

Editorial

An International Career Studies Symposium took place at Reading University on 22nd and 23rd September 2009 organised by the Centre for Career Management Skills and the Career Studies Unit. The symposium was conceived by Julia Horn, Maura O'Regan and David Stanbury of the Centre for Career Management Skills, and Phil McCash and Phil Mignot of the Career Studies Unit. The symposium was designed to link the evolving research field of career studies with the teaching of career studies in the curriculum. Invited speakers contributed a range of keynote lectures and workshops on this theme, represented here by seven articles. The first three articles are derived from keynote presentations and the latter four derived from workshop contributions.

Michael Arthur tracks the evolution of career studies and argues that there is still relatively little dialogue between the fields of vocational guidance and organisational studies. He seeks to promote a better conversation between these and other disciplines engaged in career studies. Michael proposes that this can be achieved by the development of shared research methodologies and the encouragement of stronger integration between theory and practice.

Kerr Inkson highlights the importance of metaphor in career studies as a means of both linking different disciplinary traditions and integrating theory and practice. He suggests a teaching exercise based on interviewing a family member, and proposes an outline career studies syllabus for career studies. With his most recent career metaphor, a landscape with travellers, Kerr seeks to pay equal attention to both the travellers and their changing socio-economic environments.

Audrey Collin links her own career with the evolution of career studies and criticises the limited scientific epistemologies once dominant in Western psychology. She emphasises rigour in career studies research, and the importance of longitudinal studies and understanding the effects of interventions on individuals. Audrey closes by arguing that the study of career can directly enhance engagement with difficult epistemological questions in the student's home discipline.

Mark Savickas argues that career construction theory can inform the career studies curriculum, and in relation to this, proposes a workshop to help college students construct their career. This entails the construction of a 'life portrait' whereby students assemble stories of role models, work theatres, career scripts and performance advice. Mark suggests that these stories can be developed into a macro-narrative that may then be shared with significant others.

Celia Hunt argues that creative writing can be a powerful tool in personal and career development. She designs a creative writing exercise through which participants can playfully explore career identities and thereby integrate different and sometimes conflicting self-concepts. In acknowledging that there are different and competing versions of the self, both Mark and Celia offer us more complex ways of approaching and understanding self awareness in the curriculum.

Maura O'Regan identifies some differences between a career studies approach to career education and traditional career management skills programmes. She argues that a research-informed curriculum should enable students to form their own conclusions about the nature of career and that this will prove stimulating both for students and tutors. Maura draws from her recently completed PhD to propose a workshop idea for the career studies curriculum. In this she suggests that students can compare and contrast her research on student orientations to study and career with Michael Tomlinson's work on final year undergraduates' perceptions of the relationship between higher education credentials and labour market outcomes.

In the final article, Phil McCash seeks to bring together some of the preceding points and classroom ideas by proposing a research-informed curriculum for career studies. He uses the technique of concept mapping to identify eight key concepts in career studies teaching: Career and Learning; Career Ethics; Career Labour Market Intelligence; Career Management Styles; Career Development Beliefs; Career Types; Career Narratives and Career Visions of the Future. Phil goes on to translate this into teaching practice by designing eight workshops with indicative learning outcomes and outline content.

One of the most illuminating items of feedback arising from the symposium related to the integration of research and teaching. As a result of conversations between participants, some researchers of career studies said that they now understood that career studies was actually being taught in the higher education curriculum. Equally, several teaching-related staff involved in the curriculum discovered that there was a vibrant interdisciplinary research field available to inform their teaching. A flavour of this conversational symposium spirit can hopefully be detected in the articles in this special edition of the NICEC Journal. There are slides available from most of the other keynotes and workshops at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/ccms/activities/events/ccms-international-symposium-presentations.aspx>

Phil McCash
Guest editor