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Promoting research and reflective practice in career development

NICEC

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

NICEC STATEMENT

The Fellows of NICEC agreed the following statement in 2010.

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- Career development in the workplace: private and public sector, small, medium and large organisations, private practitioners.
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Making a contribution to knowledge in career guidance and counselling, career learning and development

Welcome to the autumn edition of the NICEC journal. For this issue we are focusing on the research of students working on Masters' dissertations or Doctoral theses. Contributors, from a number of countries, are researching and working in the areas of career guidance and counselling or career learning and development. All the articles featured in this issue are from completed or well developed studies. Our authors are to be congratulated for the quality of their research projects and their commitment to continuous professional development, alongside the contribution to knowledge in our sector.

The study of our first author, **Nathan Iverson** from the USA, takes a macro perspective. He states 'the need for dynamic, globally-equipped, adaptive employees has become increasingly necessary to the success of organisations'. To enhance employees' career management skills, a better understanding is required of what is needed to 'navigate' the current and future challenges for career development. Nathan's study compared 2870 individuals across 40 nations to identify the Career Adaptive Practices (CAPs) they used and their relationship to career satisfaction. The study suggests that: 'The predictions for career satisfaction varied by global region indicating that the importance of the practices vary by culture'. The article also outlines practical applications from the study and makes suggestions for future research.

The second article from **Erik Hagaseth Haug** is a study of quality assurance in career guidance in Norwegian schools. Erik's project suggests that there is an assumption of a power struggle between different interests on how quality ought to be understood and then assured. He states: 'Further, the study has an assumption that career guidance is a complex social phenomena and that a systemic approach is needed.' His work aims at building a holistic, rich and nuanced insight of the multitude of understandings about what we mean by quality in career guidance services within a school context. To do this, Erik employs a critical realist approach to understand such social phenomena and proposes a model to encompass the interrelatedness of the meanings for quality in career guidance in a school context. Arguments are also presented on the potential impact of developing strong quality assurance systems for career guidance.

Our third author is **Liam Harkin** who writes on guidance counsellors' perspectives of the impact of budgetary cutbacks across different school types in the Republic of Ireland. His work found that the impact of budgetary cutbacks on guidance in Irish schools, resulted in funding inequalities between 'second-level school types' that contributed to uneven guidance reductions. These differences were evident, primarily, between fee-charging schools and schools in the Free Education Scheme (FES), leading to unequal distribution of care and a negative student experience. Liam states: 'From its inception in the 1970s, guidance in Irish schools had a holistic, equality agenda' as an 'effective counterweight against many inequalities in schools.' The study suggests managing greater care demands, as a result of decreased counselling services, with less time available, increased guidance counsellors' stress.

Next, **Nalayini Thambar**, writes about the new 'employability climate' within Higher Education (HE) in parts of the UK, which has emerged following the increase in undergraduate tuition fees in 2012. Part of the impact of the new fee regime is a greater attention to graduate outcomes or 'destinations', post university. Nalayini states: 'The resulting focus on careers advisers, questions established practice and their claims to be experts in student career development, yet has potential for greater recognition of the role.' In her article Nalayini argues for such recognition within and beyond universities. Her study explored perspectives on the professional identity of careers advisers by the collection of data via interviewing 21 careers

advisers from 14 universities across England, Wales and Scotland, using a sample reflecting league table data. Her findings suggest that careers advisers in HE are challenged in their professional identity, yet are strongly committed to their role. She concludes by developing recommendations to (re)establish careers advisers as experts in this increasingly visible aspect of the student experience.

In the next article we move from higher education to the experience of young people in an uncertain labour market. **Louise Badelow's** interpretative study explored the narratives of two young people in relation to their engagement with their careers. Louise was interested in how these young people responded to labour market uncertainties and their sense of autonomy or agency with regard to their future career expectations. Louise tells us: 'Whilst the study did not set out to validate any specified theoretical principle, it became evident that both established career theory and post-modern thinking, especially in relation to the role of adversity in building resilience, had shaped these stories'. Her tentative findings suggest that career resilience, alongside other factors affecting career management skills, may have its origins in early experiences and relationships. The conclusion appears to validate the assertion, often questioned, that effective programmes of career learning and development can help to equip young people with the skills they need to negotiate a rapidly changing labour market.

Annemarie Oomen, in the next piece, adopts a European lens for her study which explores parental involvement in career education and guidance in secondary education. Her study draws together the research findings on the importance of parents in career decision making and career building. Annemarie explains that: 'An European political focus on involving parents in education seeks to reduce the dropout rate, in order to improve the efficiency of the educational system'. Since the 1960s research has indicated that parents and families are often the primary influencers in terms of career decisions, leading to work that seeks to involve parents more. Annemarie describes three ways of categorising these interventions as: **a)** career information-centred; **(b)** family learning; and **(c)** family therapy, and advocates the need for enhanced models for parental engagement in career guidance.

