JOURNAL OF THE
National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

October 2019, Issue 43

Contents

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PUBLISHER

The *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* is published in partnership with the CDI by: National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC), The Lodge, Cheerbrook Road, Willaston, Nantwich CW5 7EN.

www.nicec.org

10.20856/jnicec.4301

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

10.20856/jnicec.4309

Career beliefs, aspirations and after-school activities: The effects of socio-economic status and ethnicity

Nikki Storey

This study examines the career beliefs of students from an ethnically diverse state school in London using an adapted short version of the 'Careers Beliefs Patterns Scale' (Arulmani, Van Laar & Easton, 2003, p.199). Results suggest that ethnicity had a much lower impact than socio-economic status on students' career beliefs and aspirations, whilst religion and ethnicity had a substantial influence on participation in extra-curricular activities. Recommendations include working with parents to create programmes which support students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and communicating with religious organisations regarding ways that employability skills can be developed within their youth programmes.

Introduction

Studies show that factors such as socio-economic status (SES), ethnicity and gender have a greater impact on the career decision-making processes of young people than their personal aspirations and desires (Bassot, 2011). Moreover, career choices reflect an unequal access to economic, social and cultural capital, which are partially developed through access to opportunities such as extracurricular activities and relevant role models (Archer, 2002). As the careers adviser in an ethnically and socio-economically diverse girls' school in Hackney, London, I was interested in investigating how these factors impact on students' career beliefs.

Career Beliefs

Career beliefs – defined as 'culturally mediated beliefs held by a group about the meaning and purpose of work' (Arulmani, 2011, p.86) – play an important role in the way individuals approach their career development, as they can influence receptivity to learning new skills and developing interests, setting goals, making career decisions and taking action (Roll & Arthur, 2002). People act according to their beliefs, regardless of whether or not they are accurate. Self-defeating beliefs prevent people from taking advantage of opportunities, aligning with the suggestion that thoughts ultimately determine feelings and behaviour (Turner & Conkel Ziebell, 2011). An ability to seize opportunities is important for accessing the labour market, and therefore it is beneficial for young people to be supported in identifying their own negative career beliefs and developing more constructive ones.

Ethnicity and culture are relevant to career beliefs because they influence views on career possibilities. Racism, isolation, shifting social norms and expectations, and having few role models of the same ethnic background can be discouraging (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Issues affecting ethnic minority students' career paths include expected low academic performance and conflictual relationships with teachers, a limited range of occupations being designated as culturally acceptable, opportunity structures, and conforming to social context and norms (Bassot, 2012; Hardgrove, Rootham & McDowell, 2015). Additionally, research shows that the impact of heritage community endorsed career beliefs can persist even when a family has migrated to another country (Arulmani et al., 2003).

However, ethnicity alone does not explain the career-related choices of minority ethnic students, which are situated within a variety of other constraints, possibilities and concerns, many of which are experienced by students from other non-minority backgrounds (Reay, David & Ball, 2005). Assumptions about the social class and the educational inheritance of ethnic minority students are commonly oversimplified. The definition of 'ethnicity' used here includes religio-cultural practices, beliefs and norms, as these tend to be inextricably linked. Religio-cultural commitments and values can heavily influence the ability of young people to engage in experiential learning opportunities that help them to develop useful employability skills (Reid, 2016). Transferable skills are increasingly important and so it is crucial that young people are given opportunities to try a range of activities and develop their skill base. Studies indicate that participation in after-school clubs results in higher average grades, lower absenteeism, interpersonal competencies, higher aspirations, and improved attention and motivation (Singh & Mishra, 2014). The focus school in this study provides around one hundred hours a week of free after-school activities that students can attend after the end of the school day, such as homework support, sports activities and musical projects. Internal school records show that these activities are attended by students with and without pupil premium funding, special educational needs, and from a range of religio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, though some activities may attract more students from one sub-group than others. Therefore, extra-curricular activities have been included to identify which groups engage most and whether this mediates or contributes to disparities in SES or ethnicity.

