificates demonstrate a source of legitimacy for individuals conducting these practices.

The YES Network also aided in establishing legitimacy for career counselors who had previously received GCDF certifications as counselors. GCDF-certified individuals previously received formal training in career counseling from a program put forth by the Center for Credentialing and Education (CCE); however, this training was not specific to schools. Rather the GCDF is an international curriculum originating in the United States designed to train career counselors, or career professionals such as human resources representatives, in a specific model of practice. The curriculum has similar goals, practices, and assumptions as the YES Network.

While the content was similar between the two trainings, the YES Network trainings increased the legitimacy of these practices in the school environment. One career counselor, Sofija, noted that she received training as a GCDF-certified career counselor shortly before her YES Network training. While Sofija stated that there was significant overlap between the YES Network and the GCDF trainings, corroborating information from EDC employees who indicated the same, she stated that she primarily crafted her career counseling curriculum from the GCDF materials. Thus, for Sofija, the trainings included in the GCDF certification process were more influential in her practices than was the YES Network. However, the YES Network helped Sofija to be able to conduct career counseling practices in her school. Because career counseling was not a function of educational institutions prior to the YES Network, Sofija was unable to utilize her crafted practices, which she created during her GCDF trainings, until she was YES Network certified. Thus, for Sofija, the YES Network benefitted her more in legitimizing practices she had already developed rather than providing her with additional practices.

### ***Specific Practices: BIPO and SWOT Analyses***

When discussing specific activities conducted in career counseling sessions, many counselors mentioned the use of career inventories and career identification tools. The most frequently mentioned tools were the BIPO testing battery and the SWOT analysis. These tools were used to aid students in the early stages of their career selections. For example, one counselor, Mirjana, discussed the importance of informing students about the cycle of career selection. Mirjana stated,

[After] the school year begins, in October, I go with [my] presentation in every class of the finishing year and the end [of] the vocational classes.... Then from November [on], I give them [the] BIPO. And we talk together about their choices.... Sometimes I have group meetings, when we have a SWOT analysis, because I think they're very useful to do it in the group.... [In] January, February, when we get [individuals from] some

profession that the students are interested about, and somebody comes to explain what is the profession and what do you need [in terms of] school? Mirjana's career counseling schedule of action indicates the use of career inventories and tools as part of a larger career counseling process. Mirjana noted that she uses these tools to help students formulate their career interests before conducting more career-specific steps like finding presenters with experience in a certain field. Thus, the inventories, such as the BIPO, were utilized as both part of the career counseling sessions as well as a way to facilitate additional career counseling practices.

Mirjana's experience was not unique. Nearly every career counselor whom I interviewed noted extensive use of the BIPO inventories with students. Career counselors expressed positive reactions to the ease of use of the BIPO and its popularity among students. In fact, the use of the BIPO inventory was the practice most frequently mentioned by career counselors as a shift resulting from the YES network.

### *Physical Space*

While not a practice per se, a final element that contributed to YES Network practices, and was specifically mentioned by many counselors, was that of the physical space dedicated to conducting career counseling sessions with students. The presence of physical space dedicated to career counseling was seen as vital to the successful implementation of the program. One career counselor, Angela, noted that these spaces were attractive venues for conducting career counseling and thus facilitated increased interest in her practices. Angela stated,

I like the idea of the career center because [a] colleague of mine, she put a lot of flyers [up], she [advertised] it like this. The career center was also organized and built and with some methodology, so I like this place because it gives the students [an] idea of [their] future, of how [their chosen] profession [influences their overall future], how it is important to make good choices, etc.”

Angela believed that the space in which career counseling took place aided in the ability of career counselors to help students access counseling and understand the importance of career planning. She was supportive of the fact that the career centers were actively designed towards aiding the efforts of her and her colleagues in wedding the importance of career selection to academic programming. Additionally, this space was well advertised to the students and was a desirable place to spend time which encouraged students to visit the career center. Thus, this physical space, while not a practice in itself, helped to increase the ability of career counselors to conduct their practices by providing an accommodating, attractive, and purposeful environment for counseling.

### **Assumptions of the YES Network**

The final aspect of the implementation stage of the YES Network to be examined is the assumptions of the YES Network. The presence, or lack thereof, of these assumptions during implementation fell somewhere in between the presence, or lack thereof, of the goals and practices. Some of the assumptions were very present while others were not at all present or only present in a limited manner. For example, the assumption that career counseling benefits students was only mentioned to a limited degree by career counselors while the influence of career counseling on the local economy was not mentioned at all. The assumption that career counseling would be effective in both VETs and gymnasiums was very present while the local adaptations assumption was present to a limited extent.

### *Implementation at VETs and Gymnasiums*

The assumption that the YES Network was effective in both VETs and gymnasiums was noted by Petre, a local Macedonian, who worked with EDC. While Petre stated that the YES Network was in fact implemented in both types of schools, he also stated that it was easier to implement the YES Network in vocational schools as they already had much of the infrastructure necessary for exploring different careers. He said, “[Career counseling] was easier to implement with vocational schools because [they explored many of the] different vocations [available] in Macedonia in one school... so the students can go in different working places, different companies, and observe how it looks.” Thus, Petre noted that students in VET schools had the opportunity to investigate which careers would potentially be a good fit in school, and then, because the VET schools had relationships with outside employers, they were able to take part in job shadowing. This design facilitated the implementation of career counseling as VETs were already oriented towards many of the goals of career counseling.

Gymnasiums were a little different as students were likely not preparing for careers in the near future. Rather, these individuals were more likely to investigate careers from an abstract perspective and explore the education necessary to achieve their career goals. As Petre explained, “Gymnasiums were a little bit more restricted [because] the students from gymnasiums [were likely] continuing to university, so at least for them [it] was good to see which university would be the best fit.” Additionally, Petre noted that the curriculum of gymnasiums was less conducive to career exploration. Thus, Petre confirmed that while the YES Network was designed for VET schools, it was certainly present in both types of secondary school. Towards this end, when directly asked if the YES Network was implemented exclusively in VETs, he stated, “Gymnasiums as well. VET was more.”



Lilijana, an EDC employee who worked closely with the design and implementation of the YES Network, noted a similar phenomenon with implementation at VETs and gymnasiums. Lilijana indicated that the YES Network was implemented in both schools with an emphasis on VET schools. Lilijana pointed out specific differences in the implementation of the YES Network in both types of schools in terms of the amount of time devoted to career counseling. She stated,

The implementation was a little bit different because in the VET schools, there is an opportunity for every teacher to alter [or implement] the curriculum...so this was 72 hours during the whole school year [in VETs]. But in the gymnasiums, they had the opportunity to work on projects. So...it was as implemented as project with 33 [hours] during the year.

Lilijana went on to explain that a “project” was similar to an after-school elective course. Thus, Lilijana noted a more substantial presence of career counseling in VETs with both more actual classroom time devoted to career counseling and career counseling taking place during regular school hours. In gymnasiums, conversely, career counseling was largely an optional elective, which was held after school for a shorter amount of time. Thus, while still confirming the assumption that the program would be effective for students in gymnasiums, gymnasiums did not make the same time or curricular commitments to career counseling as did VETs.

In contrast to Petre and Lilijana’s statements, some career counselors, including Angela and Mirjana, who worked in gymnasiums or hybrid schools, did note that they conducted career counseling activities during regular school hours. Both of these individuals stated that they incorporated the career counseling lessons they attended as part of the YES Network into their regular, daily practices as teachers or psychologists. These individuals represent examples of the assumption that career counseling could be adapted into both environments. Thus, while it remains true that there was more career counseling taking place in vocational schools during

regular school hours, particularly more formal career counseling classes, the assumption that career counseling would be beneficial in both environments was present during implementation.

### *Local Adaptations*

Local adaptations were not frequently noted as taking place during implementation. However, one adaptation that was indicated by many career counselors was that of making career counseling an after-school activity as opposed to a regular school day practice. This adaptation was largely a result of the decision to train educators with other school responsibilities as career counselors. Because these counselors had responsibilities such as teaching or psychological services during the school day, a significant amount of career counseling took place during the after-school hours.

The effectiveness of this adaptation was varied and was largely dependent on the internal motivation of individual career counselors and participation from the student body. Some career counselors, such as Cynna, a counselor at a VET in the southern part of the country, noted concerns over low student attendance at after-school sessions due to minimal transportation options for students staying late. She was hesitant to conduct career counseling any time after the regular school day as she found that very few students were able to attend. Other career counselors simply decided not to conduct these after-school sessions as they were not being paid to work longer hours. However, some career counselors who attended the YES Network trainings were still interested in providing career counseling to students regardless of when it took place. These individuals provided after-school career counseling opportunities for any students who were able to attend. For example, one career counselor at a VET in Skopje, Luka, indicated that he was happy to stay after school to conduct career counseling because the students enjoyed it so much. He said, “It was like you have to stay in the school a little bit

longer, but that was not a problem at all.” When pressed on the issue of staying later in the day, he confirmed that he did not view this as a problem. Finally, when asked if he was paid extra, Luka stated, “No, it was [part of] my regular [job].” Thus, while this adaptation was dependent on student attendance and the intrinsic motivation of the career counselor, some counselors who took this avenue of implementation indicated successful and rewarding experiences. However, while this model was successful to some extent for career counselors during implementation, by relying on extraordinary efforts from individual counselors, it also contributed to some of the shortcomings in sustainability which will be discussed in the seventh chapter (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter found that career counselors implemented the YES Network as designed with varying degrees of fidelity according to the goals, practices, and assumptions identified in the previous chapter. Specifically, practices were largely implemented as intended during the design of the YES Network, while the goals of many career counselors were more limited than those established during the creation of the program. Additionally, some assumptions included in the design of the YES Network were found to be present during implementation while others were not. This demonstrates that the practices of career counselors utilized at the time of implementation were largely in alignment with those of the YES Network. However, many of the goals indicated by career counselors, and some of the assumptions, either deviated from or were derivatives of the goals and assumptions as intended by the YES Network.

The rationales for deviations between the YES Network as designed and implemented are largely explained by competing institutional logics and institutional complexity. Specifically,

sources of influence, or institutional logics, other than that established by the YES Network can help explain individual deviations from the policy as prescribed. Additionally, the specific competing professional logic, whether teaching or psychology, played an outsized role on the degree of competition between logics and the resulting practices. The specific competing logics and influences and the processes by which individual career counselors responded to their respective environments of institutional complexity will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Institutional Logics and the Implementation of the YES Network**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the implementation of the YES Network through the lens of institutional logics. This chapter will provide insights into how career counselors arrived at their practices presented in the preceding chapter. In particular, this chapter will address why there were varying degrees of conflict present for career counselors despite relative uniformity in organizational institutional complexity. This chapter will also address the environment of complexity at the organizational level along with the various institutional and organizational logics that influenced counselors. Additionally, the individual-level variation in the processes by which career counselors created practices will be discussed.

The first section of this chapter explores the application of Besharov and Smith (2014) to the environment of institutional complexity faced by career counselors, including an examination of the competing professional logics and the secondary institutional and organizational influences that affected practices. The second section then focuses on the competing professional logics identified at the organizational-level, and how the structure and content of the incumbent professional logic influenced how individual career counselors implemented the YES Network logic. This section includes the identification of four separate types of career counselors that emerged during implementation based on the structure and content of the incumbent position of each career counselor.

## **Institutional Complexity During Implementation**

### **The Environment of Institutional Complexity for Career Counselors**

Institutional complexity, as described in the introduction section, refers to the environment of multiple, competing institutional logics (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Diehl, 2019; Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Marsh et al., 2020). Institutional logics are the norms, beliefs, values, assumptions, and rules that provide meaning to organizations and the individuals who work within organizations (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Individuals working in institutionally complex environments are faced with multiple, often competing norms, beliefs, values, assumptions, and rules. Many career counselors in the present study did in fact have multiple and competing logics that impacted their practices, indicating an institutionally complex environment. The two most influential logics regarding the crafting of daily practices were the two competing professional logics of teaching or psychology and of career counseling and the YES Network. The professional logic of pedagogy was occasionally applicable but was far less common. Professional logics are institutional logics which are specifically relevant to the professional field of interest (Hattke, Vogel, & Woiwode, 2016). As such, these are specific institutional logics for career counselors which caused the environment of institutional complexity.

### **Applicability of Besharov and Smith's Model to the Macedonian Career Counseling Case**

In examining the institutional complexity faced by individual career counselors from multiple logics, particularly multiple professional logics, this work extends on Besharov and

Smith's (2014) contribution to institutional complexity. Besharov and Smith (2014) focused on organizational-level institutional complexity while the present project primarily looks at individual-level institutional complexity. Besharov and Smith looked at how multiple institutional logics within an organization created tension for organizational actors; however, this approach did not investigate differences in how individual actors experienced each logic and how this variation affected the resulting practices. Thus, this work expands on previous institutional literature by focusing on differences in individual experiences and responses to institutional complexity faced by organizational actors. In order to investigate the different experiences of organizational actors, the environment of organizational-level institutional complexity as defined by Besharov and Smith (2014) will first be examined.

Besharov and Smith's model of institutional complexity looks at the degree of complexity present in organizations based on the degree of centrality and the degree of compatibility of competing institutional logics. These two features of institutional logics then determine the degree of conflict. If centrality is high, meaning that two or more logics are essential to the goals of the organization, and compatibility is high, meaning that multiple logics can be pursued concurrently, then the logics are aligned and there is minimal conflict. If centrality is high and compatibility is low, then the logics are contested, and extensive conflict emerges as both central logics compete for priority. If centrality is low and compatibility is low, the logics are estranged with moderate conflict as one logic is closer to the organizational functioning while the peripheral logic causes some strain as they are not compatible. Finally, if centrality is low and compatibility is high, there is a dominant relationship with no conflict as the central logic is prioritized above the peripheral, but compatible, logic (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 371).

Using Besharov and Smith's model to investigate the potential conflict between the professional logics of career counselors, all counselors included in this study would be in the dominant quadrant. As the incumbent professional logic was core to organizational functioning and the career counseling professional logic was peripheral yet compatible, this model predicts no conflict. However, despite this organizational environment, at the individual level, the conflict between the professional logics varied. For some counselors, conflict was low or non-existent as there was separation between the logics caused by the divide between time designated for career counseling and time designated for psychology or teaching. For other career counselors, conflict was higher as they attempted to implement the content of both logics concurrently, causing a strain on time. This variation in conflict was not addressed in Besharov and Smith's model, which necessitates a more individualized examination of institutional complexity for the present case. In order to fully understand the environment faced by individual counselors, the various logics and sources of complexity will be reviewed.

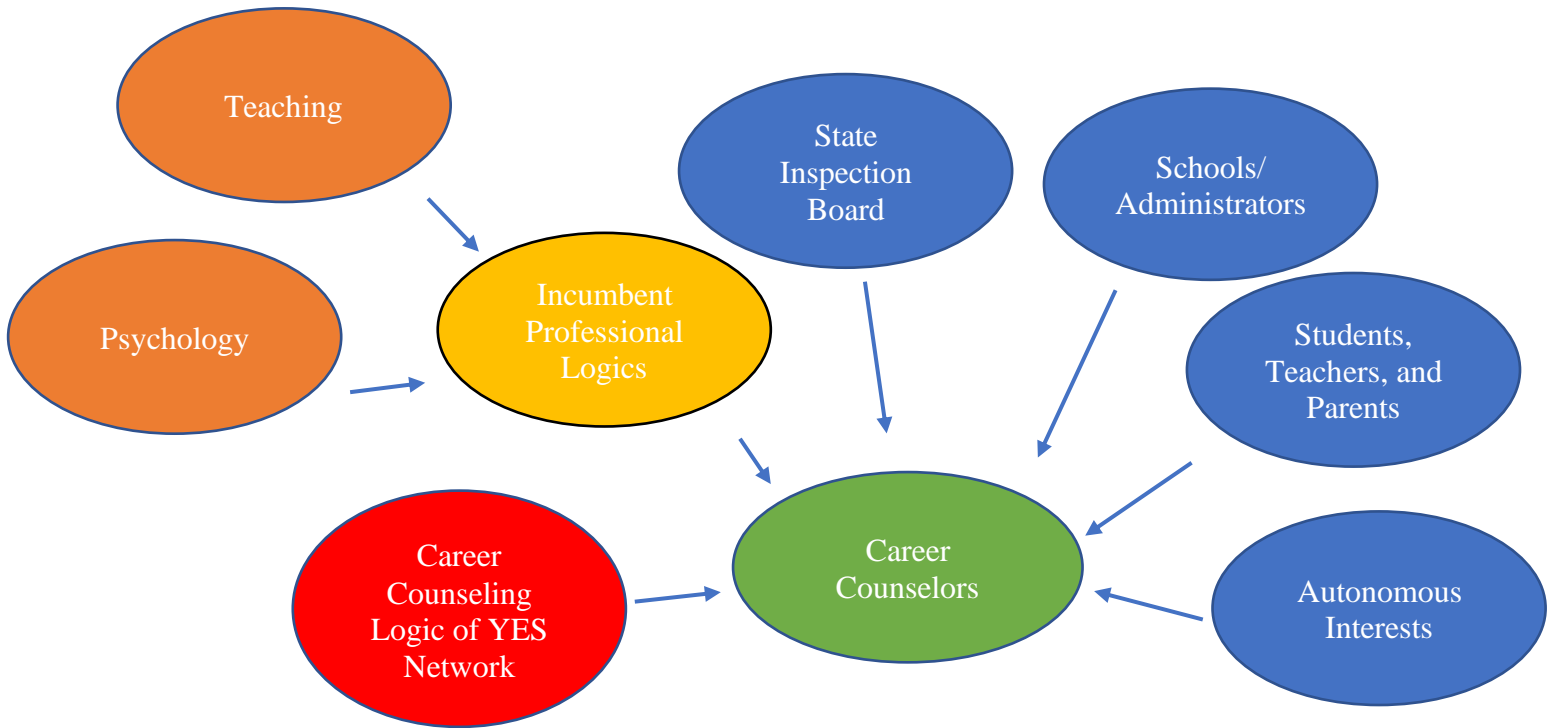
### **Sources of Institutional Complexity**

In addition to the incumbent professional logics of teaching or psychology and the YES Network professional logic of career counseling, career counselors were also influenced by the stakeholder interests of the state inspection board, the school administration, students, teachers, and parents, as well as personal interests for autonomy. Stakeholder interests are demonstrated to add further complexity to institutionally complex environments (Herold, Farr-Wharton, Lee, & Groschopf, 2019). These logics and interests are all displayed in the following diagram, **Error! Reference source not found.** Following this diagram, each stakeholder interest, and the



incumbent professional logic, are described individually. The influence of the professional career counseling logic of the YES Network was reviewed in the previous chapter.

**Figure 9: Primary Influential Logics and Stakeholder Interests for Career Counselors**



***State Inspection Board***

The state inspection board was a particularly intriguing source of influence given its alignment with national standards. This oversight committee was designed to ensure that educational practitioners conducted the curricula and activities that they were assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science. Thus, the state inspection board contributed to a nationalized and standardized set of practices that all educational practitioners were expected to follow. These

expectations of course varied according to the position held by each educational practitioner, with psychologists and teachers maintaining different expectations.

In theory, this board would limit the ability of educational practitioners to behave with discretion. As the board was designed to ensure compliance with a standardized curriculum, this would leave little room for individual deviations. However, in practice, career counselors noted that this board provided limited oversight. As such, the board was largely symbolic and possessed very little evaluative authority. While career counselors stated that board representatives were present on occasion over the course of the school year, no instances of repercussions stemming from the state inspection board were reported. Thus, the state inspection board represents a powerful institutional force which could substantially influence practices if so desired; however, in reality, this board provided limited oversight on career counseling practices.

One career counselor, Angela, noted that the state inspection board observed her practices occasionally at her school. Angela indicated that during these visits, the state inspection board would comment as to the content of her practices in order to ensure alignment with ministry protocols. However, she also noted that these individuals were accustomed to new models of practice from sources such as USAID and rarely interfered with her practices. Angela said that if she was ever questioned by a representative of the state inspection board, she would simply state that the practices she utilized were part of a new USAID program, or a program from another international development agency, and was approved by the Ministry of Education. USAID-funded programs, and other development programs from countries in western Europe, were plentiful and were Ministry-approved curriculum additions. Because of the number of different programs, state inspection board inspectors were rarely aware of all such initiatives. The assurances from Angela that practices that deviated from the typical curricular expectations were

part of a USAID project was enough to satisfy inspectors from the inspection board. Thus, partially because of the number of USAID projects in North Macedonia, the state inspection board was a fairly passive stakeholder. Because these stakeholders represent the expectations of the state, the lack of authority exercised by the state inspection board points to a weakened influence of the national government on career counseling practices.