In the penultimate article, **Catherine Reynolds** writes from a focus of careers work in higher education. She describes how career learning and narratology can be blended to create a new approach to career education which she terms 'career criticism'. To show how this can be taught, she draws on the approach to literary criticism as taught within literary studies. Catherine explains that: 'Careers can be seen as stories, conscious and unconscious texts; analysing elements such as structure, plot, narrators, and narrative techniques enables students to interpret surface and below-surface meanings of career stories'. The outcomes are potential tools to assess career texts during formal and informal career learning and development. A range of examples is provided. The approach, which could be applied to other sectors outside HE, can help clients to understand and take action in relation to the multiple influences that have an impact on career development.

Finally, **Anne Delauzun**, also writing from an HE perspective, suggests that many students are becoming more involved in their own careers and employability support via organising workshops, employer talks and networking events. She wonders if it may be time for careers professionals to take a step back and leave them to it. The existing careers literature, she states, focuses on occupational choice and the job search process, whereas careers practitioners generally acknowledge a much broader definition of career behaviour. The article explores evidence a range of contexts, including relevant literature and practitioner experience, of peer influence on HE students' career behaviour. Anne states that, 'there is much to suggest peer influence could be better harnessed as a means of increasing and deepening opportunities for students' career learning'. The article also considers the implications for the design and delivery of HE careers and employability support.

This edition of the NICEC journal has 'showcased' eight contributions to knowledge derived from post-graduate research. Articles from new researchers are always welcome and provide evidence of the talent, commitment and capacity of colleagues working in diverse contexts who are producing insightful work to inform and inspire practice.

Hazel Reid, Editor

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Career development practices: A global comparison

Nathan Iverson

We have entered an international era where the need for dynamic, globally-equipped, adaptive employees has become increasingly necessary to the success of organisations. Whilst employees want to develop their careers, they may lack the career management skills to do so and look to their employer for support. Better clarity is needed to understand the career management skills and practices that people can develop to navigate this new reality. This study compared 2870 individuals across 40 nations to identify the Career Development Practices (CDPs) they used and their relationship to career satisfaction. All seven sets of career practices (stretching oneself, knowing oneself, adapting to change, spotting opportunities, networking, building one's brand, and reflection/planning) were predictive of career satisfaction with networking emerging as the most important. In addition, results indicated that organisational career support added to and compensated for lower individual scores on the career practices. Furthermore, the CDPs that predicted career satisfaction varied by global region indicating that the importance of the practices varies by culture. Practical applications for career practitioners and talent management professionals are discussed in addition to suggestions for future research.

Introduction

The workplace has become more dynamic, volatile, complex and global. The world of work is changing. Some have described it as the era of continuous discontinuity where change is the only constant. To not only survive, but thrive in this new reality, organisations need to be adaptive. So do the employees within them.

Career adaptability

Some organisations have addressed the volatility and increasing demands by attempting to find, select, and develop their 'high potential' employees. The trouble with only focusing on a few employees is that in today's organisations, the success or failure of an organisation doesn't necessarily rest only on senior leaders. The customer service and decisions made by frontline employees can make or break the company. Employees are needed at all levels that can sense, adapt and respond to dynamic changes in their environment (Hall, 2004). Organisations are also recognising the need to identify diverse talent from throughout their workforce and see the benefits of developing the 'vital' many.

Furthermore, focusing on fixed traits that people do or do not have is limiting. A more powerful approach is to find and nurture employee capabilities that can be learned and developed, and to allow employees to excel in their area of 'strength'. Whilst employees need to develop the skills and knowledge to do their job effectively, there are other practices that employees can use to meet future workplace demands. This includes developing the skills and attitudes to proactively manage their current and future career. These meta-skills have been called Career Development Practices because they are higher level skills that can be learned and developed. As careers have become increasingly protean (constantly changing and self-driven) (Hall, 2004) and boundaryless (across life roles and across organisations) (Arthur and Rousseau, 2001), employees need to have strong, adaptive skillsets to address current demands and position themselves to take on future challenges.

To help address this need, a global sample of workers was used to explore three questions: (1) Which career development practices are used most/least often and

what is their relationship with the employees' career satisfaction? (2) To what extent does organisational support enhance or compensate for individual's career development practices? And (3) Which career development practices are most often used in different global regions and which ones are most predictive of employee career satisfaction?

Career development practices (CDPs)

The research in career development suggests that seven meta-skillsets are particularly important in helping employees meet the demands of a changing workforce (Lombardo and Eichinger, 1989; Winter and Jackson, 2004; Yost and Plunckett, 2009). These include: (1) *Knowing oneself* – accurately understanding one's capabilities and one's strengths and weaknesses in relation to others; (2) *Stretching oneself* – the willingness and ability to take on challenging tasks and assignments that will lead to growth; (3) *Adapting to change* – the willingness and ability to adjust one's approach and adjust to new demands in the work environment; (4) *Spot the opportunities* – one's ability to identify and create work opportunities for oneself; (5) *Building a network* – establishing connections with others for social and professional support; (6) *Building one's brand* – crafting an active and visible reputation in/outside your organisation; and (7) *Reflection/planning* – regularly stopping to assess what is working, what isn't working and planning the future.