Adolescents have been shown to rank the support of their parents as a greater source of influence on their career expectations than that of teachers or peers (Metheny & McWhirter, 2013). Furthermore, young people's aspirations are most commonly influenced by home and school contexts, with students most likely to aspire to a job done by a family member, family friend or neighbour, or to a role relating to one of their extra-curricular interests (Archer, DeWitt & Wong, 2014). Students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to attend extra-curricular activities so occupational awareness may remain limited to low-paying job roles. SES is linked to financial, cultural and social resources (or 'capital') which can develop competencies that are vital for effective career and life management (Guichard, 2015). The changing demographic of Hackney and labour market shifts have resulted in students' SES playing a more prominent and complex role in career beliefs.

Belief patterns may be embedded in the minds of the community and transmitted through social learning, with younger generations being exposed to the failure experiences and resulting defeatist attitudes of important role models which then influence their levels of self-efficacy (Arulmani et al., 2003). Research shows that unemployment in inner-city areas reduces young people's access to role models who can demonstrate how their efforts helped them to meet career objectives (Turner & Conkel Ziebell, 2011).

These factors argue that this area of research is important because the career beliefs of young people influence the types of jobs that they qualify and apply for in the future. It also provides an improved understanding of the needs of the students with whom I work and supports the provision of anti-oppressive careers guidance, which promotes social justice and equity.

Context and methodology

The study focused on a school in Hackney, the sixth most ethnically diverse borough in London. Hackney is not only home to a higher percentage of individuals who identify as Muslim (14.1%) than is typical for London (12.4%), but also has higher numbers of lone-parents than the average for London (London Borough of Hackney Policy Team, 2017), and 21.6% workless households, compared to the London average of 12.8% (NOMIS, 2017). However, since 2011 the number of young, white, primarily creative professionals moving to the area has increased, creating a sense of affective displacement amongst some local young people who no longer feel that they 'fit in' (Butcher & Dickens, 2016).

The student sample was taken from an all-female state-funded school that provides education and pastoral support for around 1200 girls aged 11-18. The school has more than three times the national

average number of students whose first language is not English, and almost double the national average number of students who are eligible for pupil premium funding (Department for Education, 2017).

The over-arching aim for this study was to research the extent to which ethnicity and SES affect the career beliefs of young women. A variation of the Careers Beliefs Patterns Scale (CBPS) model was used to gauge the effects of ethnicity and SES on the positivity of students' career beliefs, their engagement in after-school activities, their future career aims and their access to role models. Based on the results of earlier studies, I formulated the following six hypotheses:

- Students from ethnic minority backgrounds hold less positive career beliefs than white students.
- Students from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly from Muslim religio-cultural backgrounds, are less likely to be engaged extensively in after-school activities.
- Students from higher SES backgrounds regardless of ethnicity will have more positive career beliefs than students from lower SES backgrounds.
- Students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to have role models who have talked to them about their career paths.
- Students from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds have lower career aspirations than their higher SES and white ethnic counterparts.
- Students from ethnic minority backgrounds have a more limited range of career aspirations than white students.

Following ethical clearance from the school and Canterbury Christ Church University, a letter of invitation was issued to the parents of 183 female year 9 students of whom 49 declined to participate and 2 were absent on the day. Using a variation of the CBPS short form, a self-completion paper questionnaire and a short series of questions relating to student demographics, access to career role models and participation in after-school activities was distributed to 134 students aged 13-14 years from a range of ethnic, SES and religious backgrounds.

Prior to conducting the research some of the vignettes were re-worded to increase resonance for our city-dwelling study participants. The vignettes all outlined scenarios and conclusions that one might draw from them, such as: 'Jessica keeps on failing in Mathematics and Science. Therefore, getting a job will be difficult for her'. Participants then responded with the extent to which they agreed or disagreed through a 5-point Likert scale, which allowed for analysis of broader attitudes. Six of the included vignettes examined the respondent's thoughts on engaging with further education to increase work skills and/or academic qualification (Proficiency). A further six highlighted the individual's sense of control over the trajectory of their life (Control and Self-Direction), and the remaining two assessed students' attitudes to overcoming barriers encountered during their career preparation (Persistence). Two more questions concerned role models (Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris & Sappington, 2017), and the questionnaire ended with a series of questions on students' demographic background and extracurricular engagement.