### *Schools/Administrators*

School administrators were also stakeholders for career counselors. Interestingly, these individuals were rarely noted as substantial stakeholders, particularly in comparison to the United States. Many career counselors indicated that school administrators did not play a role in the development or evaluation of practices. Rather, school administrators were often discussed as minor inconveniences in the counselor's ability to conduct their practices undisturbed. This lack of influence from school administrators was primarily caused by a lack of authority granted to people in administrative positions. For example, career counselors Mirjana and Angela noted that their administrators lacked evaluative authority over their practices. Mirjana even stated that she conducted her own performance evaluations in lieu of one from the school director. Mirjana noted, "It's my choice, what to give to the children and how to arrange the activities." Angela noted that the indifference of the administration towards the practices of educational practitioners, including career counselors, put the onus of implementation on the practitioners. Regarding the implementation of the YES Network, Angela stated, "I have the materials. I like the materials. I used to reread them, going back to see how they were organized because this was a really good program; it was useful for the school psychologists. The problem is not [the materials]; the problem is the motivation of the [counselor] to do this, because it is not, it was not supported by schools." This leaves the decision to the career counselors to choose whether or not

to utilize the materials. Thus, motivated counselors may choose to use these materials while others view them as superfluous. These experiences indicate that the school administration was a fairly weak influence, but one that did impact the implementation of the YES Network by failing to encourage career counselors to conduct such practices

Administrative control over career counseling was further weakened by the constant turnover of principals in North Macedonia. This turnover took place because principals in North Macedonia are quasi-political appointees of the local political parties. This was particularly apparent during observations at schools when I was introduced to principals at my study site. These individuals would typically be gracious in accepting me to their schools and in discussing superficial topics, but they rarely or never offered information about specific educational practices or policies. They rarely seemed interested in the topic of career counseling and often simply asked how I felt about the issue. I frequently left these meetings with the feeling of having just interacted with a political figurehead rather than an educator. To this end, according to multiple individuals associated with EDC, while principals are not uniformly fired and replaced when a new minister is appointed, school directors are replaced by ministers, and other political figures, frequently—especially following a change in administration. According to Sofija, a career counselor in a southern Macedonian city, principals are replaced at each school in the country approximately every one-and-a-half years. Sofija found that it was difficult for administrators to develop significant relationships with educational practitioners given their short durations as school leaders. This high rate of turnover led to very little opportunity for administrators to establish themselves as authoritative entities. Regardless of the feelings of administrators towards the YES Network, these perspectives received limited attention from career counselors.

However, despite the general lack of influence on activities and practices, school administrators did exert some authority over career counselors' schedules. Sofija indicated that the primary influence her principal maintained regarded whether or not the career counseling activities she conducted would allow her to spend less time in the classroom for her regular teaching responsibilities. In instances where the principal allowed time spent as a career counselor to count towards her required course load, in terms of how many classes she had to teach each year or semester, Sofija dedicated more time to career counseling during the workday. However, when the principal was less receptive towards counting time spent as a career counselor towards her teaching expectations, she spent less time with career counseling activities. Thus, the primary source of administrative influence over career counseling practices was the extent to which principals dedicated school time to career counseling versus the extent to which they considered career counseling a volunteer activity.

### ***Students, Teachers, and Parents***

While career counselors noted limited oversight of their practices from the state inspection board and school administrators, they did largely express that student, teacher, and parent preferences were influential in the creation of their practices. Therefore, rather than respond to specific demands as to the administrative expectations for the position, career counselors responded to the needs and interests of their coworkers, students, and student families. For example, Mirjana expressed that she liked to stay informed by the teacher in charge of each grade level regarding the career counseling interests of these stakeholders. Mirjana stated, "I asked the [lead] teacher, how pleased are the students with the activities . . . . I asked the teacher that is responsible for the class, what the parents say [at] the PTA meetings." Mirjana

then went on to note that the desires of these stakeholders influenced which practices she chose to utilize in counseling sessions with her students.

Additionally, in a separate interview with Mirjana and some of her students, Mirjana indicated that the biggest reason she conducted career counseling was because the students enjoy the career counseling sessions. The students later confirmed that they particularly enjoyed career counseling and, in fact, would like to receive more career counseling but understood that Mirjana didn't have time to expand her career services. Thus, while sources such as students, parents, and teachers did not have evaluative authority over career counselors, these sources nonetheless influenced practices based on the interests they expressed to career counselors.

In addition to its influence on the environment of institutional complexity, the prioritization of the needs of students by career counselors is also applicable to the student-level focus discussed in the previous chapter. In reviewing the goals, practices, and assumptions of the YES Network, career counselors were much more attentive to the aspects of the program related to student needs and satisfaction as opposed to more macro-level goals like reduced emigration and reduced unemployment. The aforementioned influence of student interests on the practices conducted by career counselors is thus somewhat explanatory towards why this student-level focus was more common for career counselors during implementation. In particular, the weak influence of the state inspection board in conjunction with a weak organizational influence from the school administration allowed career counselors to prioritize the needs of their students over any larger, but more abstract, goals that the YES Network had.

### ***Autonomous Interests***

In addition to external influences or stakeholder interests, career counselors also noted that their personal or autonomous interests influenced their practices as well. For example, one

career counselor, Danica, stated that she included her personal understandings of best practices into her work with students. She then combined her personal motivations for practice with the general psychologist guidelines for practice, established by the Ministry of Education and Science, and created a plan for the year. Despite the fact that Danica was able to exercise substantial discretion in the creation of her practices, she did state that once she set her plan for the year, her school director held her to the tasks she indicated that she would complete. Danica stated, “The principal plays a role in my activity because ... if I don’t do something she will call me and tell me, ‘Well, you didn’t do this this month and you have it in your program. What’s your plan? When are you going to do this? Why are you late?’” If Danica chose to incorporate career counseling practices into her annual plan of action, she would be expected to complete these tasks. If she did not include such tasks, she would not be expected to conduct any career counseling with students. However, as noted in the administrative section, despite this form of administrative oversight, it is unlikely that an administrator would actually take action against an educator for deviating from their plan of action.

Danica’s experience offers an interesting combination of personal interests and administrative oversight. The administrative oversight experienced by Danica was in response to a plan of action, which she created without influence from administrators. Danica’s experience with her administration was that they ensured she completed the tasks which she stated she would complete. Thus, Danica’s administrator provided her with external motivation to achieve internally motivated tasks. Given the role of Danica’s personal insights in the creation of her practices, the autonomous interests influence is fairly strong. This influence is then further bolstered by support from the weaker but aligned administrative influence. Specifically, administrators offer some, albeit limited, oversight to ensure that career counselors comply with

their self-directed plans of action. While the school administrators are fairly weak in terms of authority, they contribute to the influence of the autonomous interests of career counselors by providing some accountability for self-determined practices.

Danica's experiences regarding the influence of personal interests on career counseling practices were not unique. Many other counselors noted a similar phenomenon. For example, Mirjana indicated an almost identical pattern in which she crafted a plan of action for the year that she then submitted to her principal. Other career counselors, such as Angela, provided less information about the role of the administration in ensuring compliance to a personal course of action, but reiterated a similar concept as Danica's in creating an annual plan of action based on personal ideals of best practices. These individuals found that because of the lack of formalization of the role of career counselor, they largely crafted their practices based on what they thought to be best practices.

The process of selecting desired career counseling activities from a larger sample of options is similar to that of Judson Everitt's (2012) "arsenals of practice." This term refers to the process by which teachers develop practices from an array of teaching options based on their prior experiences. Similarly, career counselors in this sample established their own arsenals of career counseling activities based on their prior experiences. The lack of specific or formal stipulations from administrators about what career counseling practices should consist of led to the utilization of "arsenals of practice" by individual career counselors in order to determine best practices.

Unfortunately, the reliance of career counseling practices on personal interests also left open the possibility for career counselors who were not interested in conducting career counseling. Because there were no requirements from formal sources, such as the Ministry of



Education and Science or the school administration, many career counselors opted to not conduct any career counseling practices. This point was best exemplified in conversations with Rosa, a career counselor at a VET in Skopje. Rosa stated that while other teachers in the school attended the YES Network with her, she was the only one who ever implemented practices in her school. When asked about how the YES Network influenced the practices of these teachers, Rosa stated, “They know it [the YES Network], but they don’t want to [implement it].” Thus, while Rosa participated in the trainings and was personally motivated to implement the YES Network, her colleagues were less motivated and did not have any external motivation to engage with the program. Thus, the substantial influence of personal motivation on career counseling practices led to a significant opportunity to ignore, or not implement, the YES Network curriculum.

### ***The Incumbent Professional Logics***

The previously discussed incumbent professional logics were the most dominant source of influence on career counseling practices. Because career counselors were not independent from their previous positions in the school, whether it be teacher or psychologist, these individuals maintained the responsibilities of their previous positions while conducting career counseling activities. These incumbent positions remained the primary position for all career counselors interviewed. Thus, the incumbent professional logic was also the most prioritized logic and influence. The nuance of the extent to which this logic was prioritized will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

The content of the incumbent professional logic of course varied depending on whether the individual in question was a teacher or a psychologist with teachers providing classroom instruction and psychologists providing one-on-one services as needed. Psychologists also occupied something of a “catch-all” position, acquiring responsibilities that did not fall neatly

into the job descriptions of other individuals. For example, during the 2021-2022 school year, psychologists were often responsible for implementing COVID-19 regulations. This “catch-all” phenomenon resulted in a further reduction in available time for psychologists to spend on career counseling. This is particularly relevant as time limitations were often noted as the greatest source of conflict for career counselors.

Many career counselors indicated that the incumbent professional logics were overtly prioritized by both external sources of influence, such as administrators and coworkers, and internally, as practitioners retained their identities and responsibilities as teachers and psychologists. Nonetheless, variation in the influence of the incumbent professional logic, and the aforementioned stakeholder interests, on actual practices was substantial and will be discussed further in the following section. In particular, the variations in the impact of institutional complexity experienced at the individual level according to the content and structure of the incumbent professional logic will be discussed.

### **The Role of Institutional Complexity at the Individual Level in Crafting Career Counseling Practices**

While the first section examined the multiple logics and influences with which career counselors contended, this section focuses on the role of institutional complexity in the development of career counseling practices at the individual level. Specifically, this section focuses on the interactions between the incumbent professional logic and the professional logic of career counseling logic that influenced career counseling practices, and the extent of conflict for counselors at implementation. The focus of this section is on the variation of how individual counselors experienced institutional complexity as well as the differences in conflict faced by

these individuals. This focus on the variation at the individual-level is a continuation of institutional logics theory.

### **Variation at the Individual Level and Institutional Theory**

The role of the individual in determining practices is not a unique concept within institutional theory. For example, previous work has examined the roles of individuals in inhabiting institutional structures (Binder, 2007; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Hallett, 2010). Hallett and Ventresca (2006) indicated the importance of including the influence of individual interactions with other organizational actors and managers along with institutional structures in determining how institutional logics shape behaviors. Binder (2007) expanded on this framework by showing that while individual actors are influenced by institutional structures and social interactions, they also have agency to act creatively and independently as street-level bureaucrats with substantial autonomy and discretion. Additionally, Binder (2007) emphasized the role of departmental logics and the need for organizational actors to balance multiple logics from different departments when these logics interact. The manner in which individual organizational actors respond to these differing departmental logics is influenced by their job position within the organization as well as their individual interpretation of each logic (Binder, 2007). Additionally, the extent to which organizational actors must engage with each department's logic is influenced by the extent of integration versus compartmentalization between the multiple departments (Binder, 2007; Sharp, 2020). When compartmentalized, actors interact with each individual logic independently from one another. When integrated, logics must be combined.

Many of these concepts overlap with the present study. This chapter considers the role of the individual by exploring how the individual experiences of organizational actors determine

individual outcomes within an institutional structure. For example, individual practitioners engage in different interactions with coworkers and administrators depending on the extent of overlap between their incumbent professional logic and the new professional logic (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Hallett, 2010). Specifically, psychologists have different relationships with their school directors than do teachers. The nature of this relationship influences the manner in which the individual responds to institutional complexity. Additionally, Binder's (2007) theory of separated departmental logics is applicable to the present study given the differences in compartmentalization, or segregation, between the incumbent professional logic for teachers and psychologists and the new YES Network logic. For example, teachers often experienced less conflict between logics than psychologists because of the departmental segregation, or compartmentalization, present in many schools between teaching and career counseling. Psychologists, conversely, enjoyed less compartmentalization because their logics were integrated into the same environment as they conducted both psychology tasks and career counseling tasks concurrently. In the present study, compartmentalization is referred to as segregation of logics. This chapter uses these aforementioned concepts to further institutional theory by integrating institutional complexity with the autonomy of individual organizational actors who interact with multiple departments and their respective logics. The result is a model of institutional complexity that provides increased deference to the discretion of the individual.

### **Balancing Professional Logics**

Because of the variation in how individual career counselors experienced institutional complexity during implementation, practices looked different for various career counselors. The *occupational structure* of teachers and psychologists, along with the degree of *conceptual*

*overlap* between the two professional logics, were largely responsible for how individual career counselors responded to institutional complexity. *Occupational structure* primarily refers to the flexibility of the incumbent professional logic, while *conceptual overlap* refers to the degree of similarity between the previous professional logic and the career counseling logic. Based on variation in these factors, four primary types emerged for how career counselors responded to institutional complexity. These types—hybrid psychologist, differentiated psychologist, overlapping teacher, and differentiated teacher—are presented in the typology in Figure 10. This typology provides descriptions of the individual responses to the implementation of a new professional logic, and how these individuals balanced multiple logics given the complexity present.

**Figure 10: Typology of Responses of Career Counselors to Institutional Complexity**

		Occupational Structure	
		Flexible	Rigid
<b>Conceptual Overlap</b>	High	<b>Hybrid Psychologists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated logics</li> <li>• High degrees of conflict</li> </ul>	<b>Overlapping Teachers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially integrated logics</li> <li>• Mild conflict</li> </ul>
	Low	<b>Differentiated Psychologists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially integrated logics</li> <li>• Moderate conflict</li> </ul>	<b>Differentiated Teachers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Segregated logics</li> <li>• Low conflict</li> </ul>

***Conceptual Overlap***

The conceptual overlap between the career counselor’s incumbent professional logic and the newly introduced career counseling professional logic was particularly influential in the

creation of practices resulting from institutionally complex environments. The term conceptual overlap refers to the degree of similarity in the concepts between each career counselor's incumbent professional logic and the career counseling professional logic. Those who conducted similar practices to the YES Network prior to its implementation were more likely to integrate the two professional logics when the YES Network was introduced. Additionally, individuals with high conceptual overlap were more likely to have opportunities to add career counseling into their existing repertoire of practice rather than creating two distinct practices. Individuals with less conceptual overlap were more likely to completely segregate the two professional logics, rarely engaging with both simultaneously. Thus, these latter individuals were more likely to formally differentiate their practices from one another, a process closely related to the degree of conflict experienced by each counselor (Binder, 2007).

### *Occupational Structure*

In addition to conceptual overlap, the structure of the psychologist's office versus the teacher's classroom was also influential in the creation of individual career counseling practices. Specifically, psychologists experienced more flexibility with their schedules and behaviors than did teachers. According to multiple career counselors, psychologists had less structured schedules than teachers. Psychologists were expected to work with students throughout the day, but the specific activities they conducted were done at their own discretion. Teachers, conversely, had more rigid structural components like specific classes and course topics. One of these specific courses was career counseling. Thus, psychologists had the opportunity to integrate career counseling into their pre-existing practices while teachers added an additional class to their workloads. This indicates that psychologists who became career counselors had increased discretion and autonomy in the development of practices as compared to teachers.

In addition to flexibility, the format of practices dictated by each incumbent professional logic was distinct. Psychologists tended to conduct one-on-one practices with students in their offices while teachers worked in classrooms with large groups of students. As stated by Nada, a representative at USAID North Macedonia:

There were not supposed to be any differences in counseling conducted by teachers versus psychologists following the YES Network training, and both were expected to be able to deliver both one-on-one counseling with students, and group work with students, ...but their backgrounds and university degrees made psychologists better prepared to do the one-on-one counseling and teachers more comfortable with the [group] modules of the elective course.

Thus, psychologists conducted individual career counseling with students, combining psychological and career counseling duties, while teachers used their skillsets to conduct career counseling classroom lessons independent of their regular teaching duties. The one-on-one nature of their work left psychologists with more discretion, as well, as they were able to tailor individual sessions to individual students. Teachers, meanwhile, utilized less discretion as they were unable to individualize lessons given the group dynamic of the classroom.

These differences between psychologists and teachers in terms of the flexibility and format of career counseling influenced the timing and extent of career counseling conducted as well as the extent of integration of practices. As with conceptual overlap, psychologists were more likely to integrate career counseling into their psychology practices because they had the autonomy to select activities to conduct with their students from psychology or career counseling indiscriminately and concurrently. Teachers conversely conducted career counseling at specific times that were most often independent from their regular teaching duties. Additionally, these individuals conducted group career counseling sessions. Thus, they were more likely to segregate their practices as there were fewer opportunities for integration given the rigidity of the schedule and the inability to individualize career counseling to specific students.

## **Types of Career Counselors**

These differences in conceptual overlap and occupational structure for individuals balancing the psychology and career counseling logics and individuals balancing the teaching and career counseling logics led to variation in how career counseling was implemented. As indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.**<sup>10</sup>, these differences resulted in the establishment of four types of career counselors. These four types will be reviewed in the ensuing sections along with examples of each type of career counselor.

### ***Hybrid Psychologists***

Hybrid psychologists were psychologists and career counselors who readily integrated their position of psychologist with that of career counselor. These individuals, who had flexible occupational structure and high degrees of conceptual overlap between their logics, utilized elements of both the career counseling and the psychology logics over the course of their workdays. Hybrid psychologists faced high degrees of conflict because of their efforts to incorporate both logics into their practices.

Angela was a good example of this type of career counselor. Angela continued to conduct her psychologist duties while also adding a career counseling repertoire for any students interested in such services. Angela indicated that this was a serious addition to her already substantial workload. She stated,

We don't have too much time because I have other responsibilities. My colleague has other responsibilities. So, we are always in need of more time. That is why I was talking all the time that this has to be one person who will do only this, and I have 10 other things to do you know. This is our personal motivation more than it is supported [by administrators].

Angela expressed that she faced substantial conflict between her psychologist and career counseling duties based on the fact that she was trying to add a whole new position to the



responsibilities of her existing position. Thus, while the logics were actually able to be integrated, conflict arose from the difficulties in implementing both logics concurrently. However, because of her personal motivation, Angela combined and pursued both logics to the best of her ability.

### *Differentiated Psychologists*

Differentiated psychologists were psychologists and career counselors who independently conducted their psychology and career counseling tasks. These individuals utilized separate times during their work schedules to conduct tasks they viewed as psychology tasks and tasks they viewed as career counseling tasks. The differentiated psychologists in the sample all expressed that the psychology tasks took precedence over career counseling tasks. These individuals had flexible occupational structure and low conceptual overlap as they viewed career counseling as largely independent from psychology. They faced moderate conflict as they still incorporated multiple logics into their workday. However, they had less conflict than hybrid psychologists as they did not attempt to utilize both logics in their entireties. Rather they incorporated specific aspects of the career counseling logic into their psychology practices as needed. Differentiated psychologists were less common than hybrid psychologists.

Danica, who used some career counseling skills but did not fully integrate the logics nor did she place as high a value on career counseling tasks as did Angela, was a good example of a differentiated psychologist. Danica indicated that she attended part of the YES Network training in order to be able to use the BIPO with her students. However, she did not attend the general career counseling portion of the training. She chose to exclusively add the BIPO inventory to her existing psychologist responsibilities rather than conduct complete career counseling sessions

with students. The fact that Danica retained an unchanged psychology practice with the addition of a singular career counseling technique qualifies her as a differentiated psychologist.

The primary source of conflict for Danica was in the addition of a career counseling task to an already full workload as a psychologist. In particular, as the tasks of psychologist and career counselor were largely differentiated, her conflict primarily stemmed from limited time rather than combining multiple professional logics. Danica reported some struggles with finding enough time complete all of the tasks with which she was tasked. However, Danica also mentioned that due to the flexibility provided to her by her principal, she was often able to adjust her tasks as necessary in order to prioritize those tasks she felt most necessary. This flexibility lessened the degree of conflict between both professional logics to moderate.

### ***Overlapping Teachers***

Overlapping teachers were teachers and career counselors who, rather than maintaining completely segregated practices of teaching and career counseling, added certain career counseling elements to their regular teaching practices. These teachers had high conceptual overlap between teaching and career counseling logics, but because of rigid occupational structures, they found limited instances in which to incorporate career counseling into their teaching tasks. Due to the spatial and temporal separation between the teaching and career counseling logics, these individuals still largely conducted career counseling practices in the after-school hours and occasionally during scheduled classes during the regular school day. Overlapping teachers thus faced mild conflict due to their efforts to integrate logics despite having rigid schedules. However, because the two professional logics were largely segregated due to spatial and temporal separation, conflict was lower than that found with psychologists.

Mirjana was a good example of an overlapping teacher as she taught psychology courses and thus had more conceptual overlap between her teaching and career counseling roles than did most teachers. Before she began working as a career counselor, Mirjana was teaching psychology at a VET school. However, she was unable to fill her required course load by exclusively teaching psychology. Thus, she volunteered for the YES Network program in order to add career counseling lessons to her formal teaching expectations. Following the YES Network trainings, Mirjana taught career counseling classes with her students. Given the conceptual overlap between career counseling classes and psychology classes, Mirjana was able to incorporate career counseling components into her psychology classes and vice versa. Given the similarity between her classroom topics, Mirjana was classified as an overlapping teacher.

Unlike hybrid psychologists who also experienced conceptual overlap, Mirjana did not face substantial conflict as she conducted her career counseling and psychology lessons independently. She stated,

I have another schedule for the career counseling. When the school year begins, I go with the presentation in every class of the finishing [senior] year and the vocational classes, and I go with my presentation in every class and I'm presenting [on] career counseling. Rather than contending with two logics competing for time within the same curriculum, Mirjana maintained two independent curriculums. This practice resulted in only mild conflict as the spatial and temporal separation between psychology and career counseling lessened the pressures to fully integrate the two professional logics.