These seven meta-skills are important in an economy where employees are increasingly called on to think of themselves as a 'business of one' and challenged to manage their own career. The good news is that all of these skills can be learned. They are practices that can be developed through deliberate practice. Employees and career coaches can enhance these skills. Organisations also play an important role in creating the conditions and process where employees have the opportunity to develop and enhance their skillsets.

Organisational support

More specifically, organisations facilitate the environment and conditions where employees can practice and develop these meta-career skills. Research suggests that organisational processes such as performance management, training, and mentoring programmes can enhance (or get in the way of) employee development (Tansky and Cohen, 2001). Similarly, co-workers and employees' immediate managers play important roles in their development.

For the sake of what?

Enhancing employee adaptability and accelerating their development begs another important question – development for the sake of what? Highly adaptive employees in dynamic, complex environments tend to be better performers, are more engaged, and more satisfied with their jobs. The latter two dimensions are particularly important in today's economy. The employee contract has changed in the recent decades from lifetime employment to a continuously negotiated contract between the organisation and the employee (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001). The two parties will continue to do business as long as the relationship remains valuable for both the employee and the employer. It can and will be terminated whenever the conditions are no longer met.

Organisations that are dependent on their talent are in a tenuous position. To keep a strong, effective workforce, they need to provide an attractive, compelling work environment where employees feel like they are contributing, satisfied with their job, and continuing to grow. If they don't perceive that these conditions are being met, jobs are becoming mobile in the increasingly dynamic and boundaryless marketplace. An employee's satisfaction with their pay, benefits, sense of doing work one enjoys, meaning, growth, and work/life balance - all become critical in their decision to stay in a job or move (Michaels *et al,* 2001). Thus, for organisations, attracting, selecting and retaining a talented workforce has hinged on their ability to build the employability of their workforce - through methods such as career development – which in turn will increase performance abilities and career satisfaction.

The global workforce

Although organisations are increasingly called to operate in a global environment, a better understanding is needed to sort out which Career Development Practices are most important in different global regions. For example, one could imagine

that some dimensions such as knowing oneself and building one's brand would be particularly important in individualistic cultures such as the United States and the United Kingdom, whereas other dimensions such as networking would be more important in collectivistic cultures such as China and Japan.

The purpose of this research project was to explore these questions and add insights into the Career Development Practices that are most strongly related to career satisfaction, the role that organisational support can play, and how these relationships might vary across different global regions.

The research

Survey participants

A career development survey called the CareerPulse™ was completed by 2870 respondents from 73 different nations. This tool was a part of Career Innovation's larger Career Portal online-platform (The Career Innovation Company, 2016). The average age was 39 and 47% were female. Job positions included senior leaders (16%), managers (23%), and individual contributors (60%).

Respondents rated the extent to which they used each of the Career Development Practices (CDPs) including: (a) knowing oneself (4 items); (b) stretching oneself (4 items); (c) adapting to change (6 items); (d) spotting opportunities (3 items); (e) building a network (5 items); (f) building one's brand (6 items); and (g) reflecting/planning (6 items). In addition, the respondents reported the organisational support they received (3 items) that focused on the feedback provided and potential future career opportunities within the organisation. Finally, respondents reported their career satisfaction across a number of dimensions (11 items) including financial rewards, doing work one enjoys, meaning and purpose in one's work, growth opportunities, and work/life balance.

Upon completion of the CareerPulse™ inventory, participants were given feedback on their survey results. This included information regarding their strengths, areas for growth, and practical steps for developing their skills in each of the career adaptive practice areas.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation with Career Satisfaction

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Correlation with Career Satisfaction
Knowing oneself	3.26	.80	.68	.53**
Stretching oneself	3.16	.85	.67	.48**
Adapting to change	3.62	.70	.70	.39**
Spotting opportunities	2.69	.99	.66	.55**
Building a network	3.11	.91	.81	.58**
Building one's brand	2.55	.92	.83	.39**
Reflection/planning	2.89	.90	.83	.43**
Organisational support	2.61	.99	.66	.60**
Career satisfaction	3.25	.70	.84	

Note: ** = Statistically significant at the p <.01 level indicating that there is less than a 1 in 100 chance that the correlation was due to random chance.

Results

Career development practices and career satisfaction

To begin, the author explored which Career Development Practices were used most often by employees and the extent to which they predicted overall career satisfaction. Table 1 summarises these results.

The results suggest that building one's brand, spotting opportunities, and reflection/planning are the least used career practices. Adapting to change, knowing oneself and stretching oneself are used more often. This is interesting information but takes on significantly more meaning when the correlations with career satisfaction are considered because the least used practices may not prove to be the most impactful. The most potent methods for raising career satisfaction are not to focus on the lowest scores, but rather on the scores which are most statistically connected to career satisfaction as seen in Table 1. This table suggests that organisational support, and an employees' ability to build their network and spot opportunities correlate strongest with career satisfaction and therefore should be our areas of interest.