The questionnaires enabled large amounts of data to be collected without exposing participants to peer pressure, while a 5-point Likert scale allowed for more complex responses than a yes/no tick box. The results were collated, coded and analysed to identify significant patterns using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Although the data were primarily quantitative, an interpretivist approach to the analysis was adopted because of the subjective and personal nature of career beliefs. To examine participant's aspirations, jobs listed by students were assigned an average general educational demand (GED) score from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles and linked to UK occupational information (David, 2013; National Academy of Sciences, 1991). To categorise and classify the level of skill involved in the types of occupations that interested students an occupation coding tool was used (ONS, 2016). The mean ranking for occupational status generated by the National Opinion Research (Smith & Son, 2014) was used to examine the status level of the students' aspirations. Students from different ethnic backgrounds were grouped in accordance with the Office for National Statistics primary principles, while SES was analysed using two measures: free school meals (FSM) and a pupil premium funding indicator (PPI).

Students' religious identities were identified by parents and student names were replaced with numerical references to ensure anonymity.

Findings and analysis

Statistical analysis revealed that that the responses of students from PPI backgrounds were significantly more negative than those from non-PPI backgrounds ($p=0.013$). These results were amplified when using the same test to compare the responses from FSM students with those of non-FSM students ($p=0.009$). These replicate findings from an earlier study by Arulmani et al. (2003) that found that students from higher SES backgrounds demonstrate more positive career beliefs than students from lower SES backgrounds.

Further analysis of the impact of SES within different ethnic groups revealed that PPI created a significant difference in career beliefs only among Asian ethnic minority students (Mann-Whitney U test, $p=0.038$). However, a significant relationship was also found between ethnicity and FSM status in the case of white students ($p=0.021$). This partly disproves the hypothesis that students from higher SES backgrounds, regardless of ethnicity, demonstrate more positive career beliefs than students from lower SES backgrounds, and reflects research by Abbas (2010) who noted that families of young South Asian women from lower-SES backgrounds held a narrower view of their lives in the UK due to within-community solidarity and wider societal discrimination. Further research may shed light on whether this relates to the number of generations that have been through UK societal cycles, or to the marginalisation of minority groups (Ball, Reay & David 2002).

The finding relating to white FSM students fits recent examination of lower-SES white individuals as a nationally under-achieving group, indicating a relationship between this and their negative career beliefs (Fisher, 2017). In addition to SES, social classes, defined as 'groups of people who share similar economic circumstances and associated lifestyles' (Warwick-Booth, 2013, p.54) may also play a role. For example, parents from higher social-class backgrounds socialise their children in ways that contribute to educational success (Berrington, Roberts & Tammes, 2016). However, class was not part of this study so further research would be required to confirm these suggestions.

The findings revealed that students from minority ethnic groups are no less likely to hold negative career beliefs than their white counterparts (Mann-Whitney test, $p=0.601$). One explanation could be that increasingly positive career beliefs amongst ethnic minorities are due to changes in opportunity structures. Alternatively, it could also be that the students are too young to have developed an awareness of ethnicity-related barriers that could result in a shift towards negative career beliefs (Melvin & Galles, 2011).

Other notable findings relating to ethnicity included a demonstration of the influence of the cultural 'veil'. Amongst the white respondents, 45% did not consider themselves to belong to an ethnic group, almost 20% more than any other ethnic group. Similarly, responses from mixed ethnicity students could be explained by a sense of being situated in a society that categorises ethnicity as a dichotomy, and the resulting struggle to claim a self-defined identity (Warwick-Booth, 2013; Uy, 2016).

Scores for the Proficiency Beliefs scale suggest that regardless of SES or ethnicity, students understand the benefits of engaging in further education to increase their work-related skills or academic qualifications. Less positive were the scores given for the Control and Self-Direction Beliefs scale which suggest that they may not believe that it is within their control to progress on to further study and develop their skills. This belief has been shown to affect students' attitudes to learning, creating a dissonance between academic effort and future career rewards (Deardorff, Gonzalez & Sandler, 2003).