### ***Differentiated Teachers***

Finally, differentiated teachers were teachers and career counselors who had complete separation between their teaching and career counseling responsibilities. These career counselors taught unrelated courses during the day and worked as career counselors either after school or

during designated career counseling times during the school day. They had rigid occupational structures and little or no conceptual overlap. Thus, they faced low conflict because of the complete segregation of logics.

Rumena, a French teacher and career counselor, was a good example of a differentiated teacher because she completely separated her responsibilities as a teacher from those of a career counselor. Rumena maintained specific times and spaces where she was a French teacher and different times and spaces where she was a career counselor. She thus reported very little overlap or conflict between her multiple responsibilities in the school. Rumena conducted career counseling in a classroom environment during the regular school day in lieu of additional sections of French lessons and thus was not limited in terms of time to conduct both classes. Additionally, there was no overlap in concepts between French and career counseling and thus the two logics remained segregated.

## **Discussion**

### ***Street-Level Bureaucracy and Autonomy***

The different typologies, or manners in which individual career counselors implemented the career counseling logic of the YES Network, were made possible by the autonomy afforded to these individuals as street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucracy is a framework that emphasizes the discretion of the frontline employee (Lipsky, 1980). Given their autonomy as street-level bureaucrats, career counselors were able to shape how a policy translated into practice somewhat independently of the original intentions of the policy. While substantial differences existed between the degree of autonomy available to psychologists and teachers, they

both worked as, and retained the autonomy of, street-level bureaucrats. This autonomy provided these individuals with the ability to respond independently to the pressures of institutional complexity and create unique practices that potentially deviated from the prescribed policies of the YES Network.

While all of the career counselors observed behaved as street-level bureaucrats, they maintained different degrees of discretion depending on their previous position, either psychologist or teacher, within the school. Specifically, psychologists indicated that they were able to utilize any element of the career counseling logic with complete discretion. Or alternatively, these individuals stated that they were able to ignore this logic in its entirety. Thus, the use of the logic, or its components, was strictly up to the psychologist. One psychologist noted, "It's like a training that we can, [but] we don't have to use in our practice." She went on to explain that she was very pleased to have learned additional tools for use and that she found it important to include these tools in her practice.

Teachers, alternatively, maintained discretion in the particular activities they conducted, but not in the inclusion of career counseling in their repertoires of practices. Teachers who conducted career counseling had to engage with the career counseling logic but maintained discretion in terms of how they shaped the practices they orchestrated. For teachers, the discretion involved in the creation of career counseling practices was closer to that of designing a class curriculum. As stated by one career counselor who also worked as a teacher, Mirjana, "It's my choice, what to give the to the children and how to arrange the activities." Thus, while lacking discretion in whether or not to conduct classroom sessions, teachers were able to design their career counseling sessions to their liking.

## **Spatial and Temporal Separation**

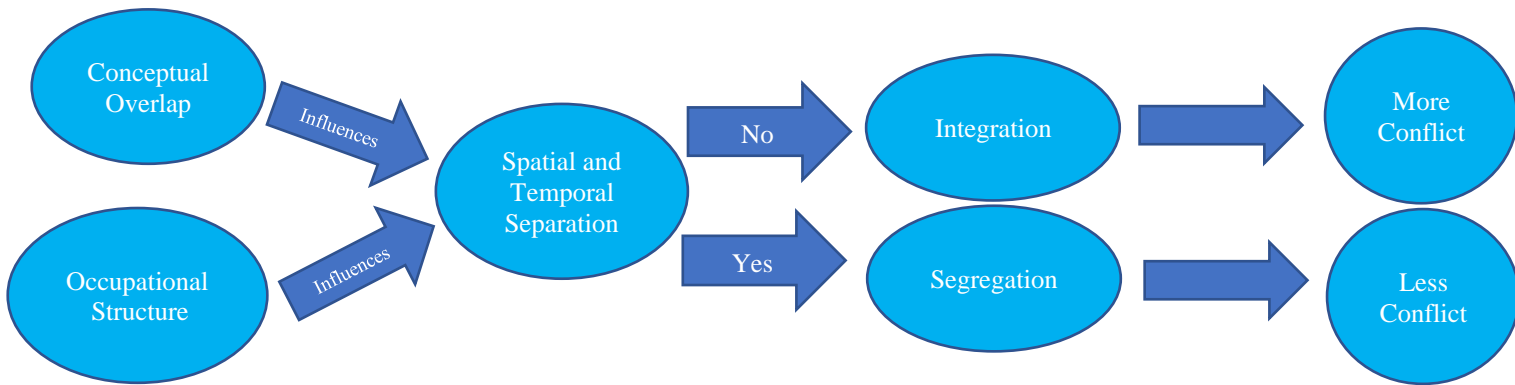
In addition to differences in discretion, differences in spatial and temporal separation between professional demands were also substantial for psychologists and teachers. Teachers noted that they had far more spatial and temporal separation than did psychologists. Reducing conflict by creating time and space for each logic independently is an established approach to reducing conflict between logics (Gümüşay, Smets, & Morris, 2020). In environments where institutional logics are likely to conflict with one another, such as teaching and career counseling at the same time, organizational actors benefit from dividing their workdays between different logic spaces at different times. Spatial and temporal separation is an avenue by which fidelity of implementation and consistency could be improved for future career counseling initiatives. Career counselors with spatial and temporal separation noted less conflict between logics and implemented the YES Network with less discretion and more fidelity. Thus, these individuals had more predictable models of counseling than did their colleagues with limited spatial and temporal separation.

## **Integration, Segregation, and Conflict**

Another factor that influenced the degree of conflict experienced by counselors was the extent to which the professional logics were integrated into practice. Some individuals, primarily psychologists, were able to integrate concepts from both of their professional logics in order to craft singular, but often conflicted, practices. Meanwhile other career counselors, primarily teachers, kept the incumbent practices separate from their career counseling responsibilities. These individuals were faced with less conflict as the logics were segregated from one another and largely did not compete for the same time periods in these individuals' schedules.

The extent of integration or segregation of logics is closely related to the aforementioned concepts of spatial and temporal separation as well as occupational structure and conceptual overlap. Specifically, the degree of integration was influenced by the spatial and temporal separation between the logics as determined by the organizational environment in which career counselors implemented the YES Network. Additionally, the extent to which spatial and temporal separation existed was closely related to both the occupational structure of the counselor implementing the YES Network as well as the conceptual overlap between the YES Network and the incumbent professional logic. The relationships between conceptual overlap, occupational structure, spatial and temporal separation, integration and segregation, and conflict are represented in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Predicting Conflict for Individual Career Counselors**



***Independent Position***

The influence of spatial and temporal separation on the conflict experienced by career counselors highlights the value of creating an independent position on the ease of

implementation. Nearly all career counselors in the sample indicated that career counseling would have been implemented with greater fidelity and less conflict if it was designed and created as a completely separate position from any other responsibilities, or professional logics, in the school. In this manner, career counselors would have faced less institutional complexity as they would have had a single professional logic to govern their practices. Thus, there would have been no competing professional logics, and these individuals could implement career counseling with far less conflict. This process was best represented by the differentiated teachers in the present sample, who were able to implement career counseling with very limited influence from their other professional logic. As demonstrated by the spatial and temporal separation between professional logics for these individuals, separating career counselors from other responsibilities undoubtedly reduces the conflict experienced by these individuals during implementation.

### **Conclusion**

Multiple institutional logics and stakeholder interests influenced the practice of career counseling at the time of implementation. Despite facing the same or similar logics, individual career counselors experienced different environments of institutional complexity and thus created different practices from one another. The logics and interests that career counselors balanced included the career counseling logic of the YES Network, the incumbent professional logic, the state inspection board, school administrators, students, teachers, and parents, and autonomous interests. Because the YES Network trained existing educators to practice career counseling in addition to their other responsibilities, the professional logics of teaching or psychology and the professional logic of career counseling represented by the YES Network were the two most prominent sources of conflict during implementation. Depending on the



extent of conceptual overlap and format of the occupational structure, career counselors implemented the new career counseling logic of the YES Network in one of four ways: hybrid psychologist, differentiated psychologist, hybrid teacher, and differentiated teacher. Each implementation type involved different degrees of conflict. The conflict faced by each career counselor during the effort to implement two independent professional logics played a substantial role in how the YES Network influenced each counselor's practices.

While the present chapter investigated the implementation of the YES Network, including the influence of institutional complexity on practices, the following chapter will explore the sustainability of the YES Network. These concepts are related as implementation examines the practices that took place during the introduction of the YES Network while sustainability examines the practices that still take place. The ensuing chapter will investigate sustainability by exploring the practices which continued to exist during the 2021–2022 school year. This chapter will include an investigation of the institutionalization process and the extent to which career counseling was institutionalized. Additionally, the chapter will include an in-depth exploration of factors that encouraged and discouraged sustainability.

## **Chapter 7: The Sustainability of the YES Network**

This chapter examines the sustainability of the career counseling component of the YES Network eight years after it was first implemented and five years after funding for the initiative ended. Sustainability is largely achieved when practices become institutionalized or ingrained in the daily practices of educational practitioners (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021; Greenwood, Jennings, & Hinings, 2015). For institutionalization to have taken place, the career counseling rules and practices set forth by the YES Network must have become established as rational myths or appropriate practices that determine the expectations for individuals working as career counselors (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; March & Olsen, 1998; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). If the practices established by the YES Network became institutionalized, they would have achieved legitimacy and would have been reproduced across organizations in an attempt for organizational survival or, more likely in this instance, organizational alignment with national expectations (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Deephouse et al., 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1980; March & Olsen, 1998; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

In order to assess institutionalization, this paper will utilize components of the Modes of Reproduction (MoRe) institutional approach. Anderson and Colyvas (2021) developed the MoRe model in order to identify “sources of longevity or disruption...for institutionalization” (p. 3). This model is based on the concept that sustainability is achieved when practices are self-activated by practitioners without external motivation. Once practices become “chronically reproduced” and “routinized” without external instigation, institutionalization is achieved as these practices repeat themselves without external influence (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145).

In conversations with Macedonian educators, the biggest problem with international education initiatives in North Macedonia is that they rarely maintain their intended purpose after

the agency that initiated the program withdraws support. One teacher indicated that once the funding agency removes support, the Macedonian individuals involved in the project received less oversight and began to revert to their previous practices. Because sustainability is a common shortcoming in international education policy initiatives (Drummond & DeYoung, 2003; Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000), information pertaining to which aspects of the YES Network were sustained and why will improve future education policy development broadly and specifically in North Macedonia.

In this chapter, I first assess the current stage of institutionalization of career counseling in North Macedonia. Then I introduce the specific model that I use to assess the institutionalization of career counseling and an explanation of how the mechanisms detailed in this model apply to the case of career counseling (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021). Finally, I examine how the YES Network goals, practices, and assumptions continue to influence career counseling practices.

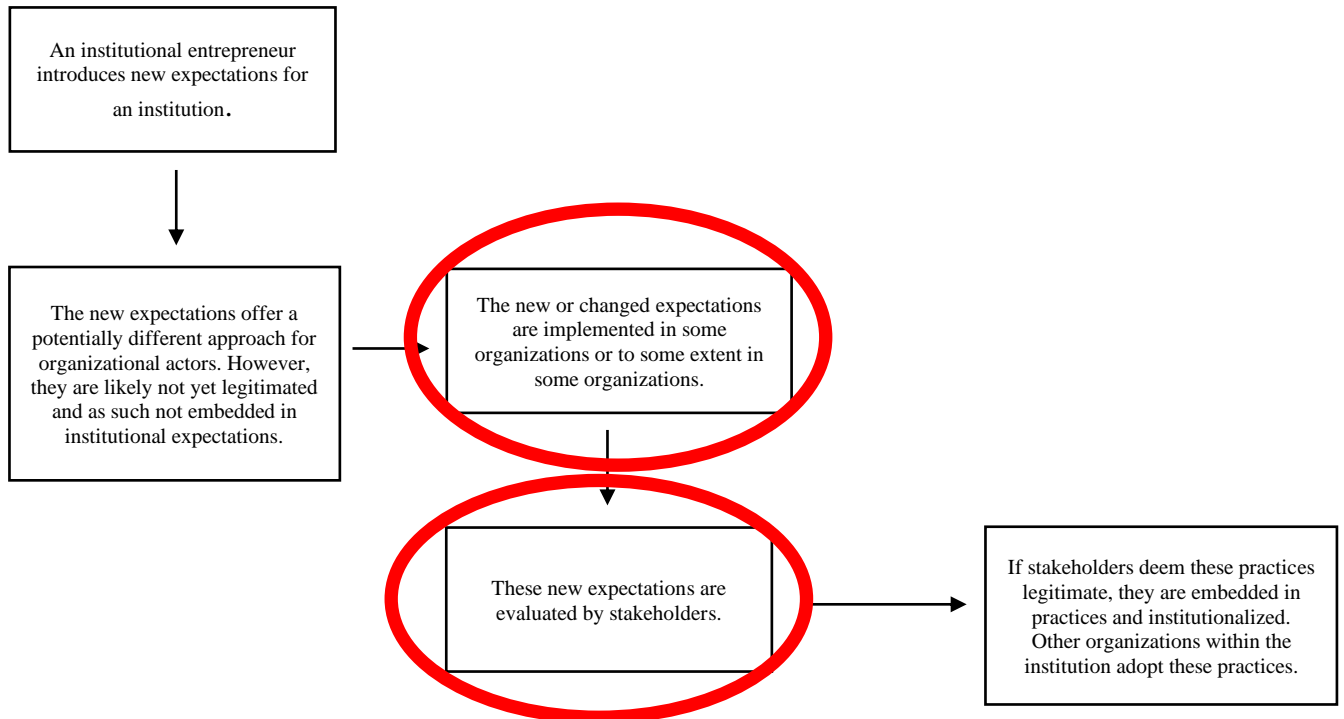
### **Institutionalization of Career Counseling in North Macedonia**

Institutionalized practices become embedded into the repertoires of organizational actors, creating sustainability (Suddaby, 2015). Thus, if we were to find that the YES Network practices were institutionalized, this would imply that sustainability was substantial. Otherwise, if the practices were not embedded and institutionalized, sustainability would be minimal.

At present, the YES Network practices are not fully institutionalized and embedded in the behaviors of career counselors or those conducting career counseling. The current stage of institutionalization is demonstrated in **Error! Reference source not found.2**. This diagram,

originally presented in chapter 2, presents the stages of the institutionalization process, including the identification of the current status of the YES Network

**Figure 12: The Current Stage of Institutionalization**



However, this does not indicate that there is no sustainability of career counseling resulting from the YES Network. Rather, career counseling is currently implemented fully in some organizations, to some extent in other organizations, and not at all in some schools. In schools where career counseling is taking place, it is still being evaluated by stakeholders. According to my observations and interviews with career counselors, school administrators, and Ministry of Education and Science representatives, each stakeholder views career counseling somewhat differently. Some believe that it is an essential practice while others view it as superfluous. Still others feel that it has a role for some students while not for others. There is currently a lack of consensus or uniformity regarding the legitimacy of career counseling

practices. Should it be determined a legitimate educational practice either by consensus or mandate from stakeholders, it will likely progress further towards an institutionalized practice as indicated in the final box of **Error! Reference source not found.2**.

Because career counseling remains in a developing stage of institutionalization, the following sections review influences that contributed to the institutionalization process in either a positive or negative manner. The mechanisms reviewed are those identified by Anderson and Colyvas (2021) as primary contributors to institutionalization. I isolate the mechanisms most pertinent to the practice of career counseling and identify individual influences within these categories. These influences are further categorized into those that further institutionalization, and thus sustainability, and those that reduce the likelihood of institutionalization and sustainability. At the conclusion, this section effectively identifies why the YES Network succeeded in altering practices to some extent, but ultimately is not yet institutionalized.

### **Self-Activating Practices and Mechanisms**

The MoRe model identifies seven mechanisms that help practitioners reproduce specific practices and aid in institutionalizing these practices. These seven mechanisms are described as “self activating modes of reproduction in the educational realm” (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021, p. 10). The specific modes included are formal policies, stable stakeholder interests, organizational routines, performance metrics, students’ identity categories, professional norms, and resonant frames. For the sustainability of career counseling included in the YES Network, the mechanisms most frequently observed and discussed by career counselors as influencing the extent to which career counseling was sustained are formal policies and regulations, stakeholder interests, professional norms, and organizational routines.

## **Formal Policies and Regulations**

Formal policies and regulations refer to structures adopted by the government that dictate rules and practices that must be conducted. These are perhaps the most direct and obvious manner of practice replicability, or the repeated use of specific practices, leading to institutionalization (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021). Formal policies and regulations indicate what practices must take place in schools. Of course, the extent to which such practices actually take place or take place in the manner originally intended is often variable across schools and organizational actors (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). Thus, the formal policies that impact career counseling practices at present as well as factors which influence how these policies are interpreted by individual practitioners will be discussed in the following sections.

### ***Policies Supporting Sustainability***

**Ministry of Education and Science Policies.** One reason that career counseling is sustained to some extent is the continued development of educational policies that include the provision of career counseling in secondary schools. According to Jovana, a representative from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Law on Teachers and other Professional Staff is frequently amended, and new iterations often include components pertaining to career counseling. The most recent iteration of the Law on Teachers and other Professional Staff was introduced in April of 2021 and “proposed training programs for professional associates for career counseling of students.” As designed, the new law would have provided for career counseling training opportunities for educators in VET schools. In further conversations with Jovana, she stated that this law was intended to not only provide professional development opportunities for career counselors but also to formalize the position of career counselor in

secondary schools. However, as of April, 2022, the Law on Teachers and other Professional Staff did not pass as designed and is currently in the process of being amended prior to future deliberations. Despite the recent setback for the Law on Teachers and other Professional Staff, the persistent inclusion of career counseling in proposed policies indicates a step towards sustainability as stakeholders continue to evaluate the value of this practice. In particular, the formal recognition of the position of career counselor by the Ministry of Education and Science would be a significant step towards institutionalization.

**Career Counseling in Higher Education and Primary Schools.** While career counseling in secondary schools is not formally mandated at present, career counseling is currently mandatory at other age-levels of Macedonian education. According to Jovana, while the rule is not fully practiced with fidelity, career counseling is required in primary schools, grades typically referred to as 1<sup>st</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> in the United States, and in universities.

***Career Counseling in Primary Schools.*** Given that students in Macedonian primary schools must choose between vocational schools and academic gymnasiums at the conclusion of their ninth-grade-equivalent year, career counseling is very important at this level of education. To assist students with their career decisions beginning with their choice of secondary schools, there are career counseling practices in place in primary schools. However, similar to those practiced in secondary schools, and given that an independent position of career counselor is not recognized at any level, these services are still provided by individuals with other positions of employment within the schools—namely psychologists and pedagogues. As of 2019, this arrangement was noted in Article 47, Section 2 of the Law on Primary Education:

To monitor individual affinities of students and assist the students, their parents i.e. guardians in the selection of secondary school, the school psychologist i.e. pedagogue shall use tools to determine students' abilities, interests and prospects and shall

implement a professional orientation program with students in the eighth and ninth grade, which is determined by the Minister on proposal by the Bureau. As such, these services are mandated by law to be conducted to some extent by psychologists and pedagogues; however, the precise nature in which tools and professional orientations are used is largely discretionary. Thus, practices likely take place with some variation in a similar manner to those offered at the secondary level.

Many of the services offered in primary schools are a result of career counseling programs that predate the YES Network. Petre, who worked with the YES Network as well as other, US-funded career counseling programs, noted that other USAID-funded projects helped to establish career counseling for younger students. In particular, the aforementioned Primary Education Project (PEP) established “career corners” in primary schools, which helped students consider various career offerings and opportunities. Petre also indicated that the Macedonian Completeness Project (MCP) had a similar component that helped continue the development of career services for primary school students. In fact, Petre felt that career counseling was a larger need for students in primary schools than for older students, given that they had to make such a significant decision regarding their future studies and careers at such a young age. While Petre was ultimately unsatisfied with the results of the PEP and MCP programs, he hoped that a new career counseling curriculum for primary schools would be developed shortly. Petre believed that a primary-specific curriculum that was similar to the GCDF curriculum would be helpful towards further development and institutionalization of career counseling in primary schools. He also hoped that these primary school programs would then translate to secondary school programs as career counseling became more ingrained into Macedonian schools. Given the focus on the development of career counseling at the primary level, along with the mandatory nature of some practices, it is possible that the career counseling policies in primary schools will serve as a



precursor to similar programs in secondary schools. Thus, as these practices continue to expand and develop, career counseling at the secondary level will likely become more institutionalized through formal policy precedent originating at the primary level.