Career practices and organisational support

Additional analyses were run using a statistical method called hierarchical linear modelling to assess the overall contribution of all seven Career Development Practices together and then to assess the extent to which organisational support added further benefit. The analyses indicated that the Career Development Practices accounted for 40% of the variance in the career satisfaction. When Organisational Support was added, it accounted for an additional 5% of the variance. As a final step, the interaction of the two variables were assessed. The results indicated that organisational support did compensate for most of the Career Development Practices, but the effect was only for networking and knowing one's self; that is, organisational support could help compensate for employees who are weak in these areas.

As a whole, these results suggest that individuals can proactively drive their careers by learning and adopting career development practices that are related to their career satisfaction, but organisations also have an important role to play in nurturing career satisfaction.

Career practices and global regions

As part of the survey, respondents indicated the countries where they resided, allowing us to group the respondents into global regions. How to best group employees is of course a complex endeavour. For example, Asian nations differ significantly in their cultural profiles. Furthermore, more responses were available from some countries (e.g., the United Kingdom, the United States) than others. A series of analyses were therefore conducted to identify meaningful, relatively homogenous global groupings. Analyses were then run to assess the extent of commonality in career development practices (mean values and correlational relationships with career satisfaction scores) across regional countries. In addition, Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2010) were consulted to select countries that could be combined. In the end, six country/regions groups were formed: the United Kingdom (n=1687), the United States (n=200), Western and Central Europe (n=397), the Middle East (n=162), China not including Hong Kong (n=70) and Central/South America (n=62). Some who participated were not able to combine into these regional groupings (n=292).

Table 2 summarises how often the career development practices were used within each region. The relative level of scores is shaded with higher scores showed in white and lower scores in darker grey. A clear pattern emerges. Career Development Practices in the UK, US and Europe typically are much lower than in the other global regions with especially lower scores in the areas of building one's brand and organisational support. This is counter to what one might expect in what is commonly described as an individualistic, self-promoting culture like the US (Hofstede, 2010). For the UK, US, and European nations, the only relative higher score appears to be in the area of adapting to change, but even these scores are relatively lower when compared to employees in the Middle East, China and central/South America. While the regions representing most of the sample (UK, US, Europe) scored lower, this is more likely a function

Table 2.
Career Development Practice Mean Scores by Region

	UK (n=1687)	US (n=200)	Europe (n=397)	Middle East (n=162)	China (n=70)	Central and South America (n=62)
Stretching oneself	3.02	3.12	3.27	3.73	3.71	3.65
Knowing oneself	3.11	3.34	3.30	3.88	3.83	3.74
Adapting to change	3.46	3.66	3.73	4.19	4.06	4.01
Spotting opportunities	2.91	3.04	2.98	3.82	3.79	3.71
Building a network	2.93	3.29	3.07	3.75	3.86	3.73
Building one's brand	2.31	2.50	2.60	3.62	3.51	3.12
Reflection / planning	2.68	2.98	2.95	3.66	3.76	3.50
Organisational support	2.39	2.71	2.62	3.33	3.55	3.30
Career satisfaction	3.14	3.35	3.27	3.56	3.69	3.54

Note: Darker shading indicates relatively low scores, lighter shading indicates moderate scores, and white indicates relatively higher scores.

of regional attributes than the region's proportionate representation as the scores in Table 2 display regional aggregate averages.

A second question was also explored: which career development practices are most predictive of career satisfaction within each region? This is an important issue for employees, career counsellors and organisations. Given limited time and resources, what is the best place to invest one's time and energy? To answer this question, a statistical technique called relative weights analysis was used to assess the proportionate ability each career development has in explaining career satisfaction (see Table 3).

Overall, results indicate more consistency than difference across the regions. Across our global sample, one can hardly go wrong by focusing on networking, spotting opportunities, and knowing one's self. However, the order does differ and the weights do as well. For example, in the US, networking and knowing oneself are similar in their importance. By contrast, in the Middle East, networking and spotting opportunities are important with networking being much more important.

Conclusions

While the world is becoming more dynamic and change-orientated, there are proactive practices that both people and organisations can put into place to navigate this new reality. Three things are clear: (1) Career Development Practices which can be learned and developed are important and related to career satisfaction; (2) Organisations have an important role to play in creating the conditions where employees can utilise and grow these skills; and (3) The Career Practices show a number of consistencies across regions, while there are noteworthy differences.

Table 3.

Top Career Development Practice Drivers by Global Region (Relative Weights Analysis)

Region	Top Career Adaptive Practice Drivers	Relative Weight
Overall (n=2870)	Network	26.6
	Spot Opportunities	22.6
	Know Yourself	15.8
UK (n=1687)	Network	28.6
	Spot Opportunities	24.1
	Know Yourself	17.9
US (n=200)	Network	27.1
	Spot Opportunities	21.4
	Know Yourself	19.5
Europe (n=397)	Network	30.3
	Spot Opportunities	24.5
	Know Yourself	13.0
Middle East (n=162)	Network	22.7
	Spot Opportunities	16.6
	Know Yourself	15.4
China (n=70)	Network	22.4
	Spot Opportunities	19.6
	Know Yourself	16.9
Central and South America (n=62)	Network	23.7
	Spot Opportunities	20.2
	Know Yourself	17.7

Note: Relative weights indicate the proportionate ability each CDP has in explaining career satisfaction.