The results of the Persistence Beliefs scale should be utilised with caution due to the limited number of questions in this category. However, overall the responses support the findings from wider studies that young people in the UK, particularly young women, lack resilience, emphasising the need for interventions to support the development of positive emotions towards their academic lives (Wang, 2017).

A chi-square test identified a relationship between PPI and responses to the Role Models question (p=0.003). This indicates that students eligible for PPI do not believe that their role models have the cultural and social resources needed for effective career management (Guichard, 2015). Or alternatively, that young people from lower-SES backgrounds do not have access to a role model who holds the type of career role that they aspire to in the future (Archer *et al.*, 2014).

Consistent with wider research, an analysis of responses by ethnicity revealed that extracurricular attendance was highest amongst white students, and lowest amongst Asian students (chi-square test, p=0.012). Similarly, students from Muslim families were significantly (chi-square test, p=0.037) less likely to attend after school activities than those who came from a non-Muslim background. These findings could be due to a range of factors, including larger family sizes and a resulting need for young people to support at home, an emphasis on collectivism and spending time with family, or a misunderstanding of the potential benefits of engaging in after-school activities (Jiang & Peguero, 2016).

Further analysis also found that non-PPI students were more likely to participate in after-school activities than PPI students (chi-square test, p=0.000). This was somewhat unexpected, as the activities are provided free of charge. However, it corroborates previous studies which suggest that the participation of young people from higher-SES families in structured activities is due to parents taking what Covay and Carbonaro (2010, p.21) refer to as a 'concerted cultivation approach', while young people from lower-SES families have large amounts of unstructured free time.

Average GED scores revealed a significant relationship between SES and career aspirations (p=0.023). This may result from friends and family of young people from lower SES backgrounds holding a limited range of roles, making it difficult to visualise alternative career options (Hardgrove et al., 2015). In contrast, aspirations amongst middle-class children are thought to be higher than their working-class counterparts due to the internalisation of parental ambitions, and increased opportunity and resource to reach these ambitious goals (Schoon & Parsons, 2002).

These results suggest that divisions run along SES lines, reinforcing the notion of perpetuated poverty presented in previous studies and raising concerns about how best to tackle issues of social mobility. A clear benefit of increasing student engagement with extracurricular activities and the world of work is that this raises awareness of the range of occupations available. The idea that some roles are not for people from certain socio-economic backgrounds (Archer, 2002) has been connected to ethnicity too, although this study did not find a link between being from a minority ethnic background and having lower career aspirations (p=0.291). However, this could be because the students have not yet reached an age where they have started to perceive ethnicity-related barriers that could affect their participation in certain occupations. On the other hand, it could suggest that because of campaigns to raise aspirations students from ethnic minority backgrounds are considering jobs previously thought not to be available. It could also be that the increased focus on diversity has improved employer practices, and so students are aware of individuals from their ethnic background working in a wider range of roles.

Implications for practice

This study explored the influence of ethnicity and SES on career beliefs and whether they hold the same significance for different groups. It demonstrated that tools created outside of a Western cultural context can add value when used within a Western context.

In contrast with earlier studies, the results suggest that SES has a stronger influence on career beliefs, aspirations and extracurricular involvement than ethnicity, and may be a main dividing factor. It is difficult to know how to tackle this in student activities without making the delineations of wealth obvious and therefore uncomfortable for the individuals participating. However, enabling greater participation in after-school activities could begin by engaging parents in identifying and addressing barriers that prevent student involvement and finding ways around them.

Asian students were most likely to be Muslim and least likely to attend extracurricular activities, and yet had some of the highest aspirations and career

beliefs, contradicting previous studies. However, it may be beneficial still to explore how best careers practitioners and religious establishments can work together to support the development of students' employability skills.

It would be worthwhile to research to what extent students from inner-city communities feel that they control their futures, to identify ways of increasing their self-direction beliefs, and to generate interventions that help young people examine the outcomes of more adaptive career behaviours. Whilst it is unrealistic to expect equal aspirations and attainment in all young people and wrong to stigmatise those not wishing to pursue high-status roles, we should tailor career guidance to ensure that students whose career beliefs could limit their future options receive appropriate support.

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