*Career Counseling in Universities.* In addition to the career counseling that takes place before secondary school, career counseling is also mandatory following secondary school at the university level for academically-oriented students. Specifically, the Law on Higher Education, Article 86 stipulates the following:

The University shall establish at least one career centre. The career centre shall keep special records of the former Students (alumni), organise career fairs at each Faculty/University that have career centres, and shall perform other activities stipulated in the Statute of the University

Many universities in North Macedonia boast career centers as a result of national requirements for universities to offer such services. These career centers were developed in a similar manner as the YES Network with funding sourced from external sources—largely the EU—and as a combined effort between Macedonian and foreign experts. For example, Josif, a professor at a large, local university in Skopje, noted that he played a role, in conjunction with his colleague Marko, in the development of career counseling practices at his university. This process involved not only the establishment of career counseling services, but the distribution of such services across all 18 departments of the university. Josif went on to say that he and Marko worked to develop an overarching structure of career counseling that helps dictate the practices of each department's independent career counseling center. Josif indicated that this policy has improved the development of career counseling in higher education as each department is able to provide individualized career advice relevant to careers of interest within the applicable field of study. These career centers largely help match job vacancies identified by relevant employers for each department with the skillsets of graduating job seekers. The need for helping graduating students

find careers related to their areas of expertise was also mentioned by another professor, Eva, as one of the larger problems in the Macedonian job market. The ability of these career centers to meet an identified need in the university community resulted in a favorable reception for these programs. The positive perceptions of these programs, along with the policies requiring such practices, are likely to encourage the continued institutionalization of career counseling at the university level.

### ***Policies Impeding Sustainability***

There are also formal policies and policy choices that have discouraged the institutionalization of career counseling in North Macedonia. Oftentimes, these are related to policy decisions that do not prioritize career counseling. The lack of prioritization comes in multiple forms including deciding to not pursue certain improvements to the career counseling model, failing to approve sufficient funding for career counseling practices, or general political instability or corruption negatively impacting public services. The specific aspects of policy choices that inhibited the institutionalization of career counseling are discussed below.

**Ministry of Education and Science Policies for Primary Schools.** While the development of career counseling at the primary school level was noted as a positive policy development encouraging the institutionalization of career counseling, there were aspects of primary school career counseling that also worked against institutionalization. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Science did not prioritize career counseling as a vital task or key component of primary education, as demonstrated by not providing sufficient funding to continue to develop career counseling at this level. For example, after the success of the original BIPO at the secondary level, the Ministry of Education and Science began to develop a reworked BIPO inventory to help students in primary schools make career decisions as they approached

the VET-gymnasium decision. In order to do so, the Ministry of Education and Science reached out to a former YES Network intern, and current UNICEF employee, Stojan. As an intern with the YES Network, Stojan was closely involved with the creation of the original, secondary-level BIPO inventory and had the expertise to create a new primary-level BIPO. Unfortunately, after discussions with the Ministry of Education and Science about the development of this new inventory, it was ultimately decided not to move forward with the project. According to both Stojan and Jovana with the Ministry of Education and Science, rather than funding the primary education BIPO project, much of the education budget went towards more elemental aspects of education such as improving basic learning skills like science and math. This indicates that while the Ministry of Education and Science was aware of the need for career counseling and direction for primary school students, they were unwilling to prioritize career counseling when making funding decisions. This lack of prioritization of career counseling through a refusal to formally develop the primary-level BIPO damaged the institutionalization of this practice as it decreases the formal expectations for activities conducted by career counselors.

**Ministry of Education and Science Policies for Universities.** There were also shortcomings in policy creation at the university level. These shortcomings were particularly interesting as they echoed many of the same concerns expressed by career counselors at the secondary level. For instance, Josif, the local university professor, noted concern over the number of responsibilities maintained by career counselors. Because career counselors at universities were also faculty members, these individuals communicated that they often had too many external responsibilities to dedicate a substantial amount of time to career counseling. Because the Ministry of Education and Science policy requiring career counseling at the university level did not include the establishment of a separate position for the provision of these

services, counseling responsibilities fell to the over-burdened faculty members. These individuals were often unable to provide the services with which they were tasked due to competing responsibilities.

In addition to time constraints, career counselors in universities noted that they received a limited amount of training to feel confident providing counseling services. Almost none of the career counselors at universities ever received formal training from either ASK or any other group providing GCDF or GCDF-adjacent curriculums. The aforementioned Josif was actually a recipient of the GCDF certification. However, while he was in the minority to begin with as a certified counselor, his certification had lapsed in 2015 and was not renewed. Josif indicated an interest in continuing to develop his counseling skills; however, given his time-consuming responsibilities as a faculty member, he had yet to find the time to pursue an additional GCDF course to renew his certification. Additionally, such a course would have to be conducted at his own expense since career counseling skill development opportunities were not provided to faculty members at local universities free of charge.

The lack of extensive formal policy creation legitimizing practices for career counselors in universities and primary schools damaged institutionalization for the overall practice of career counseling. By failing to create policies at other levels to further establish career counseling for Macedonian educators, the Ministry of Education and Science did not continue to cultivate self-activated patterns of practice at any level for individual educational practitioners. Thus, by not pursuing the development of a new BIPO inventory, not creating an independent position for career counselors at universities, and not providing professional development opportunities for career counselors, the recent policy choices in North Macedonia decrease the likelihood that career counseling will become institutionalized at any level, including secondary schools.

**Lack of a Formal Position.** Perhaps the largest instance of failed policy creation by the Ministry of Education and Science was their inability to create an independent position of career counselor at any level. Similar to previously discussed policy decisions, the failure to establish a career counselor position was largely due to the financial commitment of such a policy choice. As the YES Network did not provide funds to pay career counselors, but instead provided funds to train them, the creation of an independent position would be exclusively a domestic policy choice.

However, many individuals believed that in order for career counseling to be sustained, this was a necessary step. In fact, nearly every counselor, academic, professional association member, and ministry official noted that there had to be a formalized position with a specific career counseling job description in order for career counseling to take place with any consistency at the institutional level. For example, Mirjana, a career counselor and psychologist, noted that in order for sustainability to take place, career counseling tasks had to be formalized and separated from other positions in the building. She stated that career counseling would be effective

If it's put in our working assignments; if it's part of the process that we are paid [for, it will work]. [In my previous job,] it was in my working assignments. Like part of my work. It was [on] a document that I have [career counseling] classes, and I have it in my paycheck. Part of my salary. I was working with the children [on career counseling] every day. I have time specially for that. And it was very structured because I have what to do in writing. We like to have things in writing.

Thus, in order to have sustainability throughout the county, the tasks for career counseling need to be independent and explicitly included in the job description as an expectation.

In addition to Mirjana, Petre, the Chief of Party with EDC, took a similar stance. Petre found the biggest detriment to sustainability to be the lack of recognition by the national government of the position of career counselor. He stated that the greatest step towards

sustainability that could be taken would be to recognize and pay career counselors who were independent of any other responsibilities in the school. Petre stated,

[In] some schools [as] I mentioned, there are motivated teachers [working as career counselors] who are doing [career counseling]. In some not. It's still not officialized as a career counseling position. In the organizational structure of the schools, to have [an] official position [of] career counselor that will be paid by the government, then that's a great step for sustainability. It wasn't done. It's not done yet. We hope that it will be done in the future. In that time, then we could be sure that we will provide sustainability of the process and as many as students will be involved in this program each year.

Thus, Petre indicated that the greatest shortcoming regarding sustainability for the YES Network was the fact that an independent position of career counselor was neither created nor financed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Because there is no formal position which is independent of other responsibilities, the extent to which career counseling takes place is still up to the individual. Because of the inability to establish a formal policy creating an explicit position of career counselor, the extent of counseling which takes place is determined individually and not institutionally. Thus, according to Petre, the formal policy necessary to institutionalize career counseling practices is to create an independent job with separate funding to ensure that such a position is established with institutional-level expectations.

**Grant Funding.** In addition to the aforementioned shortcomings in formal policy development, there was also a general policy shortcoming in terms of the provision of funds for career counseling. Many of the career counseling initiatives implemented in North Macedonia, including the YES Network, were grant-funded projects. Anderson and Colyvas (2021) look at grant funding as an example of external provocation causing activation for particular practices.

They state,

Philanthropic grant funding is an extremely common source of support for efforts at educational improvement. However, such funding is temporary; thus, other things being equal, practices that are reliant on grants or other temporary supports will likewise end when support is removed (p. 9).

Thus, programs initiated by grant funding are not likely to be institutionalized without additional measures taken to develop independent reproduction of practices. Anderson and Colyvas (2021) go on to state that once the “exhaustible resources” included in a grant funded program are fully utilized, it is unlikely that the program will continue to operate as intended because the impetus is removed.

As the YES Network is an example of a grant-funded program, the degree of institutionalization achieved depends on the extent to which the YES Network was able to create self-activating practices for career counselors after the cessation of funding. Because funding for the YES Network expired in 2016, there is no longer financial support for efforts to encourage career counseling development or the continuation of established practices. Thus, individuals who are not in a self-activated pattern of providing such services are unlikely to begin providing services. Additionally, many individuals who previously relied on external motivation to provide career counseling ceased the provision of services in 2016. In conversations with one career counselor, Rosa, she indicated that multiple teachers at her school attended the YES Network trainings but do not conduct any counseling practices at present. She stated, “They know it, but they don't want [to do] it.” Rosa went on to say that “There are not many enthusiasts that want to work free without acquiring money and who [just] want to help children. That's why I'm the only one.” This points to a lack of internally motivated career counselors at Rosa's school and a need for continued external motivation in order to institutionalize patterns of career counseling. Had the Ministry of Education and Science continued to fund and provide similar services as the YES Network, albeit internally funded, it is likely that career counseling would have continued to develop and become more institutionalized. In an effort to remedy the scenario shared by Rosa, such a program could have provided financial incentives for individuals willing to stay after

school to provide career counseling services. However, because domestic funds from the Ministry of Education and Science were put towards educational initiatives other than career counseling, there was no career counseling program or incentive system to replace the YES Network. Rather, funds were put towards programs such as math, science, and reading, which were determined to be more immediately necessary for the development of Macedonian students. Thus, the external funding, and external source of motivation, disappeared before career counseling practices were fully institutionalized without any domestic initiative to take its place.

**Pipeline.** Related to the Ministry's lack of interest in creating or supporting the position of career counselor, the same entity also failed to provide policies creating educational opportunities for individuals interested in becoming career counselors. For example, one individual, Amelia, was trained as a teacher in North Macedonia and had an interest in pursuing a career in mental health services for youth. Because of the limited opportunities to pursue higher education relating to counseling in North Macedonia, outside of general psychology, Amelia applied for scholarships in order to study in the United States. Her hope was to then return to North Macedonia after receiving an American master's degree in school counseling or school psychology in order to provide counseling services to students. She planned on accomplishing this goal by working as an English teacher with additional responsibilities as a career counselor. Amelia's desired travel to the United States for her education was necessary as the YES Network and GCDF no longer offer significant training opportunities for individuals interested in becoming career counselors. Thus, Macedonians with a substantial interest in providing career counseling or related services must obtain the bulk of their training outside of the country. Because of the centralized nature of higher education in North Macedonia, with, according to local professors, the government having control over which majors are available for students to



pursue, the formal policy shortcoming is the failure of the government to include a career counseling major. Because career counseling is not included as a major, there are no career counseling courses or learning opportunities available in higher education systems. This in turn limits institutionalization as individuals are unable to obtain the skillset necessary to pursue such a career. Without domestic training opportunities, very few educators are likely to take Amelia's route of pursuing a counseling degree abroad. Therefore, the number of individuals interested in and prepared to provide career counseling services is likely to remain low.

**Corruption and Instability.** The final aspect of formal policies and regulations that impacted the sustainability of career counseling was the corruption and political instability found in North Macedonia. Because of corrupt political processes, rules and laws that might encourage the institutionalization of career counseling either never came to fruition or were largely symbolic when they did. Additionally, political instability made it difficult for an individual administration to gain traction with any new laws or regulations. Thus, institutionalization processes were made more difficult by frequent changes in leadership and agendas.

Corruption was a common phenomenon within the Ministry of Education and Science. Many individuals with whom I spoke routinely referred to the rampant corruption among the ranks of ministry officials. Corruption was noted in terms of how funds were used for public programming, how individuals received jobs, and how or why certain policies were approved and made into law. While corruption has marginally declined through the development of civic engagement and political transparency programs, it is still an ongoing concern within the public sphere in North Macedonia (European Commission, 2019).

One instance from my fieldwork that revealed corruption, or at least misleading information, was the difference in information about future career counseling programs from

Jovana with the Ministry of Education and Science and Eva with a local university. In a fortuitous bit of luck, I happened to interview Jovana and Eva on consecutive days. In my interview with Jovana, I was very interested to hear that career counseling in secondary schools was in the final stages of being included in the forthcoming, amended school regulations. This was a very promising sign for institutionalization and was contrary to much of the information I had received from career counselors whom I had interviewed. The counselors had primarily noted that while they were interested in furthering career counseling, there was very little movement from the government and the current administration to make this position official. Thus, the information from Jovana that the Ministry of Education and Science was moving forward with an amendment to increase the availability and purveyance of career counseling was quite surprising. However, in later conversations with Eva, she stated that she was not at all surprised that the Ministry of Education and Science had informed me that career counseling would be an official position soon. Eva stated that the Ministry of Education and Science is primarily concerned with appearances. Thus, and partially because I, as the interviewer, am American and working on a document that will be shared with other academics, Eva believed that Jovana merely stated what would make the Ministry of Education and Science appear most positively. Eva continued to state that in reality, this new law was a quite unlikely outcome. With the benefit of hindsight, Eva was correct as the law was yet to be passed as of April, 2022. Thus, the statement by Eva indicates the presence of either corruption or the provision of misleading information, or even just an assumption of corruption within the Ministry of Education and Science. All options demonstrate that the general perception from citizens is that information communicated by the Ministry of Education and Science is untrustworthy.

Stojan, who interned with the YES Network and currently works at UNICEF, also provided insight into the disparity between government statements and policy, and educator practices by noting that policy changes were often broad enough that little change actually took place at the organizational level. By this he meant that the Ministry of Education and Science frequently provided guidance which was vague enough or did not include oversight or accountability measures so that few tangible shifts in practices actually took place. Stojan stated,

We have strategic guidance documents, the education strategy, but they are broad and not as guiding as we would like them to be. So even though our national education strategy might outline career counseling, a minister can still come in, have their own agenda, and push changes, which may not be on the top of the priorities in the education strategy. For example, the aforementioned Law on Primary Education (Art. 47, Sec. 2) regulating career counseling practices in primary schools stated that

The school psychologist i.e. pedagogue shall use tools to determine students' abilities, interests and prospects and shall implement a professional orientation program with students in the eighth and ninth grade, which is determined by the Minister on proposal by the Bureau.

While Jovana stated that this law mandates the provision of career counseling in primary schools, there is a substantial degree of interpretation left to the individual career counselors or the Minister of Education and Science. For example, the psychologist or pedagogue can use any number of "tools" to determine "students' abilities, interests and prospects," including simple methods such as a conversation with the student about their future or a review of the student's academic portfolio, as well as more formalized methods such as a career counseling session on the development of workforce skills. According to the American School Counselor Association (2012), the former examples are indicative of tasks which would not qualify as career counseling while the latter is a career counseling task. Thus, despite the law, the decision as to whether or not to conduct career counseling still remains with the individual counselors.

The importance of overt support from the Minister of Education and Science is furthered in the previously mentioned Law on Primary Education (Art. 47, Sec. 2) as well in that the “professional orientation program” used by career counselors “is determined by the Minister.” Thus, the delivery of a professional orientation program is dependent on direct support and input from the Minister of Education and Science. In the absence of such support, it is less likely that career counselors will implement a professional orientation program. As demonstrated at the primary level, it is possible that while career counseling in secondary schools may be added to the formal education strategy in the future, in the absence of overt guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Science, and support from the Minister of Education and Science itself, it is unlikely that such a formal policy change would have substantive impact on career counseling practices.

In addition to the impact of vague and malleable guidelines for career counseling on institutionalization, political instability also negatively impacted the institutionalization process. As previously mentioned, the educational priorities of the Minister of Education and Science and the current administration are the most emphasized educational practices from an institutional perspective. However, according to both Jovana and Eva, the ministry experiences frequent upheavals as a result of changing administrations. In particular, while the Prime Minister of the country changes quite frequently, approximately every one or two years, the Minister of Education and Science changes even more frequently, often annually. In fact, Stojan noted that the Minister of Education and Science changed more frequently than any other minister in the government. According to both Jovana and Eva, there was seldom a rationale reason for these frequent changes except for the pressures facing the Prime Minister to make changes due to a lack of positive change in educational progress. These pressures often resulted in the changing of

both the Minister of Education and Science and the educational reform agenda. This of course damaged the prospects of institutionalization as programs are rarely supported long enough to see meaningful change. Thus, along with its impact on the YES Network, the constant turnover in the Ministry of Education and Science makes it difficult for any formal education policy to achieve institutionalization.

### **Stakeholder Interests**

In addition to formal policies and regulations, the interests of stakeholders are influential in the institutionalization process for educational practices including career counseling. Stakeholder interests, or the perceptions of self-interest by stakeholder groups, influence the creation and reproduction of certain educational practices according to the wants and needs of specific groups of collective stakeholders (Anderson and Colyvas, 2021). In particular, if a group of individuals, grouped together by a shared characteristic, takes action for or against a particular practice based on their perceived understanding of its effect on them, they can operate in either a reinforcing capacity or a hindering capacity. Groups of people can have a profound impact on the institutionalization of educational practices based on their collective thoughts as to the benefit of the practice. The following sections explore the collective will of stakeholders, primarily students, in terms of their interest in career counseling and the influence of their interests on the replicability or lack thereof of career counseling. The emphasis on students in this next section is due to the previously discussed interests of other stakeholders including career counselors, administrators, and government officials.

## *Interests Promoting Sustainability*

**Student Interest.** Student interest in career counseling was overwhelmingly positive among those interviewed. When asked, students stated that they enjoyed the process of career counseling when they received the services. And furthermore, if possible, students were interested in more career counseling. For example, when a group of six secondary school students were asked how often they would like career counseling, they indicated the following responses: “A lot”; “Twice a week”; “To be honest, often”; “A lot”; “If I am given the opportunity, [then] every week [with a] career counselor”; and “Maybe a couple of times because my decisions and goals are bold and straightforward.” Thus, of the six, all noted an interest in counseling and five demonstrated an interest in additional services.

Additionally, other students indicated that regardless of the quantity, they enjoyed the career counseling they received. For example, one student, Matej, stated that he found career counseling services helpful in finding a specific career given his interests. He stated,

I think it's very helpful. Especially when you have dilemmas. On the one hand, I know that I want to continue my career in the field of engineering. The problem is what type of career should I pursue? [There are] different career paths you can choose. And [career counseling] basically works through asking and answering questions about yourself, what's your personality so that you can form your own deduction. And we also did some quizzes online, those very long quizzes. And after you finish them, they give you a number of possibilities that might suit you.

Matej furthered his statement by noting that he enjoyed working through the assessments and interest inventories to help understand how his interests matched with various careers. This was particularly useful for him as he knew the individual subjects in which he was interested, but not which careers would be appropriate given these interests.

Since this group collectively reinforced the value of career counseling, this indicates a step towards institutionalization. However, it remains to be seen to what extent this sentiment translates into actual institutionalization and sustainability of career counseling practices.

**Participation in Career Clubs.** One example of the positive sentiment of students towards career counseling is the creation of student-led career clubs. Kiril, one of Angela's students at a high-performing gymnasium, stated that he started a career club to help his fellow classmates with their college searches. According to Angela and other counselors, this was a fairly common practice conducted by students. Kiril's career club was particularly oriented towards higher education. This was appropriate for the school he attended as, according to Angela, all of the graduates of this school went on to pursue higher education. Additionally, as many of the high performing students at this school pursued education abroad, this career club focused on providing clarity to the complex process of pursuing international higher education. Kiril noted that his college search was particularly oriented towards the United States, and that the purpose of the club was to share his experiences and knowledge of the American college application process with his classmates. Kiril stated that his classmates were unsure of where to apply to higher education, including both which country and which university, and what majors to pursue. Kiril hoped that beginning a career club would help provide some guidance to his classmates who were exploring their higher education opportunities.

Kiril's interest in developing a career club at his own behest speaks to the need for career counseling and career-related services in secondary schools. In this instance, Kiril was attempting to meet a need that he and his classmates were not receiving from educational professionals. Thus, this indicates continued student interest in the provision of such services. Kiril's efforts to create a career club in conjunction with the aforementioned interest of students in additional career counseling points towards the alignment of this group with positive sentiments towards career counseling and career-counseling-related services. This in turn denotes a positive stakeholder interest in institutionalizing career counseling practices.

**Relationships Between Stakeholders and Career Counselors.** Closely related to the concept of student interest in career counseling, is the students' interest in maintaining relationships with career counselors. Almost all students whom I interviewed, spoke about their career counselor in very favorable terms. In particular, a student at the law and economics vocational school, Alketas, expressed that his desire for career counseling was motivated by his interest in working closely with a specific career counselor at his school, Rumena. Alketas stated that Rumena was his favorite teacher at the school and that he thought she would be able to provide insights into future careers that other teachers would not. This indicates the influence of individual career counselors on stakeholders, whereby career counselors can forge strong relationships with individual students thus increasing their value and importance for these stakeholders

In addition to Rumena, other career counselors were held in similar regard by their students. In particular, when conversing with career counselors Rosa and Petka, colleagues at a VET in Skopje, Petka, who was translating, continuously insisted that the students loved Rosa. She would translate a statement of Rosa's and then add a line, which she clarified she was adding outside the translation, informing me how much the students loved Rosa and enjoyed working with her. For example, while translating for Rosa, Petka stated,

She loves the children. She knows how to present her knowledge [to them]. She knows how to teach them and also they love her. I added that and I know that [the students love her]. We're quite open with our students and they share their experiences [in career counseling and] they just love her.