From our study, the first finding suggests that building a network, spotting opportunities and knowing oneself are the most strongly related to career satisfaction. Interestingly, these are not the areas where employees scored the lowest. This suggests that employees, organisations and career counsellors should not necessarily focus on areas where people are weak, but instead concentrate on career development practices that can bring the biggest impact as seen in their statistical connection to career satisfaction. Secondly, this study found that organisational support also matters. Organisational developmental practices and the support they provide have important roles to play in enhancing employees' career satisfaction.

Finally, the results suggest that mean scores on the career practices may vary by region, but the practices that are most strongly related to career satisfaction are relatively consistent across the global regions. For example, networking practices were in the top two predictors across all global regions. Nevertheless, there were subtle differences such as the variation of the dimensions' relative weights in predicting career satisfaction by region. Therefore, some practices are

always valuable (e.g., networking) but local context can make a difference.

Practical implications

A final analysis was conducted to identify the specific items across all of the scales that were most strongly related to career satisfaction. Table 4 summarises the results. For individuals, the top actions included taking time to recharge, finding people who will challenge one to think in new ways, and surrounding oneself with people who can provide relational support. For organisations, the top actions included helping employees to see future career opportunities within the organisation, ensuring that managers take time to talk to employees about their careers, and providing feedback to employees about potential new roles in the company.

Table 4.

Top Individual and Organisational Items that Predict Career Satisfaction

For Individual	For Organisations
I take enough time to recharge my energy levels and avoid burnout.	I can see future career opportunities for me in this organisation.
I have people who will stretch me to think in new and different ways.	My manager takes the time to talk to me about my career.
I have people who will provide me with friendly support.	I receive feedback on my potential for new roles.

Note: Items are listed in order of their ability to predict career satisfaction.

Limitations

A few important limitations should be noted when considering this research. First of all, this study was correlational in nature so causality cannot be inferred. Future work is needed to help employees build these skills and then assess the extent to which they causally impact later career satisfaction. Secondly, other outcomes such as job performance, future employability, and turnover should be also considered.

As noted at the beginning of the paper, enhancing employee career satisfaction is critical when talented employees are central to an organisation's success. Building a strong, resilient, satisfied workforce is a worthy outcome on its own! However, future work should consider other additional career outcomes. Finally, this study stands apart in its ability to study career practices with a large sample of employees across global regions. The results should still be interpreted with caution given the non-random sample of employees. Generalising the regional results should be done with restraint.

Final thoughts

Moving into a practical application for current times, the workplace is often a fast-moving environment. There is a need to equip both the organisation and the employee with career development behaviour that will increase their adaptability and resilience. The career development practices outlined in this article, offer a way to help all employees not only survive, but also thrive in an increasingly connected world.

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Can you hear the people sing? Quality-development in career guidance in Norwegian Schools: A study on the importance of awareness of different voices

Erik Hagaseth Haug

Quality assurance and development are pivotal issues in Career Guidance services. There is an assumption in my project that there is an ongoing power struggle on how quality, as concept, ontologically ought to be understood between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The project aims at building a holistic, rich and nuanced model of the multitude of understandings of the concept of quality in career guidance services in a school context. I propose a systemic model of the interrelatedness in understandings of quality in career guidance in a school context, based on a critical realistic influenced grounded theory approach.

Introduction

> Very few people would disagree that good career guidance is critical if young people are to raise their aspirations and capitalize on the opportunities available to them. Yet equally few people would say that all is well with the current system of career guidance in this country. It is especially regrettable therefore that the current situation, in which so many young people are kept in the dark about the full range of options open to them, has been allowed to persist for so many years.
>
> (Gatsby, 2014:2)

This article summarizes a PhD project on career guidance services in a Norwegian school context. The overall purpose of this project is adding research-based knowledge to the ongoing development and assessment of career guidance services. It advocates an increased awareness on different representations concerning the aim of guidance for adolescents, and the consequences this will have on the organizational and procedural aspects of guidance. Further, I argue for the importance of a 'deep' awareness towards underlying societal mechanism generating the representations. I will argue for an integrative and eclectic understanding, both inside and between different subsystems of a society.

