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Overview of this issue

Welcome to the Journal of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling. In this edition established academics, new writers and practitioner researchers bring us useful insights into career learning and the interplay between theory, practice and research. The UK government's recent career strategy placed renewed emphasis on career learning in schools in England making it a highly topical subject for consideration. However, career covers all stages of life and needs to be supported by a life-long engagement with learning, hence the articles extend beyond the school setting. Our authors reflect on programme design, review the development and implementation of career learning frameworks and tools, and explore external and internal contextual factors that influence the career learning process. Whilst different in focus and context, at the core of all the articles is the theme of client and participant career learning leading to progression in career development.

A particular landmark for NICEC is the publication of an article by **Laura Walker** which was awarded the Bill Law Student Memorial Award 2019. In this opening piece, Laura explores the implications for career guidance practice of late career decision making, where she characterises the learning as a process of discovering more of themselves – 'more of me'. The findings are set out using a visual which is unique to the author and very helpful for use by practitioners. The image of 'dancing with fear' is powerful, and reminiscent of Bill Law's use of imagery in his concern to help practitioners to apply the lessons learned through research to practice.

In the two articles that follow, **Lis McGuire** and **John Gough** write from different perspectives about the process of designing learning experiences. Liz explores adopting a collaborative approach between the provider and the user of services. Although the article focuses on addressing the needs of persons with mental health problems, her findings and reflections are equally relevant to programme design for other user groups. Similarly, John's reflections on a collaborative process in training careers leaders in England highlights the importance of engaging the voice of the learner in enabling them to develop this role effectively in complex and demanding educational environments.

The next three articles focus on specific aspects of working directly with clients, and present new career learning tools and a career framework. These developments, rooted in practice, include a mix of 'what works' along with reflection on what was less successful, and insights into why that might be. First, **Katie Dallison** describes the development and implementation of Plan: Me. Piloted within higher education, this tool takes a holistic approach to career decision making, integrating goal setting, and allowing clients to map out a process of how they can move themselves forward independently. Second, we have an article by **Keren Coney and Ben Simkins** in which they consider the potential of using 'screencasting' technology to support students' C.V. writing. Third, **Lewis Clark and Carolyn Parry** review their creation of the INSPiRED teenager framework designed to support collaborative career-based learning between parents/carers and their teenage child.

The final two articles are concerned with the wider context within which career learning takes place. **Szilvia Schmitsek** explores the educational experiences of young people in England, Denmark and Hungary who had been at risk of dropping out, but later gained a qualification at a second chance provision. In contrast, **Nikki Storey** is concerned with the influences on the career beliefs of students in an ethnically diverse state school in London. Using an adapted short version of the 'Careers Beliefs Patterns Scale', Nikki examines the interlinked impacts of ethnicity and socio-economic status, and draws out recommendations for practitioners.

Lyn Barham & Michelle Stewart, Editors

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The training and development of careers leaders in England: Reflections on provision

John Gough

The Gatsby Benchmarks mark a new and constructive government-backed approach to improving the quality and consistency of careers guidance provision in schools and colleges in England. The new role of careers leader has also been established to encourage organisations to develop integrated provision, with a training programme commissioned by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) for this role.

As part of the course team for one of the commissioned training providers, I reflect on the early insights and lessons of these new developments, particularly the needs and concerns of the new careers leaders as they navigate demanding educational environments.

Introduction: The advent of the Gatsby Benchmarks and the emergence of the careers leader role

The Gatsby Benchmarks arose out of the Gatsby report (2014), entitled 'Good Career Guidance'. This had been commissioned by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation in response to perceived weakness in the consistency and quality of careers guidance, especially in England. Such flaws have already been extensively researched and analysed, with the negative impact of Connexions on the professionalism and identity of practitioners noted especially by Colley et al. (2010), and Lewin and Colley (2010); and, indeed, the 'attempted murder' (Roberts, 2013, p.240) of careers guidance by the Education Act (2011). Hughes (2013) also described the patchiness of provision in England in the wake of the Act.

It is worth noting here that, for the purposes of this article, 'careers guidance' is understood to be the full range of activity delivered under the eight Gatsby Benchmarks as used by the Department of Education and Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), particularly in their guidance to schools and colleges. However, in the conclusion, I note the importance of engaging careers leaders with career development theories, and particularly systems-based models (Patton and McMahon, 2014) and terminology that reflect more contemporary thinking in the subject discipline.