Thus, Petka felt quite strongly that students maintained very positive feelings about Rosa. These positive student feelings undoubtedly encouraged continued engagement with the career counseling center and student participation in the elective career counseling sessions. Given these positive feelings of students towards career counselors, along with the positive associations



indicated more broadly by the present sample, the views of student stakeholders were largely positive and thus encouraged institutionalization by providing positive feedback for this practice.

### ***Interests Impeding Sustainability***

**Favoritism.** One negative student stakeholder belief that limited the institutionalization of career counseling was the understanding of how graduating students receive employment in North Macedonia. As mentioned by individuals such as Petre with EDC and Vera with ASK, favoritism and political connections are still the primary predictors of employment. According to these individuals, this phenomenon is largely a holdover from North Macedonia's inclusion in Yugoslavia. These individuals indicated that as part of the centralized state of Yugoslavia, and the corruption that is common in nations with such centralized authority, individuals largely received employment through unofficial social and political networks. Because students understood that these connections lead to employment more so than merit, this belief lessened the importance of career counseling.

The influence of favoritism and corruption in reducing the importance of career counseling from the student perspective was mentioned by three career counselors during a collective interview in a VET in southern North Macedonia. One counselor in particular, Adriel, directly noted that students were not particularly motivated to participate in career counseling because of the political corruption rampant in the country. Adriel went on to note that students were aware that public jobs were distributed by political parties to individuals loyal to the party rather than individuals well-equipped for the job. Consequently, students saw little need to develop career ambitions when there was such a substantial component of the job market which was out of their control. All three counselors concurred with this assessment.

The phenomenon of favoritism in finding employment was such a common happening that it was frequently mentioned in chance conversations with Macedonians. For example, while on a weekend trip to Ohrid, a quaint vacation town on the shore of a lake by the same name, I encountered a recently laid off tour guide who was attempting to find employment as an independent guide. In our conversation, she revealed that she had graduated from college and received two master's degrees but was unable to find full-time work. She stated that unfortunately in North Macedonia, one can obtain education and skills related to their desired career, but in the absence of political connections, it is difficult to find employment. One's connections in public life more than skills or education dictate one's professional path. This refrain was common among the many individuals with whom I connected over the course of my fieldwork.

### **Professional Norms**

Professional norms are the third mechanism that influenced the self-activating reproduction of career counseling practices in North Macedonia. Professional norms affect this process by creating and changing the professional identities and professional expectations of educational practitioners, including career counselors (Anderson and Colyvas, 2021). These identities are formed by educational practitioners' communities and associations, which craft an identity to which members of the particular profession, or at least members of the professional associations, subscribe. So long as the professional associations continue to promote an identity for educational practitioners, including career counselors, these associations will continue to influence the practices that are reproduced by the associated practitioners. Thus, this section will

review the relevant organizations that influence career counselors as well as the factors that enhance or minimize the influence of professional organizations on practices.

### ***Promoting Sustainability***

**ASK.** The most influential professional association at present related to Macedonian career counseling norms is the Macedonian Association of Counselors of Career Development (ASK). In fact, ASK was largely responsible for the content established and promoted by the YES Network. According to Vera, the current leader of ASK, much of the content of the YES Network trainings for career counselors was developed by ASK, which primarily utilized the GCDF curriculum to develop this program. In addition to their work in the development of the YES Network, ASK continues to provide career counseling services at present, including various seminars and programs, to individuals associated with the professional association. According to Vera, these programs are offered either in-person or online and aim to provide skills that counselors feel would improve their practices. According to Vera, ASK often solicits feedback from their members in order to determine the content of their seminars. ASK also offers formal trainings for the BIPO career inventory, which, according to interviews with career counselors, is the most frequently utilized aspect of the YES Network materials. Thus, despite decreased relevance in recent years, partially due to the cessation of USAID funding for the YES Network, the ASK association is still influential in supporting career counseling practices, and its presence and advocacy positively influence the institutionalization process.

**City of Skopje.** In addition to ASK, the local government of Skopje, the capital city of North Macedonia, also promotes the establishment of professional norms of career counseling. Shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cessation of most in-person educational services, the City of Skopje funded a program to provide educational practitioners with career

counseling skills and certifications. These trainings were primarily funded by the local government and provided by ASK professionals, who utilized a GCDF-adjacent curriculum. This effort increased the ability of ASK to influence the professional expectations and norms of career counseling in North Macedonia and points to a concerted effort on behalf of the local government to increase the ability of educators to provide career counseling.

One career counselor, Sara, who worked as a pedagogue in a school in Skopje, noted that she attended a training offered by the City of Skopje in conjunction with ASK. Sara stated that she responded to a pamphlet, which she received from the local government, inviting her to a seminar on career counseling. Sara then indicated her interest in the program to her school and was selected to participate. The session she attended was on the topic of the development of competencies and skills of career counselors in high schools. While she found the information useful and interesting, Sara has yet to implement the material because of her other responsibilities as a pedagogue. Additionally, Sara stated that she received her certification just as COVID-19 drastically changed the educational landscape, and she has yet to integrate her new skills into her practices. However, Sara's participation in the training points towards a successful effort on behalf of the local government of Skopje to increase the influence of ASK in establishing professional norms for career counselors. As the influence of ASK increases, so too does the extent of institutionalization of career counseling more generally.

### ***Impeding Sustainability***

**Lack of Recognition of Certificates.** While the continued presence of ASK, along with additional funding from the City of Skopje, furthers the development of professional norms positively influencing the institutionalization of career counseling, the lack of institutional recognition of career counseling and professional certificates contributes to a decrease in the

establishment of professional identity and norms. Even for schools that value career counseling, demonstrated by the school encouraging the provision of counseling despite its non-formalized status, the specific certificates that career counselors receive for attending trainings lack institutional grounding and do not formally influence the practices conducted by certified counselors. This lack of formal recognition contributes to the weak set of professional norms present for career counselors. Career counselors who continue their practices largely do so from a set of individually established norms of counseling as opposed to shared professional norms. Such a pattern decreases the likelihood of institutionalization as individual efforts are not conducive to institutionalization as they are predicated upon independent motivation rather than institutional motivation (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021).

One of the more explicit examples of the lack of recognition given to the certification process is the lack of recognition afforded to the YES Network and GCDF certifications. In fact, Marica, who works for the ASK association, indicated that there is no benefit professionally for educators to have either certification. Thus, while the GCDF curriculum is still technically offered by ASK, Marica noted that it has been over a year since anyone new signed up to take the certification course. This was of course partially due to COVID-19; however, Marica stated that even prior to the pandemic, very few people signed up to take the course. She suggested that the cost of the course in return for no professional gain was the main reason for the lack of interest. This barrier was likely reduced somewhat by the efforts on behalf of the City of Skopje to provide career counseling trainings free of charge, yet the program does not provide financial compensation for career counselors who attend the trainings and conduct counseling practices in their schools. Thus, this city-sponsored program also demonstrates the lack of external motivation for the receipt of career counselor certifications, whether GCDF or GCDF-adjacent.

This partially explains the overall lack of interest in such certifications even with the removal of the cost of attendance. Should career counseling certifications be recognized by policymakers and school administrators as demonstrating the receipt of additional skills useful to the functioning of secondary schools, it is likely that the roles of career counselors, along with the financial compensation for conducting these roles, will shift in a manner beneficial to counselors. This change would likely motivate additional educational practitioners to attend career counseling courses and pursue certifications, which would further establish and institutionalize professional norms.

**Declining Professional Influence.** In the absence of the aforementioned external motivation to pursue career counseling trainings, at present, the lack of formal recognition for the certifications provided by professional organizations demonstrates an overall decline of the influence of professional norms and influence, thus decreasing institutionalization. The YES Network, GCDF, and ASK have a minimal influence over career counseling practices at present. This is because there is no longer substantial support for these organizations and their professional offerings or certifications among many career counselors or prospective career counselors. Rather, specific individuals who value the content of one of the career counseling curriculums or the ASK's trainings continue to utilize the curriculums or content from personal motivation. This phenomenon took place with some career counselors such as Angela and Mirjana, who noted that they enjoyed the YES Network and thus maintain YES Network practices even in the absence of continued influence from this program. However, newer counselors, or prospective counselors, such as Sara and Amelia, did not have a chance to attend the YES Network programs. While they have an interest in career counseling, they will likely implement different practices, if any at all, as they will have substantially less exposure to these

programs and organizations. This points to an increase in individually determined and motivated career counseling practices resulting from the declining presence and influence of professional norms.

The inability of the YES Network to develop and encourage the institutionalization of professional norms was a major shortcoming of the program. This failing was noted by Vera as one of her biggest disappointments with the YES Network. She stated that when the YES Network ceased operation, there was nothing developed to encourage the continued use of the YES Network protocols or involvement of career counselors with the ASK group. In particular, there was no legislation put into place to ensure that the practices established by the YES Network would continue to be formalized into norms. Because the changes that were part of the YES Network were not ingrained as formal professional expectations in North Macedonia, and there was no successor program established, these practices began to diminish when the YES Network lost influence. Towards this end, Vera stated,

[The YES Network] worked closely with management with principals. They trained teachers, encouraged [ASK] to train the teachers and so on. And they also provided infrastructure for the career centers: They bought furniture; they got them some, I don't know, some books or tools and stuff; they developed even a battery of instruments for self-assessment, the BIPO, was done, but not in a sustainable manner. Because they just refrained from pushing the legislation to the policymakers. In this statement, Vera communicated that while the YES Network made substantial changes in career counseling practices during implementation, these changes were not institutionalized at the legislative level. Because they were not implemented in a sustainable manner, many career counselors lost interest in these practices once the YES Network representatives were no longer present to encourage such activities and no formal policies remained to continue the established practices.

The inability of individual efforts, such as those of Angela and Mirjana, to create lasting change and institutionalization was noted as by Anderson and Colyvas (2021). Specifically, they state,

Purposive advocacy by passionate individuals can be powerful in the spread of a new practice. However, practices that are dependent on the superhuman effort of unique personalities will lose support if and when those people move on or burn out. Thus, structures that are dependent on exhaustible resources above and beyond the normal functioning of the organizations involved are not indicative of institutionalization. (p. NUMBER)

While some individuals maintained strong and sustained professional norms of career counseling for themselves, these efforts did not translate to the practice of career counseling as a whole. Because of the lack of institutional change, when personally motivated career counselors retire, change schools, or shift their career focus, their career counseling practices are unlikely to continue. Thus, these practices are not indicative of ubiquitous professional norms and expectations and do not demonstrate institutionalization.

### **Organizational Routines**

Organizational routines were perhaps the most effective mechanism of institutionalization for career counselors. Career counselors who continued to conduct practices at the time of my research largely focused on more tangible and routinized short-term practices, such as career inventories, with less focus on more complex and ambiguous aspects, like career counseling sessions and group lessons. These former practices were more likely to have been sustained because of their design as condensed organizational routines (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021). Unlike more ambiguous aspects of career counseling, career inventories and exercises are scripted, consistent, and repetitive. This consistent and repetitive process is conducive to the



internally motivated reproduction of specific patterns of practice. According to Anderson and Colyvas (2021),

By their nature, routines are repetitively enacted. Their consistency has led many scholars to characterize them as a force of stability in maintaining organizations, [... and] as repeating processes responsible for shaping many aspects of educational practice, [are] another important mode of reproduction. (p. 12)

Thus, the consistent and repetitive nature of these tools led to the institutionalization and reproduction of these practices among many career counselors in the sample.

The specific organizational routines mentioned by the career counselors in the present study were tools and assessments including SWOT analyses, quality assessments, skill assessments, goal timelines, and BIPO inventories. Many counselors indicated that they continue to conduct these activities with students throughout the school year. Each activity will be discussed in the following sections, accompanied by relevant artifacts ascertained during fieldwork. Because this section focuses on particular organizational routines discussed and observed in practice, it will emphasize descriptions of specific practices as opposed to factors that promote and impede the development of institutionalization, as was the case in sections for the previous mechanisms. Each subsection will thus briefly describe the specific routinized practice of interest in order to present the guidelines for each exercise or inventory that encourage the development of organizational routines.

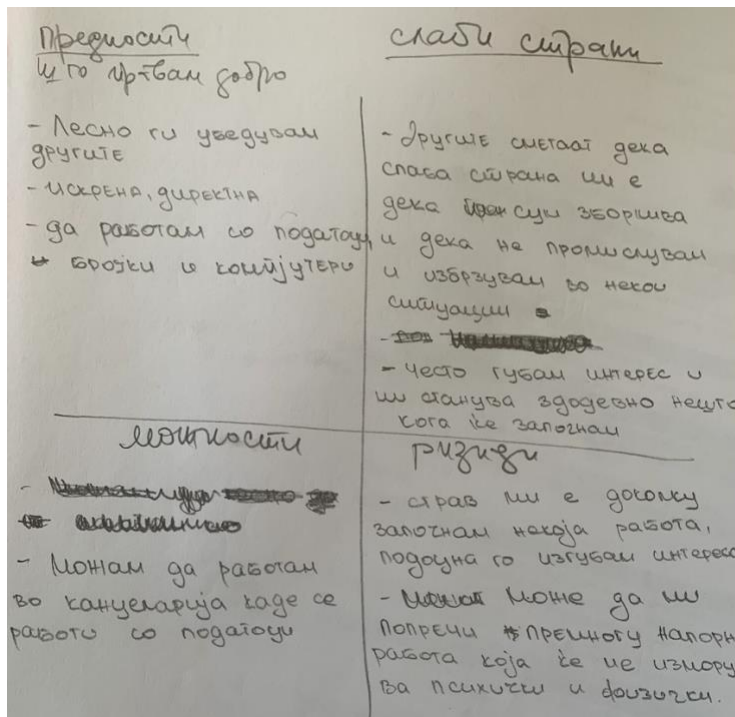
### ***SWOT Analyses***

The SWOT analysis was mentioned by numerous counselors as a tool they currently use in practice. For example, Angela noted that she frequently conducts SWOT analyses with many of her students. For the SWOT analysis, students identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as they pertain to individual career opportunities. Thus, students might investigate a particular career by exploring how their individual strengths might be of benefit to

this profession. Or alternatively, a student might explore how certain characteristics might negatively influence their enjoyment of a particular career. As demonstrated in **Error!**

**Reference source not found.**3, these analyses include quadrants for each category of interest: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

**Figure 13: A SWOT Analysis Conducted by Angela's Student**



Students often work with their counselors to brainstorm ideas for each quadrant and to consider whether the career being evaluated might be an appropriate fit. SWOT analyses are often conducted in conjunction with other inventories and career exercises such as those that help generate ideas for various careers which can then be analyzed. Given its organized structure and frequent use, the SWOT analysis is a good example of a tool that is used in a consistent and repetitive manner, encouraging the routinization of this practice.

### ***Quality Assessments***

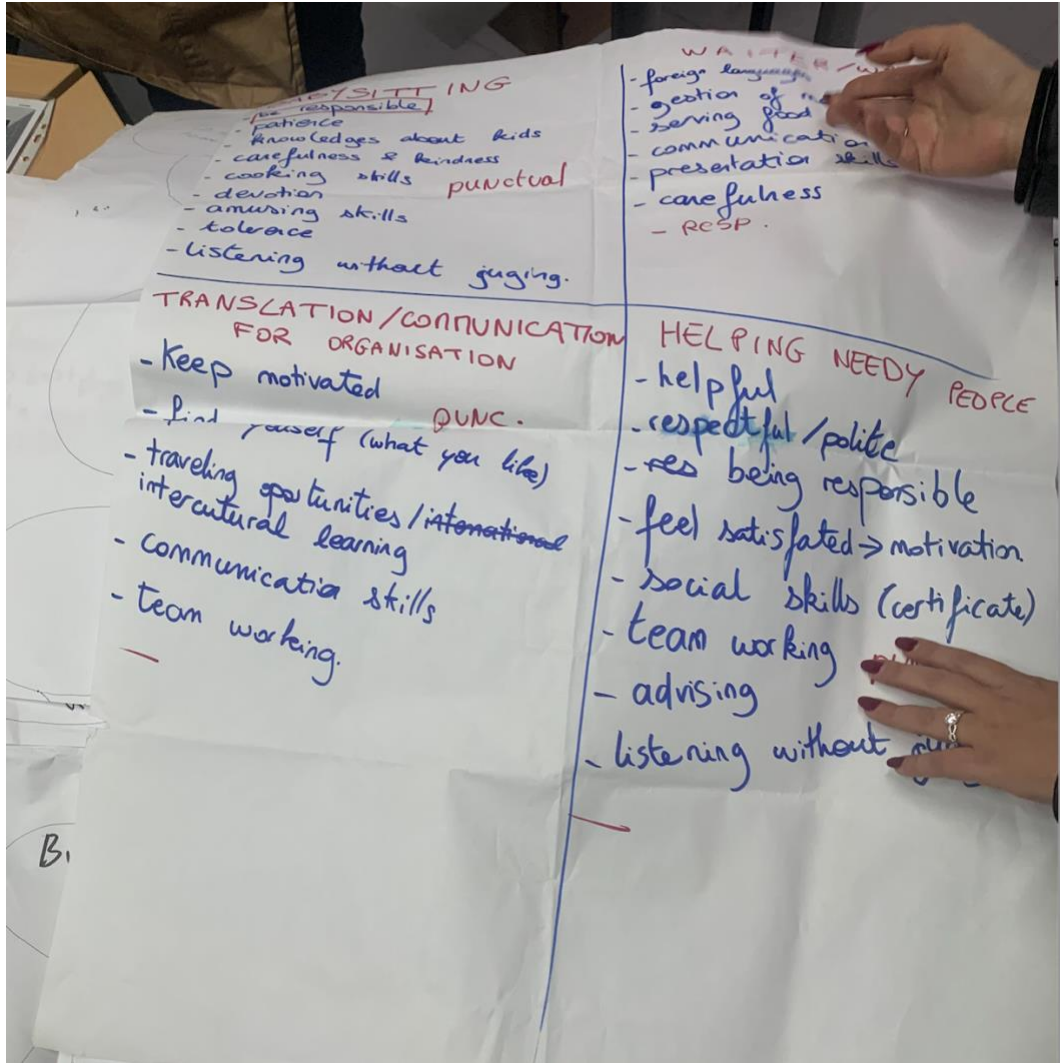
Another assessment utilized by career counselors at present, and often in conjunction with the SWOT analysis, is the quality assessment. This assessment includes a variety of statements that students answer on a scale of 1–3 (1 = rarely applies, 2 = sometimes, and 3 = often). For example, a statement could be “I respond well to directives.” Students could then enter rarely, sometimes, or often. If, for example, the answer to this question is rarely, then a career in the military would likely be a bad choice. When the statements are completed, the assessment suggests a number of careers that fit the indicated student qualities. Mirjana, a career counselor working at a high achieving vocational and academic school, stated that she would often use the results from the quality assessments as opportunities to be evaluated with SWOT analyses. Thus, the quality assessment is both a scripted routine in itself as well as a part of a larger career counseling routine involving multiple tools.

### ***Skill Assessments and Career Matching***

Another assessment indicated by Rosa, a career counselor in a VET in Skopje, as beneficial in helping students choose their careers is the skill assessment and matching tool. In this exercise, students create a document where they identify the various skills and attributes necessary to be successful in a specific career along with the benefits of each career. Rosa stated that she helps students choose between individual careers by identifying four careers of potential interest and creating a 2x2 square in which to compare the necessary skills for success and the employee benefits for each career path. For example, in Figure 144, which was shown to me during an interview with Rosa, she had previously assisted a student who was considering

careers including babysitting, waiting tables, providing translation services, and generally helping needy people.

**Figure 14: Career Skills, Benefits, and Drawbacks From Rosa's Student**



Rosa and the student went through the skillsets necessary for each career along with the benefits each career would provide for the student. For example, a career providing translation services requires communication skills and provides the opportunity to travel and learn about different cultures. Conversely, a career helping needy people requires teamwork skills and provides the

opportunity to feel self-satisfaction. After creating these documents, Rosa stated that her students were better able to assess the skills necessary for a variety of careers along with the personal benefits or drawbacks to each career. While slightly less scripted than the previous examples, the consistent approach used across students represents an opportunity for career counselors to develop organizational routines further encouraging the institutionalization of skill assessments.

### ***Goal Timelines***

Rosa also reported that she helps students establish career goals by creating goal timelines for varying amounts of time. The timeframes range from one month to five years and help students to clarify their goals for the period of time in question. For example, in the goals for one month, shown in Figure 155, students indicated desires such as buying a new phone or playing a new video game. However, when the timeline was increased to five years, the goals expanded to include substantive career goals like starting a company, going to college, or even becoming president of the United States. These latter goals are shown in Figure 16.