Introduction to the phenomena of interest

Guidance has received increasing attention at international, European, and national levels during the past 15 years (Council of the European Union, 2004 and 2008; Kunnskapsdepartementet, ONR 2016; OECD, 2004a; Plant, 2012). In Europe, the need for national systems providing accessible and professional guidance services has been highlighted (ELGPN, 2012 and 2015). Further, a need for a special focus on services for young people has been emphasized (Borbély-Pecze and Hutchinson, 2013; Oomen and Plant, 2014; Gysbers and Henderson, 2012). Regarding the potential impact of guidance provision in schools, Hooley (2014: 36) makes the following concluding comments: 'The evidence base for careers work in schools is probably one of the best-developed elements of the overall lifelong guidance evidence base.' Despite this apparently strong agreement on the importance, arguments for a well-developed evidence base, and promising initiatives at a European policy

level, Hughes (2013) argues that the situation for career guidance has worsened in recent times. This aligns with the essence in the introductory quotation to this article (Gatsby, 2014: 2). Patton and McMahon (2014: 325) further elaborate this by saying: 'For over two decades, career practitioners in schools have faced issues such as timetable overcrowding resulted in limited time for career learning, limited budgets, limited support and ill-defined role definitions'. They continue by saying: 'career education and guidance programs are often viewed as extra-curricular activities taking time away from the curriculum that really matters'.

These apparently contradicting understandings of what 'we' want of the guidance provision for young people, what 'we' know about its potential private and public impact (Watts, 1999), and the description of the experience of provision, triggered my curiosity. In my project I am questioning why a service, highly regarded both among policy makers, researchers and users seems to struggle with defining a clear vision? My initial assumption was that it had to do with a fundamental issue related to different representations of what good service mean. This led to the following preliminary research questions:

- What is the problem represented to be for different stakeholders, users and beneficiaries, and in theories, research and policy documents relevant for school based career guidance services in a Norwegian context?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?
- What effects (organizational and procedural solutions) are produced by this representation of the problem?
- What representations are 'silenced' in the current dialogue about the problem and its solutions?

A critical realistic influenced systemic theoretical framework

Edwards, O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) recommend starting a research process with an immanent critique of existing research and theory, with an aim to find potential contradictions, ambivalence or inconsistency in the present understanding of the phenomena of interest. According to Skorikov and Patton (2007) and Patton and McMahon (2014), there has been little development in relevant theory concerning adolescents career development, services provided to support them, and the connection between the two issues. Their recommendation is that a Meta-theoretical approach would be appropriate for future research. Further, Senge (1990) advocated that system theory thinking was needed more than ever because of the overwhelming complexity of our time. He identified two forms of complexity, detailed complexity and dynamic complexity. Detailed complexity relates to the number of variables in a situation, while dynamic complexity refers to the complexity of the interrelationships and patterns between the variables.

McMahon, Watson and Patton (2014) claim that the systemic theoretical approach is a reaction to the longstanding hegemonic position of the logical positivistic worldview in career development theories. Further, they argue that the underpinnings of systems theory correlate with constructivism and that both 'represent an epistemological position that emphasizes self-organizing and proactive knowing. Both perspectives assert that individuals actively construct their own reality, and are able to actively construct a meaningful position within the work context.' At the same time, Patton and McMahon (2014: 24) propose that some of the benefits of a systemic approach are that it allows that 'the important contributions of all career theories can be recognized, and similarities, differences, and interconnections between theories can be demonstrated.' In my opinion, the argument seems contradictory. How can a theory contribute to recognition of all career theories, while simultaneously advocate for one epistemological view? Here critical realism (CR) provide us with a nuancing approach. The origin of CR is to be found in a criticism of several dichotomous relations in science (e.g. between constructivism/positivism) (Danermark, Ekstrøm, Jakobsen and Karlsson, 2003). The goal was to create a more holistic approach to science, including building bridges between apparently conflicting ontological and epistemological viewpoints of reality and knowledge creation. Although not labeled as CR, I find similar arguments in the integrative approach proposed by

Chen (2003). Chen (2003:213) proposes 'a flexible and eclectic relationship between theories, in general, and between the two major schools of thinking – positivism and constructivism – in particular'. Archer et.al (1998: xi), although not explicitly labeling it a systemic theory, sum up the fundamental traits pointing to critical realism as an alternative epistemological and ontological approach to systemic thinking with the following words: 'critical realism claims to be able to combine and reconcile ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationality'. The first part of this statement implies that there exists a reality which is stratified, differentiated, structured and changing. The second part tells us that our knowledge about this reality is always fallible but, as the last characteristic suggests, there are some theoretical and methodological tools we can use in order to discriminate among theories regarding their ability to inform us about the external reality. One recommended way of performing this kind of judgemental rationality is through a critical realistic grounded theory approach (Kempster and Parry, 2014).

Research methodology

According to Patton and McMahon (2014: 170), 'The past two decades have been marked by a considerable expansion of research on career development in childhood and adolescence.' In spite of the positive development, contributors to Skorikov and Patton (2007), Hooley (2014), and Watson and McMahon (2005) acknowledged limitations in existing empirical knowledge. Based on an updated review of research findings, Patton and McMahon (2014) concludes that a much deeper understanding of factors and mechanism need to be developed. Critical realism claims that scientific work is to 'investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world.' (Bhaskar 1978: 56). To gain this kind of rich insight, Kempster and Parry (2014: 88) advocates a grounded theory approach guided by a critical realistic frame. Key elements of this approach is 'First, clarifying the subject matter in relation to CR ontological assumptions. Second, data collection emphasizing exploring lived experience through interviews. Third, analyzing data based on abduction and retroduction. Retroduction implies a commitment to theoretical pluralism, at least at the outset of an investigation. Multiple theoretical lenses can be considered for what they tell us about the various and stratefied influences that are affecting the things we observe.'