To address the problems mentioned above, the eight benchmarks appear comprehensive in their coverage of careers guidance provision, ranging from encounters with employers and training providers, to careers in the curriculum, and the provision of personal guidance. Crucially, the first benchmark is concerned with integrated and stable provision, so that career development becomes a central part of students' learning. And still further, the benchmarks acquired structural force when they were incorporated into the statutory guidance for schools and colleges when these documents were updated and revised (DfE, 2018). Further strengthening of their importance to schools' and colleges' educational delivery can be found in the revised OFSTED inspection handbooks (2019). The documents make explicit reference to the evidence of careers guidance provision that the inspectors will be seeking. The often-raised concerns of professional bodies (such as the CDI) and practitioners about OFSTED's apparent lack of interest in careers appear to have been addressed.

Frameworks and standards of careers guidance provision in schools and colleges are of course nothing new. For example, Moon et al. (2004) reviewed the extent and impact of careers education and guidance (CEG) in schools and colleges in England; and identified the inconsistency of implementation, despite CEG frameworks and standards that were issued during the Connexions/Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) era. Interestingly, such standards, in terms of their content, have a strong similarity to those presented by the Gatsby Foundation (2014). What is different now is the DfE's insistence on measuring schools' and colleges' progress in implementing the eight benchmarks, allied to OFSTED's renewed concern about provision.

There is another new feature in the careers delivery landscape: that of careers leader. Moon et al. (2004) identified two challenges in delivering CEG services, particularly careers in the curriculum: the apparent lack of leadership and ownership of this area by schools' and colleges' leadership team; and the expertise (and capacity) of non-careers trained staff (i.e. teachers) when undertaking careers learning lessons. To ensure that the statutory guidance is implemented, the CEC helped to establish the new careers leader role, and went further by commissioning training provision to support this development. As Andrews and Hooley (2016) note, the role and its accompanying training have long been sought as a crucial means by which careers guidance provision in schools and colleges is consistently developed, led and managed. The CEC's commissioned courses began in mid to late 2018.

As part of the course team that develops and delivers one of the commissioned courses, I use this article to reflect on the process of training and developing a range of careers leaders within these new policy initiatives. The article identifies some of the early lessons in supporting such professionals in complex and demanding educational environments. Further, I locate the discussion in the wider context of training and developing careers guidance practitioners in the wake of rapid policy and workforce change (Gough, 2016). The self-reflexive approach of the latter, which also adopts some of the aspects of autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Goodson, Short and Turner, 2013), will be continued here.

Training provision (and investment)

The policy importance of the careers leader role is in part signified by the extent of the investment in training and support for development. In England, the latter is the first national-level funded support scheme for careers' workforce development since the bursaries for the Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG) disappeared in 2010. The other interesting aspect is that governments since 2010 have been clear about standards and statutory expectations, but have provided no real direction (or funding) for workforce provision and development. By contrast, the CEC is offering bursaries to 1300 careers leaders who have a choice of fourteen providers which include universities, educational sector based organisations such as Teach First, and organisations concerned with the training and development of careers practitioners. The courses offered can be based on units 21 to 23 of the OCR level 6 diploma in career guidance and development; or on Level 7 postgraduate awards. Delivery can vary from on-going training days or afternoons (or weekends), or block day residentials with comprehensive on-line learning resources. Alongside these commissioned courses sit the Careers hubs which operate locally and can also offer training and peer support. This variety of provision is perhaps consistent with previous policy direction, in that the choice of which accredited or non-accredited training course to take is a decision for each school or college. However, the extent of provision, and the available bursaries, indicate a level of investment that has been absent since 2010.

Initial reflections on training delivery and supporting careers leaders

In this section, I reflect on our experience of recruiting careers leaders, and then delivering the blended learning programme. In framing the reflections, I use Johns' (2013) model, since it encourages educators (and practitioners more widely) to identify and consider the impact of a range of contextual factors on planning and delivery.

Firstly, the course itself, and its development. Colleagues opted to draw on a successful blended learning model developed for related courses, involving residential workshops and comprehensive on-line learning resources. As importantly, the programme was validated as a Level 7 postgraduate award. The team believed that the level was consistent with the importance of the role, and its (intended) seniority within a school or college. This belief reflects well-established and wider debates about the correct level of qualification for careers guidance practice, e.g. in the Silver Review (DfE, 2010) which proposed a minimum Level 6. The Qualification in Career Development (QCD) – which has replaced the QCG – is offered by universities and incorporated into postgraduate programmes. There were further practical considerations that helped to develop the appeal of the programme, such as the residential component, where learners could attend for an intensive two days, rather than taking time away regularly from their institution. This pattern has also helped networks to form quickly between the participants.