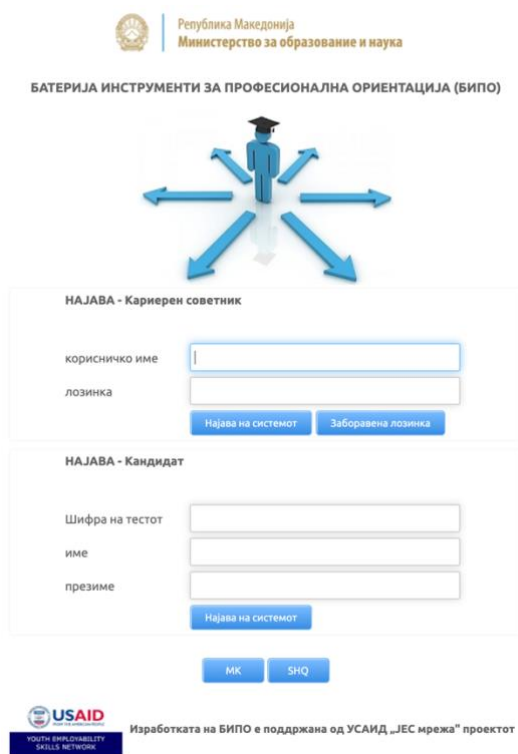
This exercise helps students establish career and personal goals as well as understand the process of setting and pursuing career goals over time. Additionally, this activity helps students understand how progressing towards increasingly larger goals helps to separate larger career ambitions, like creating a new company, into smaller, more manageable tasks. Thus, this activity helps students understand the progressive steps necessary in achieving large, career goals. Similar to skill assessment and career matching activities, goal timelines also became routinized and institutionalized in some career counseling repertoires because it is another consistent and scripted practice easily conducted in an efficient manner with multiple students concurrently.

### ***BIPO***

The BIPO is another currently utilized assessment mentioned by numerous career counselors and other relevant individuals. Vera, the leader of the ASK professional counseling group, noted that after the YES Network model was created, the BIPO testing battery was later added as a tool to be used by career counselors to aid in helping students find applicable careers. The tool is available online and can still be found at the following website: [bipo.mon.gov.mk](http://bipo.mon.gov.mk). On this website, and as shown in Figure 177, in the lower left-hand corner, both the USAID and the YES Network logos remain prominently featured. On the top of the webpage is the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science logo. The Ministry of Education and Science continues to maintain the BIPO webpage, which demonstrates their recognition of the importance of this instrument to ongoing career counseling practices in North Macedonia. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Science continues to provide the BIPO to career counselors free of charge, further demonstrating the commitment to this inventory. Thus, while there is not a formal policy regulating career counseling in secondary schools, the maintenance and provision of this

service by the Ministry of Education and Science indicates encouragement of sustainability from the government of North Macedonia.

**Figure 17: The BIPO Homepage**



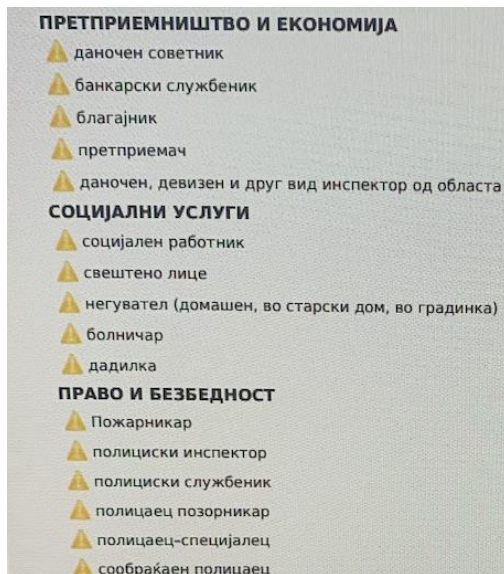
One career counselor, Angela, specifically noted that she still registers for a certain number of BIPO inventories each year depending on the number of students who express interest in the testing battery. She then has these students complete the BIPO questionnaire at home before returning to her office where she helps them with the analysis of the results and in deciding how to use the results in making college and career decisions. The results themselves are provided in multiple iterations. The first iteration is student career interests. This stage includes a description of types of careers in which students might be interested based on their responses to the BIPO questions. An example of the results from this stage is provided in Figure





Finally, students receive a list of jobs in which they would likely not be interested given their career interests. These results are presented similarly to the results in Figure 19. An example of the results for jobs which would not be of interest is presented in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Jobs Which are Not of Interest**



Nearly every career counselor whom I interviewed indicated that the BIPO is a cornerstone of their practice. Primarily because of its convenience and ease of use, career counselors are very pleased with this tool and frequently include it in their career counseling repertoires. The BIPO is another example of a consistent and repetitive organizational routine that became institutionalized in career counseling practices. In fact, given the explicit and routinized steps necessary for completing the BIPO inventory, this is likely the most prominent example of a routinized practice found in the current practices of career counselors.

Thus, the BIPO inventories, SWOT analyses, quality assessments, skill assessments, and goal timelines, are all examples of organizational routines that have been sustained by career counselors in secondary schools in North Macedonia. Unlike other practices encouraged by the

YES Network, these practices are scripted and consistent across counselors, resulting in more routinized practices. Because of the consistent and repetitive nature of these practices, they are more institutionalized than other more ambiguous and subjective practices (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021). The success in institutionalizing these practices is applicable to future career counseling and education initiatives in North Macedonia as, based on the experiences of the career counselors in the present sample, future programs that focus on developing explicit, organizational routines, as opposed to more ambiguous and subjective practices, will likely experience additional institutionalization and sustainability.

### **Sustainability of Goals, Practices, and Assumptions**

Given the aforementioned influence of formal policy, stakeholder interests, professional norms, and organizational routines on institutionalization, the degree to which the goals, practices, and assumptions are sustained among the career counselors included in the sample is mixed. For example, the pursuit of many of the goals of career counseling are declining while some of the student-centric goals remain. Additionally, many specific, shorter duration practices are sustained while longer duration counseling practices are less prevalent. The assumption that career counseling benefits students is possibly even more present than during implementation; however, other assumptions more directly related to the provision of career counseling practices are less commonly accepted. The following table shows which of the goals, practices, and assumptions implemented by the YES Network have been sustained and which have not for my sample of fifteen career counselors in North Macedonia.

**Table 6: The Goals, Practices, and Assumptions of the YES Network at Present**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Sustained?</b>	<b>Explanation of Sustainability</b>
Improve labor market	Rarely present	As with implementation, the labor market is rarely considered in the career counseling process. Instead, career counselors primarily focus on individual outcomes.
Improve workforce skills of youth	Not present	This was not mentioned as a goal by career counselors. Rather, the purpose of career counseling is job satisfaction rather than skill development.
Improve student satisfaction with employment	Present	This is largely present and demonstrated through the use of career inventories to help match interests with career possibilities.
Improve student understanding of career elements and planning	Present but declining	Career counselors use class seminars designed to help students better understand the steps of the college and career processes. These include helping students understand the role of education and preparation in the selection of a career. These are less prevalent at present than during implementation.
Decrease emigration from North Macedonia	Not present. Potentially the opposite	While this goal was mentioned at the Ministry of Education and Science, it was not mentioned by individual career counselors. Rather career counselors encourage, or at least expect, an interest in colleges or careers outside of North Macedonia.
<b>Practices</b>		
Trainings for career counselors	Present but limited	Career counseling trainings are still offered periodically by the ASK group. However, these trainings are generally not well-attended.
Certification system for counselors	Minimally present and declining	Many counselors with whom I interacted still have their YES Network certifications. However, Vera, the director of the ASK career counseling group, indicated declining interest in GCDF certifications. Additionally, recognition of such certificates is lacking.
Re-establish career counseling profession	Present but limited	This goal is present, but interest is limited to a relatively small number of individual counselors.
Career counseling sessions with students	Present but limited	Psychologists and teachers did indicate that they still conduct career counseling sessions with students. However, these sessions are limited by whether or not career counselors choose to engage with such practices and whether or not students express interest in these sessions.
Student internships	Not mentioned	Career counselors did not mention internships for students. Counselors and students did mention a desire for more “career day” opportunities where individuals from different lines of work would present the details of their jobs to students.
Career inventories conducted by counselors	Very present	The use of career inventories is very present. Specifically, career counselors indicated that they use SWOT analyses, quality assessments, skill assessments, goal timelines, and the BIPO, along with other assessments and inventories, to develop ideal career paths for students. This was the area most frequently mentioned by counselors when current practices were discussed.
<b>Assumptions</b>		

Career counseling benefits students	Present	Career counselors, and individuals providing career counseling services, maintain this belief. All career counselors with whom I spoke indicated that they think career counseling is beneficial for students. Their concerns were less with the practice of career counseling and more with sustainability.
Career counseling benefits local economy	Not present	As with the implementation phase, there is very little emphasis on the benefit to the Macedonian economy for the YES Network and career counseling. The focus remains on individual student satisfaction at present.
VETs and gymnasiums are effective locales for career counseling	Present but leaning towards VETs	Career counseling is still present to some degree in both VETs and gymnasiums. VETs remain more committed to substantive classroom career counseling.
Local adaptations will take place and improve the outcome of the program	Somewhat present, but limited	Adaptations are still present currently but are not a focus. Since career counseling is largely not viewed as a mandatory practice, career counseling practices largely exist as adaptations to individual psychology and teaching practices.

As can be seen in Table 6, sustainability varies substantially depending on the specific goal, practice, or assumption in question. In terms of goals, according to my sample, three of the five goals identified were no longer pursued during the 2021–2022 school year. There was little indication from any of the fifteen career counselors that improving the labor market and the workforce skills of youth or reducing emigration from North Macedonia are primary concerns. In fact, some counselors noted that they actively help students search for opportunities outside of North Macedonia. Meanwhile, career counselors are interested in improving students’ satisfaction with their jobs and are somewhat interested in improving student understanding of the career planning process. This indicates that career counselors remain largely unconcerned with macroeconomic phenomena impacting the country at large. Rather these individuals are primarily interested in aiding students with their own individual career counseling needs with a focus on student satisfaction.

Practices of the YES Network also experienced varying degrees of sustainability across the sample of career counselors. As previously mentioned, practices largely focus on career inventories at present. Additionally, there are some opportunities for training and certification

but not extensive ones. These opportunities have declined simply because the YES Network stopped conducting trainings, and there are only limited instances of other organizations, such as ASK, offering trainings. The trainings that are conducted are often sparsely attended. Additionally, while many counselors possess certifications at present, these are largely unrecognized by stakeholders. There is also an interest among certain individuals in reestablishing the practice in general, but this is largely an independent as opposed to an institutional phenomenon. Student internships were never mentioned by the sample of counselors while career counseling with students was mentioned but was highly variable depending on the specific career counselor. Given the general variability in career counseling services offered, including individual sessions with students, the frequent use of career inventories is likely a response by career counselors to provide efficient and informative career advice without necessitating extended visits between counselors and students.

In terms of assumptions that have survived the end of the YES Network, there is a similar degree of variability as that demonstrated in the goals section. The career counselors included in the sample operate under the assumption that career counseling benefits students, but they are not operating under an assumption in either direction as to the influence of career counseling on the local economy. This offers more support for the notion that career counselors are more interested in the wellbeing of students than of the Macedonian economy. In terms of the location of career counseling, as was true at the time of implementation, both VETs and gymnasiums operate career counseling centers. However, while career counseling is more formalized in VETs, and is conducted during the regular school day, it is largely conducted as an elective, after school session in gymnasiums. Thus, the assumption of which locale is more effective for career counseling leans towards VETs at present. Finally, the assumption that local adaptations benefit

career counseling is only minimally present. Likely because of the limited opportunities for career counseling trainings, career counselors indicated minimal changes to the career counseling expectations conveyed by the YES Network. Rather they largely conduct abbreviated versions of the practices that they were originally taught. Such abbreviated practices could be considered an adaptation in itself given the limited amount of time career counselors have at present to conduct such practices.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The sustainability of career counseling goals, practices, and assumptions at present varies substantially according to each specific element. In general, career counseling is currently less prevalent than at implementation with the exception of career inventories and career selection activities which, if anything, have increased in prevalence. However, the popularity of such direct and efficient methods also speaks to the necessity for efficient, solution-oriented, and easily routinized career counseling techniques given the status of career counseling as in a developing stage of institutionalization. This stage of institutionalization incentivizes quick and results-driven practices as there is a limited amount of time available for such activities.

Regarding its institutional progress, career counseling is still in a stage of partial implementation and evaluation by stakeholders. Some schools and career counselors maintain career counseling practices while others either never implemented career counseling or failed to maintain career counseling. For example, one career counselor, Zoran, in a small southern city was passionate about career counseling but no longer has the opportunity to conduct career counseling practices. When asked what the barrier to implementing career counseling was, he tilted his head ever so slightly towards where the school administrator had previously been

sitting in our interview room and smiled. He was indicating that while he would like to conduct career counseling, these activities were not supported or protected by the school administration. This points to career counseling remaining in developing stages of institutionalization where stakeholders, such as administrators, continue to evaluate the value of career counseling or have reached conflicting conclusions about the importance of such practices. Thus, for institutionalization to be further established, it is likely necessary that additional measures would need to continue to encourage the use and independent reproduction of such practices.

The extent to which career counseling has been institutionalized is primarily determined by the extent to which these practices are reproduced without external influence (Anderson and Colyvas, 2021). Four primary mechanisms that influence the extent of self-activated reproduction of practices, and thus institutionalization, were identified: formal policy, stable stakeholder interests, professional norms, and organizational routines. For career counseling to become an institutionalized practice, formal policies, stable stakeholder interests, professional norms, and organizational routines must be further developed to improve the sustainability of this practice. In the absence of strengthening these methods of reproduction, it is likely that the bulk of career counseling will continue to be initiated by internally motivated individuals. Such individual efforts will encourage the practice of career counseling while these individuals are present, but will likely not result in large-scale, institutionalization. However, given the consistent and recurrent presence within the Ministry of Education and Science of a proposed formal policy mandating career counseling in secondary schools, a shift towards greater institutionalization is possible. Yet, even if the measure is passed, the effectiveness of this policy will be heavily dependent on stakeholder interests as well as the organizations and associations that contribute to the establishment professional norms and routines within the field.



## **Chapter 8: Discussion**

The YES Network represents a case of an internationally designed program that was implemented into a developing context with mixed results. This case is illustrative of general patterns of successes and failures in international program development, implementation, and sustainability that can be informative to other programs and other environments. Given the applicability of the YES Network case to educational programming in North Macedonia and the developing world, in this section I review patterns and characteristics that both inhibited the success of the YES Network as well as the success of education policy in general in North Macedonia. Additionally, I discuss manners in which North Macedonia can improve future development efforts based on these barriers. The specific barriers identified which hindered education policy in North Macedonia were related to program fatigue, higher order needs, EU accession, and external motivation. Based on these barriers, I determined that by increasing domestic ownership and establishing a cohesive identity for educational programming, North Macedonia will be better able to design and develop future international education programs to ensure greater fidelity during implementation and increased sustainability. In this section, I will first review larger phenomena which inhibited the success of the YES Network and conclude with ideas for establishing identity and domestic ownership for future programs.

### **Lack of Continuity and Program Fatigue**

One general phenomenon that I noticed during observations at schools, and in general across the country, was the feeling of fatigue towards international programs. As a developing nation, most institutions in North Macedonia were supported by a multitude of international

programs from countries such as the United States, Russia, and Germany. Consequently, and as alluded to by one Macedonian teacher living abroad, Dafina, individuals were accustomed to international support for different initiatives coming and going with limited success. They frequently noted the presence of short-term initiatives which were implemented through development funds from foreign nations only for them to disappear shortly after the end of the grant. Dafina indicated that local Macedonians who worked for these programs often viewed them as a source of steady income for a set period of time with limited oversight. When the program concluded, many simply looked for employment with the next initiative. Thus, many Macedonians were primed for the failure of development programs.

One such example of this type of thinking was provided by a hiking guide by the name of Admir. He noted that there were numerous programs from Germany aiming to create hiking guidebooks, establish national parks, and develop trail systems in North Macedonia. However, he found that they were ultimately limited in their success because Macedonians were hesitant to embrace land conservation efforts. Partially because North Macedonia was part of a socialist nation as recently as 31 years ago, the notion of public land conservation was a somewhat foreign concept. This was because most land was viewed as public to some extent during the time of Yugoslavia. Admir explained that individuals struggled to engage with these conservation programs and viewed them as simply the next wave of international interest in North Macedonia. For example, Admir commented that while the Šar Mountains, in the Northwest corner of North Macedonia, had just been named a national park, he did not expect any changes to the rules governing the region to come with the policy shift. Rather, he felt that the title was in name only and politicians would simply wait until the public land conservation efforts diminished and attention was focused on the next topic of international interest in North

Macedonia. Because this pattern of international interest in a particular institution followed by a cooling off period happened so frequently in North Macedonia, individuals, including politicians and those responsible for creating and implementing policy, had become accustomed to complying with international initiatives, receiving the associated international funds, then simply waiting for the attention to attenuate. Because compliance was largely a formality, these development policies resulted in very little substantial change.

As demonstrated by the aspects of the YES Network that were not sustained, a similar phenomenon was somewhat in play for career counseling in North Macedonia. As I discovered from interviews with career counselors, some administrators and educators viewed the YES Network as a temporary focus on career counseling, and that if it was ignored long enough, attention would become focused elsewhere. These individuals were largely influenced by past experiences, and unfortunately, were largely correct in their assessment of the YES Network. In fact, shortly after the cessation of the YES Network, the emphasis on career counseling from the international development community, including local NGOs and international organizations, switched to an emphasis on entrepreneurship. This involved transitioning much of the career counseling efforts towards helping students develop entrepreneurial ambitions and skills rather than find employment at existing companies and organizations. Many of the individuals who had previously worked on career counseling efforts transitioned to roles with local NGOs to help support this effort. This included Petre, who formerly worked in a leadership position with EDC during the implementation of the career counseling component of the YES Network. Thus, to some extent, the amount of foreign assistance flowing into North Macedonia has a tempering effect on many of the programs initiated. As the international community funds such a large number of programs in North Macedonia, these programs start to detract from one another as

local Macedonians are unable to focus on a specific program or area of interest. This was demonstrated in both the example of the inability to use public lands and parks funds to conserve the Šar Mountains National Park as well as the inability of the YES Network to enact comprehensive and lasting change to secondary school career counseling activities.

The shortcomings of these many grant-funded programs are also echoed by Anderson and Colyvas (2021) in terms of the impact on sustainability. They state,

Philanthropic grant funding is an extremely common source of support for efforts at educational improvement. However, such funding is temporary; thus, other things being equal, practices that are reliant on grants or other temporary supports will likewise end when support is removed. (p. 9)

This is essentially what Admir and Dafina noticed. These individuals both concluded that the temporary nature of grant funding led to temporary participation in grant-funded programs. As predicted, when the funding expired, so too did the commitment to these temporary programs.

North Macedonia's experience with many, short-term policies is similar to the "policy churn" that takes place in the United States (Hess, 2011; Marschall & Shah, 2005). This phenomenon is characterized by new policies implemented in a repetitive pattern by individual groups of stakeholders in a manner where one policy appropriates the resources from the previous policy. Thus, little or no long-term sustainability is achieved by each successive policy. While the source of policy churn in North Macedonia is largely external grants and international development projects as opposed to internal stakeholder groups, the outcome is similar to that in the United States, where many policies are initiated, but few establish any lasting change. Thus, the negative repercussions of such a pattern are well documented.

## **Zone of Proximal Development**

One explanation for the constant changing landscape of education policies, including the YES Network, is the presence of higher order needs in North Macedonia during the implementation of programs such as the YES Network. This phenomenon is best described using the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. This theory was originally developed by Lev Vygotsky as a way to encourage independent problem solving for learners through the pursuit of goals which are reachable for students with some assistance from adults or teachers (Hedegaard, 2012; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). These goals must be more difficult than what the learner can achieve independently but must also be attainable for the learner with some assistance. This concept can also be applied to the present research in that the programs developed and supported by international development groups would likely be more successful if they are within the Zone of Proximal Development for the recipient nation. This approach would require development entities to create and implement programs that are reachable for the recipient nation with support from the donor nation, and sustainable for the recipient nation following the removal of donor funds and support. Additionally, to be successfully implemented and sustained, these programs must meet an identified need of the recipient nation (Hedegaard, 2012).

Thus, for an education program to be developed and maintained independently in North Macedonia, it must meet a specific need identified by Macedonians, be attainable for North Macedonia given current educational practices, and be sustainable after the conclusion of the externally-funded program (see Hedegaard, 2012). While career counseling was identified by some individuals as imperative to the educational system in North Macedonia, these individuals likely did not represent a comprehensive contingent of Macedonian educators and policy makers. Rather most individuals identified programs related to more basic learning skills as the primary

need of the education system. As such, according to Stojan, the former intern with the YES Network and current UNICEF employee, the program in the appropriate Zone of Proximal Development is likely more related to improving basic education skills like reading, math, and science, as opposed to career counseling. Stojan noted the struggles of Macedonian students with these skills and that the focus of most educators and policy makers is currently on these outcomes as opposed to less immediate needs like career counseling. Stojan stated:

In 2018 UNICEF supported a review of our education and of our evaluation and assessment system. This was done with support. Basically, it was done by OECD. And it pointed out major, fundamental flaws in the education system. The international PISA assessment also revealed that more than two thirds of students were lacking basic skills in reading, math, and science. So, this was devastating and steered the direction more towards fundamental changes in teaching and teacher support. So, in that kind of environment, maybe career counseling sort of fell out of the focus. Focusing on career counseling at a time when Macedonian students were not receiving adequate basic education was not in the appropriate Zone of Proximal Development for North Macedonia. It was not identified as imperative by a substantial contingent of Macedonians and was thus not sustainable. The YES Network demonstrated this as it was implemented somewhat effectively when the donor nation, the United States, was present to provide support. However, when the donor nation removed support, few substantial elements were consistently sustained. Thus, by implementing a program that was not developmentally appropriate for North Macedonia, USAID underappreciated the struggles with independent ownership of the program that North Macedonia would face when USAID funding ceased. Instead, USAID and related entities should target goals determined by local Macedonians that are developmentally necessary and appropriate for the current circumstance. As will be discussed in the following sections, this process necessitates more collaboration in the early stages of international development programs in order to better incorporate feedback from local sources to implement more contextually appropriate programs.