In my project, three of the articles are used to clarify the subject matter (Haug and Plant, 2015; Haug, 2016a and Haug and Plant, 2016). The fourth article (Haug, 2016b) presents the results from focus group interviews with pupils, practitioners and school leaders from secondary and upper secondary schools in a Norwegian county, focusing on their representations of good career guidance.

Discussion

Now, I will return to the initial research questions in the discussion section of this article. My initial conclusion from the 'clarifying of the concept' was an impression of an extensive diversity in representations of good career guidance, especially in the understandings of the preferable goal for guidance. A comprehensive presentation and discussion of the correspondence between the representations, its underlying assumptions, and produced effect (organizational and procedural solutions), are available in the articles (Haug and Plant, 2015; Haug, 2016a; Haug, 2016b and Haug and Plant, 2016) and in the final PhD thesis (Haug 2016c). In this discussion, I will focus on what I propose as the most essential issue from the research, as an example of the potential of the critical realistic integrative approach to the subject of interest.

Focus on the next career choice or lifelong preparation?

In both theoretical representations and especially political steering documents and recommendations, an emphasis is put on the importance of preparation for future societal participation (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2016; ELGPN, 2015; OECD, 2004b; Thomsen, 2014). The implications for practice is a recommendation for a stronger emphasis on developing lifelong lasting career management skills

(CMS) through different career learning activities (Hooley, Watts, Sultana, and Neary, 2013; Thomsen 2014). Although emphasizing guidance as potentially both a private and public good, Plant and Kjærgård (2016: 16) advocates that an important underlying assumption to the interest in CMS is to be found in societal changes of the 21st century described as 'neoliberal with focus on global competitiveness and increased individual autonomy'. They continue that consequently, this lead to: 'political discourses include the idea that every citizen should pursue a career and that career guidance should serve the knowledge economy and seek to increase individual's human capital and capacity to compete'.

Given this description of policy representations of the preferred goal, I find it interesting that a defining theme emerging from all three participant representations in the focus group interviews (Haug, 2016b) sees good guidance as fulfilled when focusing on the next career choice (e.g. from secondary to upper secondary). Going into potential explanations, Brown (2002) relates this to underlying 'career views'. She distinguish between a process view and an 'event' view of the concept of career, putting the prior in connection to developmental approaches (e.g. Super, 1990), and the latter in connection with trait factor and person environment fit approaches (e.g. Dawis, 2002). A more sociological explanation is provided by Gørlich and Katznelson (2015). They advocates that the focus on career management skills can be seen as underpinned by an increased individualization. The pupils might experience that the freedom, but also responsibility for long term future planning seems overwhelming. As a methodological 'answer' to these experiences, different approaches (e.g. Gelatt, 1989) are developed. However, these approaches were not considered important in the interviews (Haug, 2016b). On the contrary, they were featured as abstract and unsuitable.

Plant (2012) advocates that this apparently discrepancy between proposed theoretical and methodological approaches, policy intentions on the one hand, and representations from the users and providers of guidance on the other hand, can be seen as expressions of different answers to questions like 'Who owns guidance?' and 'Who is it for?' He suggests that 'In relation to policy makers, who demand evidence, questions arise such as: why should societies invest in guidance? What is the impact? For guidance practitioners, focal points are: how can we deliver good quality, and how can quality assurance systems in fact help to improve the services, rather than just being another bureaucratic exercise? The users of guidance, on the other hand want the best help they can get, when they need it, in a form that they can accept and understand (p. 92).

The silenced voice of users?

The fourth research question in this project is concerned with what problems, or approaches are least apparent in the ongoing dialogue on good career guidance. A recurrent issue in this project is the lack of user voices, both as co-researchers and as co-creators of the service provision (Haug and Plant 2016). There is a strong consensus that user involvement is important in both quality development and quality assurance in guidance (ELGPN, 2010; OECD, 2004b). Nevertheless, Plant (2012) argued that despite good intentions, the users are seldom given a voice in these matters. A promising initiative in this concern, is a newly released book: De frafalne ['the dropped out'] (Reegård and Rogstad, 2016). This publication concentrates on theorizing 'drop out' and 'early school leaving' issues based on comprehensive interviews with adolescents. This approach is a main recommendation in the PhD thesis, with its focus on going from the descriptions of what the problem is represented to be, to as it is viewed from the adolescents.