Secondly, the range of roles occupied by the course participants is indicative of the ways in which schools and colleges have been tasked with organising the new position in organisationally-contingent ways. The roles have included: careers guidance practitioners whose 'main' role has been enhanced by that of careers leader; curriculum or subject leads whose 'day job' has also been augmented with the leader role (and with some financial inducement); members of the school or college leadership team; and specifically-appointed careers leaders (whose job may cover a related function, such as work experience, links with employers, and enterprise development). This variety presented an interesting challenge when compiling the course topics and materials.

Reflecting on this experience, I can see that the initial course materials drew on my experience of delivering the Level 6 units 21 to 23 at Coventry University. These units in part covered aspects of careers guidance practice, not just leadership; and so required learners to grapple with relevant career learning theories. Further, the benchmarks' coverage of main careers activities, e.g. personal guidance, also suggested the need for careers guidance theories. The question was: how much? particularly as some of the participants may have covered these already (though not all careers guidance practitioners in schools have Level 6 and above qualifications).

This question was answered in large part by dialogue with the first cohort of learners. As a course team, we had allowed for a very interactive approach, with opportunities for discussion and the sharing of experiences. This pedagogy – or, more accurately, andragogy – is consistent with that adopted for adult learners, whose life experiences should form an important part of the learning process; and whose learning focus can often be on the application of learning to more immediate problems and issues (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). An apparent and immediate problem relayed by the participants was: what exactly is my role? Subsequent discussions showed varying levels of insights into the role, both in terms of its purpose, and where it sat, organisationally. A commonly shared expectation of the training programme was to help the leaders to develop a much clearer understanding of their position as careers leader.

Linked to the latter challenge was the experience of using the Compass tool to audit and evaluate the extent of provision against the benchmarks. Again, reactions varied in relation to its usefulness. Some had taken a very pragmatic approach, e.g. that despite its perceived limitations, such as its focus on quantitative measures, the tool offered a good enough framework to enable discussions with the leadership team about priorities. There was also much discussion about the rating scales, and how such ratings were arrived at. What I found surprising was the extent to which the participants felt they needed to complete the audit on their own, with little input from colleagues or managers. Again, encouraging the participants to reflect on this experience yielded some fresh insights, e.g. that the audit should not be just a 'tick box' exercise and that it should include input from internal and external stakeholders. There were some very interesting experiences where some participants had completed the audit two or three times, with increasing involvement from a range of stakeholders. These iterations reflected a process of continual review and, as crucially, in ways that reflected some leaders' growing confidence in the role.

One particularly strong aspect of learners' feedback has been their need, almost thirst, for networking, and to share experiences with other careers leaders. This need indicated a range of issues, too, particularly the consistency and strength of careers leader networks. Some were part of careers networks or hubs organised by Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), helped by the pro-activity of some local Enterprise Co-ordinators (ECs), while others were much less involved. The patchiness of careers guidance provision, noted earlier in the article, is in part reflected in the varying strength levels of local networks. However, where the links were strong, participants shared some very interesting ideas and solutions that were appreciated by other members of the programme. One particularly notable feature was the ways in which some ECs drew together careers leaders from a range of schools and colleges to share their experience of the Compass tool. This process helped the leaders to standardise more accurately their institutions' progress against the benchmarks. One of the aims of our programme is to encourage learners in their development of supportive networks and communities of practice – the latter not just being a source of practical support, but also of role and identity development (Wenger, 1999). This professional value of sharing good practice, and supporting role identity, was a strong and regular feature of local, and well-established, information, advice and guidance networks (Gough, 2017). Our hope is the training programmes in England will enable the re-establishing of such IAG networks.

Entering the matrix: the status and organisational position of the careers leader

An additional contextual reflection concerns the status and position of careers leader in a school or college. Its place within an organisational structure bears the hallmarks of matrix management. Typically, the matrix manager is responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of projects or initiatives that cut across the organisation, and where the activities are 'shared endeavours…which are neither owned nor contained within a single department' (Roberts, 2013, p.61). This differs from more hierarchal, classically bureaucratic, vertical accountabilities, where senior managers work through middle managers who in turn directly manage departmental staff (Mullins and Christy, 2016). As indicated by the careers leaders on our programme, they have no formal authority over staff for the delivery of the Gatsby Benchmarks; instead, they need to work with colleagues, and exercise considerable negotiation and persuasion skills, particularly regarding the integration of careers learning into the more 'mainstream' curriculum. These skills are still needed even when organising activities that are recognised as being part of their jurisdiction, e.g. careers fairs, or encounters with employers, and education and training providers. In this way, the careers leader may liaise with quite a range of people internally (and indeed externally) in ways that teachers who are more 'contained' within curriculum areas do not. These networks, and the insights and knowledge they bring, increase the assets and skills of the careers leader. The continual challenge, however, of not managing anyone directly in relation to leading and managing careers guidance provision is that trust and influence can take time to develop.