## **Accession to the European Union**

One source of influence that potentially encourages North Macedonia to pursue goals that are not in the proper Zone of Proximal Development is the accession plan for inclusion in the European Union (EU). North Macedonia remains a candidate for EU inclusion at present but is not yet a member country (European Union, 2022a). North Macedonia originally applied for membership in 2004, becoming an official candidate in 2005, and receives periodic reports on its progress towards membership (European Union, 2022b). These reports provide feedback on areas such as political processes, the judicial system, corruption, and education. At present, North Macedonia is ranked as “moderately prepared” in terms of education in their most recent progress report from 2021 (European Union, 2021). The areas of importance listed on the progress report for the immediate future are to implement a new framework for education, improve teacher training and professional development, and improve equitable access to education for all. In the recent past, North Macedonia has achieved “limited progress” towards these goals.

Given North Macedonia’s ambition for accession into the EU, many of their educational goals are those provided by the EU and are thus externally motivated. Additionally, much of North Macedonia’s educational programming is funded by outside resources with the goal of assisting North Macedonia in their quest for inclusion in the EU. According to Eva, a professor at a local university in Skopje, many of the recent educational programs are funded by Germany with this specific goal in mind. While the goal of inclusion in the EU is arguably a positive one for North Macedonia, it does not necessarily mean that the EU’s education goals for North Macedonia match the needs of Macedonian citizens. Eva indicated that by pursuing the goals for inclusion in the EU, Macedonians are actually receiving a disservice as these goals take

precedent over the immediate educational needs of the country. Thus, the accession plan for the EU exacerbates both the problem of frequently changing initiatives as well as encouraging initiatives that are not aligned with the immediate needs of the country. This further heightens the need for domestic input into educational programming during the development and goal-setting stages even in circumstances where the overarching goal is EU accession.

### **Externally Motivated Programming**

The influence of the European Union on Macedonian policy development highlights the larger phenomenon of North Macedonia looking to foreign sources for policy direction. In addition to the EU accession plan North Macedonia also sought foreign input for other policy choices as well, including USAID assistance with the YES Network and the German government aid in land conservation projects. All of these programs and their goals were embraced by Macedonian officials as positive steps in North Macedonia's developmental progress. However, these programs also demonstrate a substantial degree of external influence on national programming for North Macedonia. Many of these programs, including the YES Network, were designed from goals that were established or identified externally. As a result of the substantial degree of external influence on Macedonian policy choices, North Macedonia lacks a cohesive and comprehensive identity and direction for education programming.

The lack of a cohesive direction for education policy is facilitated by a limited or lacking national identity for North Macedonia in general (Sekulic, Massey, & Hodson, 1994). This lack of a cohesive identity transcends policy choices and politics, and is manifested in the way individual Macedonians see themselves and their fellow compatriots. Religious and ethnic differences create substantial cultural divisions with predominantly Albanian and Muslim



communities largely living independently from predominantly Slavic and Orthodox Christian communities. The dangers of this societal division were demonstrated by the repeated conflicts which took place between Macedonians identifying as Slavic and Macedonians identifying as Albanian shortly after North Macedonia established independence from Yugoslavia (Czaplinski, 2013). According to conversations with Admir, a Macedonian who identifies as Albanian, as well as other relevant sources, the new Macedonian government created in 1991 established inadequate ethnic Albanian participation for a group that constituted 20% of the national population. The disapproval of the new government by ethnic Albanian Macedonians, and the ethnic turmoil between Slavic and Albanian citizens, was epitomized by the refusal of Albanian Macedonians to vote to ratify the new constitution in 1991 (Czaplinski, 2013). These tensions quickly became violent with armed conflicts continuing through the 1990s, culminating in the 2001 insurrection involving ethnic Albanian Macedonian insurgents and the Slavic Macedonian military.

These examples of division and lacking national identity are especially pertinent in light of the national unity and communalism which, by many accounts, was present during North Macedonia's time as part of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or communist/socialist Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was known for developing a shared sense of national identity among a diverse citizenry (Hemon, 2019). This national identity was partially responsible for a staggering period of growth and development, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, as individuals were able to move past ethnic and religious divisions and progress as a collective society towards economic prosperity. This effort was largely spearheaded by the "benevolent" dictator of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, or Tito for short. Tito understood the necessity for a collective national identity and arranged for "cultural" events to help establish such an identity. For example, Tito would preside

over a large birthday celebration for himself in which Yugoslavian children would pass a baton all throughout the country, in a similar manner to the Olympic torch, until finally, the baton would reach Tito himself in a stadium in Belgrade, Serbia on his birthday. This event was both a celebration of Tito's birthday and a demonstration of citizen loyalty to Tito and Yugoslavia.

Given the fractioned society at present, similar demonstrations of unity are notably absent in modern North Macedonia and Macedonian policy development. This is not to suggest that Tito's Yugoslavia should be replicated in order to create a cohesive Macedonian identity. Tito was a dictator who deprived Yugoslavia of democratic ideals and vital human liberties for more than thirty years. His dictatorship is often described as totalitarian, despite his positive reputation among many (Campbell, 1980; Flere & Klanjšek, 2014; Robinson, 2017). Additionally, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Tito established and operated the Goli Otok re-education prison camp for Yugoslavians loyal to Stalin. Using a similar model as the German concentration camps and Soviet gulags, more than 13,000 individuals were imprisoned here for various "crimes," with over 300 dying as a result of their imprisonment (Milekic, 2019). Thus, Tito used his position of central authority to inspire nationalism through propaganda, suppression, imprisonment, and death (Hemon, 2019; Milekic, 2019). These methods are reminiscent of other dictators such as Hitler, Stalin, Hoxha, and Mao and clearly exemplify an instance of too much power ascribed to a single individual.

However, despite the atrocities committed by Tito, in the absence of a national identity such as the one he created, North Macedonia lacks a definitive direction for policy creation. Rather, they are heavily influenced in their policy decisions by various independent nations hoping to provide direction for the country through policies and programs funded through international development initiatives. Furthermore, these initiatives are often designed, according

to Jim, a former member of the U.S. Department of Justice, to garner support for the ideals of the donor nation, or nation providing financial and organizational support, in former Yugoslavia. Jim, who previously deployed to North Macedonia as part of a project funded by the United States to help improve and develop law enforcement efforts, indicated that both Western countries, including the United States and Germany, and Eastern countries, including Russia, are at present competing for influence in the former Yugoslavian countries. These donor countries attempt to build influence with the Macedonian government by providing funding for various developmental initiatives that are designed to establish infrastructure in accordance with the system of government of the providing nation. For example, through this lens, the YES Network can be interpreted as a program designed to reduce unemployment and bolster a fledgling capitalist economic system. North Macedonia thus has innumerable opportunities to engage with programs funded by foreign nations partially due to the desire of these nations to establish influence.

### **Domestic Ownership**

Given the demonstrated policy impacts from external sources of influence on policy choices, North Macedonia would benefit from more domestic ownership of their educational programming. While many external programs are created with substantial input from Macedonian sources, the overarching program goals are foreign in nature. For example, before Petre was promoted to a leadership position with EDC in 2013, the initiative was largely guided by his two American predecessors with EDC. These individuals primarily sourced the YES Network program goals and components from other EDC initiatives and American curriculums, which may or may not be appropriate for the Macedonian context. In fact, historically, the

reliance of developing nations on foreign sources in the development of educational initiatives has often resulted in contextually inappropriate policies that lack potential for sustainability (Heyneman & Lee, 2016). Macedonian organizations, such as the Ministry of Education and Science, could benefit from establishing ownership of their educational programming in order to create more appropriate and sustainable programs. This process requires a shift in the responsibility of program creation from foreign nations and companies to North Macedonia and Macedonian entities.

Furthermore, in addition to creating an internal identity and direction, North Macedonia would benefit from beginning to fund programming domestically or in collaboration with foreign sources. In accordance with international development research, in order to achieve the sustained development of educational programming such as career counseling, North Macedonia would need to make a financial commitment to these practices (Drummond & DeYoung, 2003; Gubser, 2017; Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). This research shows that in order for progress to be maintained, the recipient nation of an international development project must maintain interest in the program, including by providing financial support. Because the YES Network was exclusively funded by the United States, the program disappeared when the funding ceased. For a multitude of reasons, including a lack of individuals to conduct the career counseling and a lack of urgency in supplying this service given higher order needs, North Macedonia did not create policies or funding sources to maintain career counseling. More internal support is necessary if international policies such as career counseling are to be maintained and institutionalized following the cessation of international support.

As such, future initiatives in North Macedonia necessitate a preemptive commitment from the Ministry of Education and Science to provide financial support to the program of

interest. While these models are not failsafe and have been circumvented in past instances by a refusal to offer the agreed upon financing, co-funded models ensure that the recipient nation commits, at least in theory, to a financial agreement involving domestic funds to continue programs after the financial withdrawal of the donor nation (Stromquist, Klees, & Miske, 2000). Such an arrangement would likely be particularly useful if certain thresholds had to be met by the recipient nation in order to receive continued funds or assistance from the donor nation. This would likely reduce incidences of failure to supply promised funding amounts. For example, one potential arrangement could have been that North Macedonia would have had to establish domestic training programs for future career counselors before USAID provided additional funds to help train existing educators in career counseling. This design would not only ensure that North Macedonia committed to improving the chances for sustainability but would also encourage the Macedonian government to assess whether the suggested program meets the immediate needs of the country. This would be a likely outcome as the government would be unlikely to commit funds to a program it did not deem important. Given the financial commitment from the government of North Macedonia, this design would also likely result in less programmatic turnover and allow for individual programs to become established and institutionalized given the finite funds available to support programs.

Thus, program fatigue, higher order needs, the EU accession plan, and the absence of a national identity were all barriers to success for the YES Network. These same barriers will likely be present for future educational initiatives in North Macedonia. By creating a cohesive education plan and establishing domestic ownership through increased collaboration in design and funding, it is likely that North Macedonia can improve future education programs. As the YES Network also serves as a case of international development more broadly, similar barriers

will likely exist for international education programs in other developing nations as well. Similar to the conclusions from the case of the YES Network in North Macedonia, other developing nations can also likely benefit from increased domestic ownership in the design and funding of international education programs.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I examined the development, implementation, and sustainability of an international education initiative called the YES Network. This program was a youth and workforce initiative designed to reduce youth unemployment in North Macedonia. Using a case study methodology, I conducted semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis to identify the content and source of this initiative, its influence on the practices of career counselors, the manner in which career counselors balanced the content of the initiative with their other responsibilities during implementation, and the extent to which the content of the YES Network's career counseling initiative is sustained in the practices of career counselors.

I found that the goals, practices, and assumptions that structured the logic of the YES Network were created in a manner that included input from a multitude of sources that were diverse both in terms of the organizations and nations. The former sources included organizations such as ASK, EDC, USAID North Macedonia, and the Ministry of Education and Science, while the latter sources included numerous countries, primarily the United States and Bulgaria. These sources collectively established a model of career counseling that was implemented as part of the YES Network.

When implemented, career counselors adopted the YES Network with varying degrees of fidelity. Career counselors largely focused on the student-oriented goals as opposed to more macro-economic goals of the YES Network program. Career counselors utilized most of the practices that were encouraged, with an emphasis on conducting individual career counseling sessions and utilizing student inventories. Additionally, career counselors operated under the assumption that local adaptations, including conducting career counseling at both gymnasiums

and VETs, would enhance the benefit of career counseling and would allow career counselors to provide beneficial services to more students.

The primary reason for the variable fidelity in implementation was the presence of conflicting influences on what practices career counselors “should” be conducting. Because the YES Network trained existing educators to add a career counseling element to their work, as opposed to training individuals to be exclusively career counselors, the individuals who conducted career counseling had multiple responsibilities within their schools. Thus, the extent to which these individuals prioritized career counseling, as opposed to their original responsibilities in the school, varied substantially, with some individuals conducting extensive career counseling and others conducting little or no career counseling.

Similar to implementation, the extent to which the YES Network was sustained also varied substantially. Because the YES Network was implemented with varying degrees of success, the practices became more ingrained with some career counselors than others. Additionally, because the YES Network ceased funding career counseling activities in 2016, and schools and school administrators largely no longer expected career counseling to take place, career counselors no longer had any external motivation to conduct such practices. Consequently, individuals who were internally motivated to continue to conduct career counseling practices did so, while many career counselors ceased the provision of such services.

### **Contributions**

The lessons from this case study of the YES Network contribute to the literature in several ways, including to institutional theories of institutional complexity and institutionalization, as well as international education policy more broadly.



## **Institutional Complexity**

Given the use of institutional complexity in explaining the implementation of the YES Network, this dissertation was able to provide several conclusions that further this literature. The primary use of institutional complexity in this research was to investigate the process of introducing a new logic into an institutionally complex environment. The YES Network was implemented with varying degrees of fidelity at the organizational level largely due to the institutional complexity faced by career counselors within schools (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Diehl, 2019; Glazer, Massell, & Malone, 2019; Greenwood et al., 2011; Marsh et al., 2020). One of the reasons for this variation, according to career counselors, was that they balanced multiple professional logics including the YES Network's logic and the incumbent professional logic of teaching or psychology as well as the influences of stakeholders including the state inspection board, the school administrators, students, teachers, and parent interests, and autonomous interests when creating their practices. The relationship between the YES Network and the incumbent professional logic of teaching or psychology was frequently noted as the primary source of conflict. This conflict was largely a result of career counselors balancing two professional logics and often resulted in career counseling being relegated to a secondary task. Given the centrality of the incumbent professional logics of teaching and psychology, or the prioritization of this logic within schools, and the relatively high compatibility of the logics, or the relative ease with which both logics could be balanced, most career counselors established a dominant relationship between the logics with the incumbent taking priority (Besharov & Smith, 2014). Thus, this research confirms the value of institutional complexity as an effective model for examining how practitioners balance multiple institutional logics and for examining the

potential for conflict during the implementation of a new institutional logic, particularly when the new logic directly competes with a pre-existing logic in a similar domain.

The present research also identified exceptions to the model of the incumbent professional logic taking precedent and minimizing the use of the career counseling logic even when a dominant relationship exists between the two logics. These exceptions were primarily individuals who were particularly passionate about career counseling and were able to integrate career counseling practices into their repertoires despite the secondary nature of this logic. This phenomenon represents an example of the variation in practices which took place at the individual level. Such variability is consistent with inhabited institutions and the interactions and experiences of individual practitioners which take place within institutional structures (Binder, 2007; Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). Accordingly, different career counselors reported varying degrees and forms of institutional complexity along with varying degrees of conflict between institutional logics. These individual-level experiences represented a degree of variation for which traditional institutional complexity theories do not fully account.

I proposed an extension of institutional complexity that furthers our understanding of the role of the individual in contending with complex environments. This model is particularly apt when complexity is present between logics of the same domain—for example, the professional domain in the instance of the YES Network. This model considers conceptual overlap and occupational structure. Conceptual overlap in this instance refers to the degree to which the content of each logic is similar to the other. For example, in the instance of the YES Network, the content of the career counseling logic was more similar to the content of the psychology logic than the teaching logic. Thus, psychologists largely experienced more conceptual overlap than did teachers. Occupational structure refers to the degree of flexibility, or discretion, available to

the institutional actor. Using the same example, psychologists had substantially more discretion in the structuring of their activities than did teachers. Thus, for individuals balancing multiple professional logics, the occupational structure of psychologists was more conducive to implementing career counseling practices. Because of the differences in conceptual overlap and occupational structure present for different organizational actors when implementing the YES Network, the psychologists in my sample typically adopted the YES Network with greater fidelity than did teachers. The exception to this finding was for teachers who implemented career counseling practices with spatial and temporal separation from their other teaching responsibilities. These individuals were also able to implement the YES Network with fidelity given the segregation present between non-overlapping logics afforded by engaging with each logic individually.

Thus, this research adds to the work of Besharov and Smith (2014) by demonstrating the extensive role of the individual in institutional complexity. Besharov and Smith's (2014) model provides an opportunity to assess institutional complexity at the organizational level but less opportunity to assess the variation present at the individual level. Due to focus of this dissertation at the individual level, I was able to extend the work of Besharov and Smith (2014) by identifying specific elements that explain the individual-level variation in practices. These elements were the aforementioned conceptual overlap and occupational structure. Additional research is necessary in order to determine the generalizability of these characteristics to explain individual-level variation in other instances of institutional complexity.

## **Institutionalization**

In addition to institutional complexity, this research provides a particularly interesting opportunity to investigate and further institutionalization research given the career counseling logic of the YES Network's current state of partial, albeit limited, institutionalization. Largely due to the institutional complexity present during implementation, and the variable degrees to which career counseling was implemented by practitioners, the extent of institutionalization of career counseling remains in a developmental stage. Stakeholders in North Macedonia currently continue to evaluate the practice of career counseling, which directly influences its legitimacy and the extent of institutionalization (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Deephouse et al., 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1980; March & Olsen, 1998; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). These stakeholders include Ministry of Education and Science officials, school administrators, career counselors, teachers, students, and their families. At present, there is lacking institutional consensus as to the value of career counseling resulting in individual-level variation in which some internally motivated career counselors continue to conduct practices while many others do not. Barring a change in the degree of legitimacy granted to career counseling, and thus a change in the extent of institutionalization, the presence of "passionate individuals" continuing to pursue career counseling is unlikely to result in increased institutionalization and sustainability (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021).

In order to achieve institutionalization, career counseling practices must be self-activated and reproduced without external influence (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021). Given the cessation of funding, and thus external influence from USAID, the factors at present that determine the extent to which such reproduction takes place are formal policies and regulations, stable stakeholder interests, professional norms, and organizational routines. The present research investigated each

mechanism in turn in order to identify elements within each category that contributed to the extent of institutionalization. This research thus provided an opportunity to implement Anderson and Colyvas' (2021) MoRe model in an environment of partial institutionalization in order to investigate the influence of various mechanisms on the institutionalization process.

This dissertation largely corroborates the work of Anderson and Colyvas (2021) in confirming the importance of formal policies and regulations, stable stakeholder interests, and professional norms on the institutionalization process. While some policies helped to further the practice of career counseling in North Macedonia, institutionalization was ultimately hindered by a lack of conclusive policy creation establishing formal expectations for career counselors. Additionally, while many stakeholders, particularly students, responded favorably to career counseling, ultimately the favoritism present in the job market of North Macedonia limited student interest in career services. The lack of consensus for student stakeholders, or the lack of stable and consistent interests, contributed to the limited ability of stakeholder interests to positively impact the institutionalization of career counseling practices. Finally, while professional norms that influenced career counselor behaviors were originally established, the declining recognition of these norms and the declining participation among career counselors with the organizations responsible for establishing these norms ultimately indicates a declining influence of these professional norms on practices and thus a lack of institutionalization.

One extension of Anderson and Colyvas' (2021) MoRe demonstrated by this dissertation is the use of organizational routines. The organizational routines of the YES Network are the most institutionalized practices resulting from this initiative. Many of the career counselors in the sample continue to use routines such as SWOT analyses, quality assessments, skill assessments, goal timelines, and BIPO inventories. Thus, within the present sample of career counselors,

organizational routines were the most efficient way to achieve institutionalization. Largely due to the condensed and routinized fashion in which these practices were designed, the individuals in my sample reported that these techniques were readily incorporated into their practices. Institutionalization for specific and tangible practices was easier to achieve for these individuals than was the institutionalization of the more ambiguous or less routinized aspects of the initiative, such as, according to documents provided to me by a career counselor, helping students “develop a vision for personal career success.” This indicates a potential hierarchy of mechanisms in which some mechanisms lead to more efficient institutionalization of practices than do others. As with institutional complexity, additional research is necessary to confirm the generalizability of this finding.

### **International Education Policy**

In addition to theoretical contributions, this dissertation provides information that can aid in the creation of international education policies in many contexts, primarily in North Macedonia or other developing nations. The extent to which the YES Network influenced and continues to influence practices, or the extent to which it did or does not, offers information as to how to craft programs which have the maximum intended benefit. For example, the greatest success of the YES Network is most likely its introduction of a practice into a context where it was previously either not practiced or practiced in very rare instances. Its greatest failure is likely its inability to institutionalize certain aspects of career counseling, such as failure to establish an independent position of career counselor or create legislation that requires career counseling to take place in secondary schools. These lessons can inform future programs in North Macedonia

and other developing nations to help better design and institutionalize practices that are unique to the specific context.

The implementation of the YES Network serves as both a model and a cautionary tale for future international education development projects. Future projects can learn from the YES Network's successes in terms of how it developed an effective program for a new institutional practice by incorporating insights from a variety of sources including both local and international organizations. This collaborative process resulted in the creation of a program that successfully introduced a new educational practice into a unique context and received a favorable response from practitioners. Many educational practitioners who were interested in conducting such practices were able to develop their career counseling skills and implement these practices to some extent with students. Thus, the collaboration which took place in the development of the YES Network was effective in creating a program which was appealing to educational practitioners, and which allowed some practitioners to incorporate career counseling skills into their repertoires of practice.

