

Editorial – Meeting Needs

Careers professionals continue to identify groups whose need for career education and career guidance is not being met for reasons of misguided policy, inadequate funding or inappropriate practice! This issue of the journal looks at the needs of two such groups – prisoners and foundation degree students – without suggesting any specific connection between them! It also carries two articles focusing on how needs can more effectively be met by moving practice closer to the way in which individuals think about careers and make career decisions.

The first article is based on the 2008 John Killeen memorial lecture given by Phil Hodkinson, Emeritus Professor of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leeds. Phil chose to draw upon his research career to present his latest ideas about career decision-making and career progression. It was an opportunity to revisit the theory of careership which he, Andrew Sparkes and Heather Hodkinson developed in the early 1990s when they were carrying out a longitudinal study of the Training Credits scheme for young people. It is a theory which integrates three overlapping dimensions: the positions and dispositions of the individual, the relations between forces acting in the field(s) within which the decisions were made and careers progressed, and the on-going longitudinal pathways the careers followed. In the article, Phil explains how subsequent research by himself and others has confirmed major parts of Careership theory whilst showing the need for some modifications to other parts of it. Phil now feels that the work that he and his colleagues did on the first two dimensions was stronger than that on the third.

Phil is strongly critical of many established theories of careers work. In relation to matching personal traits to job characteristics, he says they 'were just plain wrong'! The weakness that he exposes of many traditional approaches is that they do not accord with people's actual experiences of career decision-making and progression. Careership attempts to show the interrelationship between individual agency, issues of social structure and serendipity or chance. It has implications for guidance practice and how we can design more effective helping strategies that, whilst acknowledging the limitations of guidance, could make a real difference to individuals' lives. This will involve rethinking guidance practice that is there for the comfort and convenience of practitioners.

Heather Mendick and Katya Williams are also interested in how young people respond to the influences on them and in particular the complex way in which television influences young people's career choices. Their article adds significantly to what we already know about the impact on young people of representations of work on TV from the work of Ken Fox (1995) and Sylvia Thomson and Ruth Hawthorn (2000). They argue that careers professionals need to respond in their practice to the subtle ways that TV and other media contribute to exclusion and inclusion.

Two of our articles deal with the unmet needs of particular groups who have limited access to career guidance. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) in prisons presents unique challenges for the delivery unlike any other setting in the UK. In their article, Jackie Sadler and Leigh Henderson explore the policy context, the nature of prison regimes and the potential of coherent IAG delivery to enhance the quality of the prisoner learning journey, facilitate entry into sustainable employment and reduce re-offending.

Finally, Sue Wilkinson reports on a survey of foundation degree students at the University of Portsmouth which will be of special interest to higher education careers advisory services and designers of the new adult advancement and careers service. In it she highlights some of the particular needs of adult work-based learners.

References

- Fox, K. (1995). 'Media education and careers education and guidance (or once I saw a happy episode of *Eastenders*)' in D. Frost, A. Edwards & H. Reynolds (Eds.). *Careers education and guidance*. London: Kogan Page.
- Thomson, S. & Hawthorn, R. (2000). *Work - As Seen on TV*. Trowbridge: Lifetime Careers (Wiltshire) Ltd.

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