An associated experience concerned the extent to which the careers leaders felt supported and empowered to pursue their roles. Most if not all of the participants relayed what seemed an honest sense of being supported by the leadership team. However, the extent of the support, and genuine access to organisational levers of power, seemed to vary. Some noted that the head teacher would meet briefly with the careers leader, and offer supportive words - particularly if the school or college's progress against the benchmarks was 'going well.' This was in contrast to others who had the support and interest of a member of the board of governors who had responsibility for careers guidance. Such interest resulted, in some cases, in termly reports to the governors about the progress towards the benchmarks. This structural lever was one example of how careers leaders can translate their assets into desired organisational outcomes (Alsop, 2005). Most of the participants expressed a sense of needing to find similar organisational levers in order to add some force to their matrix management approach. For example, they hoped that the changes to the OFSTED inspection would promote a genuine and consistent interest in careers guidance as a central part of their institutions' educational mission.

The role of career development theories

Whilst the workshops in particular were thus concerned with the 'being and doing' of careers leadership, the face to face delivery of our programme, and the on-line materials, explored career development theories and models of practice, e.g. in relation to personal guidance. The participants' feedback attested to their need to understand and explore relevant theories as a way of understanding the complexity of careers choice; and to better inform the development of a stable careers programme. An indicator of the latter is that some participants observed that their provision was a series of well-rated activities, e.g. careers fairs, or work experience, that didn't necessarily connect up into an overall programme with a clear vision. As a teaching team, we found that the learners were particularly engaged by Patton and McMahon's (2014) linkage of Systems Theory to career development. The concept was useful in showing how young people (in this case) lived as part of complex, inter-connected systems; and that a careers programme needed to acknowledge such complexity, rather than presuming that, for instance, information giving and receiving is an unproblematic process that should automatically develop aspirations and action. Andrews and Hooley (2018) are clear on this point: the importance to careers leadership of a critical understanding of career development theories. In addition, the theories also reminded the careers leaders that the education of young people more broadly emerges from multi-stranded socio-political, cultural and economic contexts.

A further point concerning a critical understanding of careers theories links to the becoming of a careers leader. Part of establishing a careers vision and plan is to develop a personal approach to enacting change (ibid.). On our programme, this featured in an exercise which also reflected my varied experience of leading and managing. The participants were invited to reflect on, and discuss some fundamental questions, such as, as a careers leader, what do I want? And why? And what assets have I got? Who else do I need to involve? Based on feedback, these questions helped the learners to formulate, and articulate, 'what they wanted.' These formulations were also supported by their developing appreciation of career development theories. This process helped to address a sense felt by some people of having the role foisted on them (with a small uplift in salary in some cases, according to our cohort) without much clear direction. In short, they realised that they had to provide vision and leadership.

Conclusions

The Gatsby Benchmarks, the Careers Leader role, and the CEC training programme, have been largely welcomed by the sector. The hope is that these developments will indeed help to address the issues of inconsistent provision and quality of careers guidance in schools and colleges in England. Our experience of working with new careers leaders on our training programme attests to their commitment to the role and, most importantly, to transforming the career prospects of young people. In doing so, the challenges they have faced include role definition; becoming a careers leader with a clear vision and rationale; organisational challenges, such as matrix management and resource constraints; and varying levels of internal and external support. As well as their concerns with the 'being and doing' of their role, they have also been keen to develop critical insights into career development theories. The balance and composition of our programme has evolved to address these concerns. We also seek continually to strike a balance between 'training' and encouraging learners to engage in career development theories, not least, those that underpin career learning skills.

Balanced against these positive developments and experiences, is the hope that governmental funding to support careers leadership continues in order to embed and consolidate the emerging gains and good practice. From my own practice, it is clear that the CEC are continually reviewing and redeveloping their guidance and tools, e.g. with the launch of a revised Compass tool for September 2019, and streamlining the process by which more schools and colleges are encouraged to nominate their careers leaders for training, e.g. by using the Careers hubs as co-ordinating contacts with training providers. We can only wait to see how the future funding settlement for schools and colleges enables the embedding of the benchmarks.

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