Future educational programs can also learn from the mistakes of the YES Network. For example, one lesson learned from the YES Network is the importance of creating a new and independent position when new practices are introduced into educational environments. When a new practice is implemented into schools, the experiences of my sample of career counselors indicate that it is likely to be more successful if the individuals conducting this work do not have competing responsibilities outside of the new practices they are learning. As learned from the YES Network, these alternative responsibilities often take precedent for practitioners given the motivations from other sources, such as administrators, to continue with the responsibilities the individual maintained before the new practices were introduced. While a completely independent

position is not always feasible, should practitioners maintain dual roles, it would be beneficial to formally divide the time of the practitioners between multiple responsibilities in the school (Binder, 2007; Sharp, 2020). This was demonstrated by the sample to result in superior implementation with fidelity.

Additionally, in an effort to increase the likelihood of sustainability, it is necessary to create legislation and institutional structures that encourage the use of the new practices. For example, from the feedback from my sample, sustainability of the YES Network practices would likely have been superior if the position of career counselor had been formally recognized by the government as an official position within schools and career counselors were paid accordingly for their extra responsibilities. Such steps in future programs, including formalizing the specific position of interest and providing appropriate compensation to individuals for the work they conduct, would likely help develop institutional expectations that would assist in the replication of practices after the project is no longer active (Anderson & Colyvas, 2021).

### **Limitations**

The greatest limitation of this research is the extent to which it is generalizable. Given the sample size of fifteen career counselors and six schools, the research can only speak to the events taking place in the schools of interest as opposed to Skopje or North Macedonia more broadly. This is especially so given the variation present in career counseling practices across the country. There are numerous schools in which career counseling was never implemented or not sustained in any capacity. Given the focus of this study on the design, implementation, and sustainability of career counseling in North Macedonia, most of the research took place with individuals who conducted some form of career counseling. Thus, the schools where career counseling was not



implemented or not sustained to any degree are under-represented in the sample. However, the substantial number of individuals included in the sample in addition to career counselors helps to broaden the conclusions from simply the schools and counselors included.

Other limitations were largely related to the process of data collection, particularly of observations and school administrator interviews. In my fieldwork, I was limited as to the number of observations I could collect. As mentioned in the methods section, I was unable to conduct observations with all career counselors. Rather, many individuals with whom I had not established substantial relationships were not comfortable with my presence during their interactions with students. While I was able to conduct observations with career counselors with whom I had established significant relationships, the number of observations was substantially lower than I had hoped. Additionally, I had hoped to include more school administrators in my research. Unfortunately, these individuals turned out to be more difficult to reach and interview than I had anticipated, and I only ended up interviewing two of the administrators from the schools included in the sample along with a third from a school not included in the sample.

The final methodological limitation involves the retrospective nature of interviews used for the implementation portion of the research. The primary means of data collection regarding the implementation of the YES Network was interviews with career counselors about events that took place in the past. For many career counselors, these events took place between six and eight years ago, and it is likely that some recall bias was present in the responses I received. However, as the YES Network is no longer in an implementation stage, retrospective interviews were largely my only source of data as to the implementation process. Thus, such interviews were necessary for the current research. Additionally, by conducting validity checks, such as member

checks, discrepant cases, and triangulation, I hope to have minimized the impact of recall bias on my conclusions.

In addition to limitations on generalizability and data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic also changed the landscape of career counseling in North Macedonia. Schools in North Macedonia were virtual from March of 2020 until August of 2022. Thus, my fieldwork began at a time when teachers and students were re-engaging with in-person learning for the first time in nearly a year-and-a-half. This undoubtedly exacerbated the prioritization of higher order needs, such as addressing learning loss from time out of school, over needs such as career counseling. Thus, sustainability was likely lessened partially as a result of the pandemic.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation presents a comprehensive and unique evaluation of career counseling in North Macedonia. It provides a longitudinal perspective on career counseling initiatives over many years specifically detailing the phases preceding, during, and after the implementation of the YES Network. As such, the conclusions are applicable to bettering the design, implementation, and sustainability of future career counseling and educational initiatives in North Macedonia and other developing nations.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Guides**

\*\*\*These guides represent a comprehensive overview of the multitude of questions asked to various participants in the study. Not all questions were asked to all participants. And in many cases, multiple interviews were necessary in order to cover the content of the interview guide. The guides were used to scaffold interviews and were not used as a script.

### **Career Counselors**

#### **Tentative Interview Guide-Subject to Change**

The purpose of these interview questions is to provide probes into the content of career counseling practices in North Macedonia, the source of this content and how different influences, or logics are balanced at implementation and at present. As with most qualitative research, these questions do not directly reflect the research questions, rather they will be used to gather information which will be used to answer the research questions (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, there is an indirect relationship between the information gathered via interviews and the overall purpose of the study.

#### **Introduction**

Hi, my name is Richard Hall. I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University studying career counseling practices. I am hoping to compile information as to the content and source of career counseling practices and the process by which career counselors create their practices. I will ask a series of open-ended questions. My hope is that the questions will spawn open-ended answers. As such, feel free to elaborate on your responses based on the content of the probe. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be released in any documents resulting from these interviews.

#### **Background**

- Demographics and details:
  - What is your name?
  - What is your age?
  - How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
  - What school do you work at?
    - Is this school academic or vocational?
    - What is the racial and ethnic composition of the school?
    - What is the gender composition?
    - What is the SES of the student body?
    - How old is the school?
    - How well do students perform?
- How did you get started in career counseling?
  - What is your background?

- Were you primarily a psychologist or teacher prior to the implementation of the YES Network?
- How long have you been a career counselor?
- Were all years at the same school?
- How many students do you see?
- Do you meet with every student?
- Can you walk me through a typical school day for you as a counselor? Are there any special activities you conduct throughout the year?
- What are your goals as a career counselor?
- How would you describe your role as a career counselor?
- Can you tell me about career counseling in your school and how it is structured?
- How do you decide what your priorities are for your time?
- How much support for these priorities is there among counselors?
- What sort of professional development opportunities are there for counselors?

### **YES Network**

- Do you recall the formation of the YES Network? Or any other program from USAID in the field of career counseling?
- If so, how did your job change before and after the YES Network?
  - What practices did you engage in before and after the YES Network?
  - How did your role change before and after the YES Network?
- What are the goals of the YES Network?
  - To the best of your knowledge, why are/were these the goals?
- How did the YES Network program interact with the school-level or administrative expectations for your position?
- How did you personally respond to these potentially differing expectations? Did you change or prioritize certain expectations?
- How did you balance the responsibilities of career counseling with your other responsibilities in the school?
- How have the stipulations of the YES Network maintained over time?
- How much support among counselors, teachers, and students do you see over time?

### **Sustainability**

- Do you continue to engage with the YES Network at present?
- How much time, or what percent of your job, is career counseling from the YES Network at present?
- Which elements do you continue to engage with at present?
- Are you supported in your engagement with the YES Network?
- How did you decide which elements to engage with?
- Why did you decide to eliminate certain elements?
- Why do you feel that parts of the YES Network were not sustained?
- What could have been done differently to increase sustainability?

### **Other Influences**

- Besides the influence of the YES Network, how do you decide what activities to engage in?

- What sources influence these decisions?
  - Members of the Ministry of Education and Science? School administrators? Professional organizations? Personal interests? Teachers? Parents?
- Have these sources changed over time?
- If multiple sources, what are the expectations of each?
  - What is the relationship between each source? Do their goals align with each other?
- Assuming multiple sources, do you feel you are able to accomplish the goals of all of them?
  - Do you feel that at an individual level you prioritize the expectations of any one source?
- Specifically, what is the relationship between the local community, the school administration, and the career counseling office?
  - Has this relationship changed over time?

### **Wrap-up**

- What are some of the greatest successes and difficulties in being a career counselor?
- What do you think are some of the more pressing issues in the field of career counseling in North Macedonia currently?
- Do you have any concerns about the implementation or sustainability of career counseling in North Macedonia?
- Can I contact you for an additional interview at a later date?
- Do you have any peers, at the same or different schools whom I might be able to contact?
- Can I conduct an interview with your administrator?

## **Administrators**

### **Tentative Interview Guide-Subject to Change**

The purpose of these interview questions is to provide probes into the expectations for career counselors in North Macedonia from the perspective of school administrators.

#### **Introduction**

Hi, my name is Richard Hall. I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University studying career counselor practices. I am hoping to compile information as to the source and content of career counseling practices and the process by which career counselors create their practices. I will ask a series of open-ended questions. My hope is that the questions will spawn open-ended answers. As such, feel free to elaborate on your responses based on the content of the probe. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be released in any documents resulting from these interviews.

#### **Background**

- Demographics and details:
  - What is your name?
  - What is your age?
  - How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
  - What school do you work at?
    - Is this school academic or vocational?
    - How well do students at this school perform?
    - What is the racial and ethnic composition of the school?
    - What is the gender composition?
    - What is the SES of the student body?
- How long have you been a school administrator?
- Have you always been at the same school?
- Are you a member of a political party?
  - Does this influence your role as an administrator?

#### **YES Network**

- What are your expectations for career counselors?
- Do you recall the formation of the YES Network?
- Does the YES Network influence these expectations?
- Do you encourage specific aspects of the YES Network?
  - Why do you encourage these aspects?
- Why do you feel the YES Network has or has not been sustained over time?
  - Are there changes which could have been made to the YES Network which would have encouraged sustainability?

#### **Other Influences**

- Besides the YES Network, or USAID in general, how do/did career counselors decide what activities to engage in both now and during the implementation of the YES Network?



- What sources influence/influenced these decisions both now and during implementation?
  - National sources? Administrators? Professional organizations? Personal interests?
- To the best of your knowledge, what are the expectations of each for career counselors?

### **Administrative Influence on Career Counselors**

- To what extent do/did administrators influence career counselor activities both now and during the implementation of the YES Network?
- How do/did you as an administrator decide what activities to promote both now and during the implementation of the YES Network?
- To what extent are/were your expectations of career counselors influenced by other school priorities both now and during the implementation of the YES Network?
- Specifically, what is/was the relationship between the school administrators and career counselors both now and during the implementation of the YES Network?

### **Wrap-Up**

- What are some of the greatest successes and difficulties in being a school administrator?
- What do you think are some of the more pressing issues in the field of career counseling in North Macedonia?
- Do you have any concerns about the implementation or sustainability of the YES Network in North Macedonia?
- Do you have any peers at the same or different schools whom I might be able to contact?

## EDC and USAID

### Tentative Interview Guide-Subject to Change

The purpose of these interview questions is to provide probes into the source and content of the YES Network.

#### Introduction

Hi, my name is Richard Hall. I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University studying career counseling practices. I am hoping to compile information as to the source of career counseling practices and the process by which career counselors create their practices. I will ask a series of open-ended questions. My hope is that the questions will spawn open-ended answers. As such, feel free to elaborate on your responses based on the content of the probe. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be released in any documents resulting from these interviews.

#### Background

- What is your name?
- What is your age?
- How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
- What is your role at EDC/USAID?
  - What is your background with EDC/USAID?
- What is the role of EDC/USAID in North Macedonia?
- What is the relationship between USAID and EDC?
- What is the relationship between EDC/USAID and the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia?

#### YES Network

- What was the role of EDC/USAID with the formation of the Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network in North Macedonia?
  - What was your role with the YES Network initiative in North Macedonia?
- What were the goals of the YES Network in terms of career counseling practices (specifically)?
- What were the key practices/structures/policies implemented?
  - Was the YES Network different for career counseling offices at academic and vocational high schools?

#### Source of YES Network Goals

- Was the American model of career counseling influential in the creation of the YES Network in North Macedonia?
  - Was this influence taken from the ASCA National Model or another source?
    - Do you recall what elements were specifically adopted?
- Were any practices adopted from countries besides the United States?
  - What other countries or sources contributed to the YES Network?
  - What components were from these other countries? What was the source within these other countries which created these career counseling components?

### **YES Network Purpose**

- Were the goals and practices of YES Network established to meet a specific need in North Macedonia?
  - What were these goals?
  - Do you have any documents indicating these goals?
  - Do you have any evaluations as to whether or not these goals were met?
- Did this initiative create career counseling or amend an existing practice?
- Were the goals of the YES Network initiated by USAID and the United States? Or by the Ministry of Education and Science and North Macedonia? Or by an alternative source?
- To the best of your knowledge, what was the purpose of the YES Network?
  - Was it designed to meet a critical need for students in North Macedonia?
  - Did the United States have any goals for the YES Network?
    - If yes, were these goals self-serving or diplomatic in nature?

### **Implementation**

- What was the process of implementation at the ground level? How was the specific initiative actually communicated to career counselors?
- To the best of your knowledge, what are/were the other sources which may influence or have influenced career counselors in North Macedonia?
- Who were the key players in implementation? Was it EDC, USAID, the Ministry of Education, the specific school, someone, or something else?
  - How much flexibility was available in schools in the implementation process?
- Were there any other EDC/USAID efforts which may have influenced career counseling practices in North Macedonia?
  - If yes, what were the goals of these initiatives for career counselors (specifically?)

### **Sustainability**

- To the best of your knowledge, what took the place of the YES Network after funding from USAID ceased?
  - Was this entity EDC/USAID sponsored?
  - Was this entity designed to further the mission of the YES Network?
- Do you have any impact research or evaluations I can examine?

### **Wrap-Up**

- What are some of the greatest successes and difficulties in terms of implementing the YES Network initiative, or educational initiatives more broadly, in North Macedonia?
- To the best of your knowledge, did career counselors embrace the YES Network or was there pushback?
  - If the latter, what was the source of the pushback?
- Can I contact you for an additional interview at a later date if need be?
- Do you have any peers or colleagues at EDC or USAID whom I might be able to contact?

## **Ministry of Education and Science Officials**

### **Tentative Interview Guide-Subject to Change**

The purpose of these interview questions is to provide probes into the source and content of career counseling practices in North Macedonia and why this content was adopted.

#### **Introduction**

Hi, my name is Richard Hall. I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University studying career counseling practices. I am hoping to compile information as to the source of career counseling practices and the process by which career counselors create their practices. I will ask a series of open-ended questions. My hope is that the questions will spawn open-ended answers. As such, feel free to elaborate on your responses based on the content of the probe. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be released in any documents resulting from these interviews.

#### **Background**

- Demographics and details:
  - What is your name?
  - What is your age?
  - How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
- Describe the system of education in North Macedonia?
- What is your role at the Ministry of Education and Science?
  - What is your background?
- What is the role of the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia?
- What is the relationship between EDC/USAID and the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia?
- Are you a member of a political party?
  - Does this influence your role as a member of the Ministry of Education and Science?
  - Which party are you a member of?

#### **YES Network**

- What was the role of the Ministry of Education and Science with the Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network initiative in North Macedonia?
  - What was the role of the Ministry of Education and Science in the creation of the YES Network?
  - What was your role with the YES Network initiative in North Macedonia?
- What were the goals of the YES Network in terms of career counseling practices (specifically)?
- What were the key practices/structures/policies implemented?
  - Was the YES Network different for career counselors at academic and vocational high schools?
- Is there a list of competencies associated with each initiative that I can access?

#### **Inspections**

- Do you inspect schools?
- What are the goals of these inspections?
- What are you hoping to find with career counselor practices?

### **Source of YES Network Goals**

- Was the American model of career counseling influential in the creation of the YES Network in North Macedonia?
  - Was this influence taken from the ASCA National Model or another source?
    - Do you recall what elements were specifically adopted?
- Were any practices adopted from countries besides the United States?
  - What other countries or sources contributed to the YES Network?
  - What components were from these other countries? What was the source within these other countries which created these career counseling components?
- Was the unique history or context of North Macedonia influential in the creation of these initiatives?

### **YES Network Purpose**

- Were the goals and practices of the YES Network established to meet a specific need in North Macedonia?
- Were the goals of the YES Network initiated by USAID and the United States? Or by the Ministry of Education and Science and North Macedonia? Or by an alternative source?
- To the best of your knowledge, what was the purpose of the YES Network?
  - Were they designed to meet a critical need for students in North Macedonia?
  - Did the United States have any goals for the YES Network?
    - If yes, were these goals self-serving or diplomatic in nature?

### **Implementation**

- To the best of your knowledge, what are/were the other sources which may influence or have influenced career counselors in North Macedonia?
- Were there any other Ministry of Education and Science efforts which may have influenced career counseling practices in North Macedonia?
  - If yes, what were the goals of these initiatives for career counselors (specifically?)
- Do you feel that these USAID initiatives were implemented with fidelity?

### **Sustainability**

- To the best of your knowledge, what took the place of the YES Network after funding from USAID ceased?
  - Was this entity funded by the United States or North Macedonia? Or a different source?
  - Was this entity designed to further the mission of the YES Network?

### **Wrap-Up**

- What are some of the greatest successes and difficulties in terms of implementing the USAID initiatives, or educational initiatives more broadly, in North Macedonia?
- To the best of your knowledge, did career counselors embrace the YES Network or was there pushback?

- If the latter, what was the source of the pushback?
- Can I contact you for an additional interview at a later date if need be?
- Do you have any peers or colleagues at the Ministry of Education and Science whom I might be able to contact?

## Students

### Tentative Interview Guide-Subject to Change

The purpose of these interview questions is to provide probes into the content of career counseling practices in North Macedonia, the source of this content and how different influences, or logics are balanced throughout implementation and at present. As with most qualitative research, these questions do not directly reflect the research questions, rather they will be used to gather information which will be used to answer the research questions (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, there is an indirect relationship between the information gathered via interviews and the overall purpose of the study.

### Introduction

Hi, my name is Richard Hall. I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University studying career counseling practices. I am hoping to compile information as to the content and source of career counseling practices and the process by which career counselors create their practices. I will ask a series of open-ended questions. My hope is that the questions will spawn open-ended answers. As such, feel free to elaborate on your responses based on the content of the probe. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be released in any documents resulting from these interviews.

### Background

- What is your name?
- What school do you attend?
- What year are you in school?
- How old are you?
- How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
- Can you walk me through a typical school day for you as a student?
- What are your career goals?
- What is your relationship with your career counselor?
- What activities do you expect your career counselor to conduct?
- Why are these your expectations?
- Have your expectations changed at all over your career as a student?
- Does anyone else in the school help you with your career goals?

### USAID Initiatives?

- Do you recall any major changes to career counseling which took place?
- If so, how did career counseling change before and after this program?

### Wrap-up

- What is your favorite part about meeting with your counselor?
- What would you change about career counseling given the chance?
- Do you have any concerns about career counseling?
- Can I contact you for an additional interview at a later date?
- Do you have any peers, at the same or different schools whom I might be able to contact?

## Appendix B: List of Participants

### Career Counselors (15)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Other Position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School/Organization</b>	<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Location</b>
Angela	Psychologist	Female	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Sara	Pedagogue	Female	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Dusana	Psychologist	Female	School 1	Gymnasium	Skopje
Mirjana	Psychologist	Female	School 2	Gymnasium/VET	Skopje
Trena	Teacher	Female	School 2	Gymnasium/VET	Skopje
Danica	Psychologist	Female	School 3	VET	Skopje
Luka	Teacher	Male	School 3	VET	Skopje
Rumena	Teacher	Female	School 3	VET	Skopje
Rosa	Teacher	Female	School 4	VET	Skopje
Petka	Teacher	Female	School 4	VET	Skopje
Sofija	Teacher	Female	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Adriel	Teacher	Female	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Cynna	Teacher	Female	School 5	Gymnasium/VET	South-Western North Macedonia
Zoran	Teacher	Male	School 6	VET	Central North Macedonia
Thetima	Teacher	Female	School 6	VET	Central North Macedonia

### Other Secondary School Educators (5)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School/Organization</b>
N/A	Principal	Female	School 5
N/A	Principal	Female	School 6
Jana	Principal	Female	Private Secondary School in Skopje
Dafina	Teacher	Female	Secondary School in London, England



Amelia	Tutor/Student	Female	Private Tutoring Company in Skopje
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Students (14)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School/Organization</b>
Kiril	Male	School 1
Matej	Male	School 2
Dragana	Female	School 2
Viktorija	Female	School 2
N/A	Female	School 3
Alketas	Male	School 3
N/A	Female	School 3
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
N/A	Unknown	American Corners Participant in the Vicinity of School 5
Ako	Male	Private School in Skopje

YES Network Development Partners (9)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>
James	Male	EDC
Alfred	Male	EDC
Petre	Male	EDC
Amelia	Female	EDC
Lilijana	Female	EDC
Valentina	Female	EDC
Vera	Female	ASK
Marica	Female	ASK
Catherine	Female	Center for Credentialing and Education

Academics (4)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Tanya	Female	Saints Cyril and Methodius University
Eva	Female	Saints Cyril and Methodius University

Marko	Male	Saints Cyril and Methodius University
Josif	Male	Saints Cyril and Methodius University

Other Public Employees (8)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Nada	Female	USAID North Macedonia
Jovana	Female	Ministry of Education and Science
Gorana	Female	American Corners (US Department of State)
N/A	Female	American Corners (US Department of State)
N/A	Female	American Corners (US Department of State)
Besnik	Male	US Embassy in Skopje
Jim	Male	US Department of Justice
Rebecca	Female	US Department of State

Humanitarian Organization Employees (3)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Stojan	Male	UNICEF
N/A	Female	Peace Corps
N/A	Female	Peace Corps

Tour Guides (4)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Admir	Male	Tour Company-North Macedonia
N/A	Female	Tour Company-North Macedonia
Ajdin	Male	Tour Company-Bosnia and Herzegovina
Boyana	Female	Tour Company-Bulgaria