Conclusion

Hughes (2013) advocates a clear vision for future career guidance in schools. In the project, I have advocated that this clearness should encompass an open and reflective approach to career planning for adolescents as a multifaceted issue, with several representations and 'correct answers' with different underlying assumptions in play. When evaluating the quality of the various activities in guidance, it is important to note that measurements are 'marked by political, ideological and value-related ideas, which makes what is considered to be quality for some

not necessarily means the same for others' (NOU, 2003: 64). Supporters of a given quality perspective tend to regard their own point of view of course as self-evident (Dahler-Larsen, 2008). This in turn causes a mismatch in the communication about good quality. Further herein lies a potential for some understandings to be considered as the normative and correct ones, while other understandings are virtually absent in the debate on the phenomenon. Therefore, my proposed future direction for career guidance services in Norwegian schools corresponds with Savickas (2011: 8) saying, 'So today, depending upon a client's needs, practitioners may apply different career services […] Each career intervention […] is valuable and effective for its intended purpose.'

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Increased inequality: An analysis of Irish guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of budgetary cutbacks across different school types

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Equality discourses informed this study on the impact of budgetary cutbacks on guidance in Irish schools, which found that funding inequalities between fee-charging schools and schools in the Free Education Scheme (FES) contributed to unequal reductions in guidance. Factors such as social class, familial habitus, parent-power, cultural, social and economic capitals, and institutional habitus were shown to influence young people and their parents' decision-making, and in turn the guidance provided in schools. As FES schools prioritised career guidance over counselling, students experienced compromised care, as counselling was neglected and the guidance service became a reactionary crisis intervention service. In fee-charging schools there was no change.

Introduction

The backdrop to this research was a fundamental change in how guidance[1] resources were allocated in Irish schools. For forty years, the Department of Education and Skills[2] (DES) operated a centralised, standardised guidance allocation system, based on student enrolments. The allocation was ex-quota (i.e. it was separate and in addition to teacher allocations) and one full-time guidance counsellor[3] was allocated per 500 students in a school. In the budget of 2012, a cost-saving measure was introduced which stipulated that guidance hours had to be provided from within each school's teacher allocation, with the responsibility delegated to individual school heads to decide on the 'appropriate guidance' (DES, 2005: 4) allocation).

Research questions

The aim of the research was to explore guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of changes in schools during the year after the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation. The research questions were suggested by an Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) guidance audit (IGC, 2013), which revealed a 59 per cent reduction in one-to-one guidance in schools and concluded that this reduction was not equally spread across all school types. The IGC audit did not explore reasons for the unequal reduction or the differing impacts across school types. These

1 The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) defined *guidance* in the educational context as 'a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices' (NCGE, 2004, p.12). The Department of Education and Science clarified guidance further as encompassing "the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance" (DES, 2005, p.4).

2 The abbreviation DES covers the three different terms used for this Government Department in the last 40 years: 'Department of Education', 'Department of Education and Science' and 'Department of Education and Skills'.

3 *Guidance counsellor* is the professional title used by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), in Ireland, to describe the role of the lead person delivering the guidance service in schools.

gaps suggested the following research question: 'What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?'

Theoretical framework

The main theoretical frameworks underpinning the research were equality discourses, notably those of Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh (2004) and Lynch, Baker, Cantillon and Walsh, (2009). In this research, I placed career and educational guidance within an equality discourse, where students and their parents are seen to make education and career choices relative to social class, familial habitus, capitals and institutional habitus. In doing so, I aimed to analyse the impact of the budgetary cutbacks on guidance across different school types.

Literature review

In order to explore any unevenness in guidance provision in schools, Baker's concept of inequality in education (Baker et al, 2004) was examined. Baker argued that unequal access to educational resources leads to unequal participation and unequal outcomes in education, manifested as a social class issue where working-class students are unable to access, participate in and achieve in education on an equal footing with middle-class students. Within Irish schools, given the holistic nature of the Irish guidance model,[4] guidance counsellors can be considered as having the capacity to counteract some of the main inequalities prevalent in schools, in particular in relation to inequalities of love, care and solidarity (Lynch et al, 2009).

Bourdieu's (1973) 'habitus' and 'capital' discourses articulated how inequality in education is reproduced, in terms of economic, cultural, social and class reproduction. As guidance in schools essentially involves helping students make choices (NCGE, 2004), Bernstein's (1970) insight into restricted student choice, and Lareau's (2003) discourses around middle-class 'concerted cultivation' highlighted differences in educational and career decision-making across school types influenced by factors such as social class and capitals, institutional habitus and career guidance. Students in socio-economically disadvantaged schools and communities were found to have different social and cultural capitals to students in middle-class schools and neighbourhoods (Lareau, 2003; Rudd, 2003; O'Brien 2005). School choice and school success was linked with social class, familial habitus and cultural / social /economic capitals (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Allat, 1993).

The familial habitus of the home and the institutional habitus of the school were shown to be very similar for middle-class children, but very different for working-class students (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Institutional habitus was demonstrated to have a significant impact on students' decision-making processes, making some choices virtually unthinkable and others possible (ibid). Students in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged communities presented as unconfident, finding it difficult to identify with people who have prestige, status and power (Wilson, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993). This lack of self-esteem creates a challenge for adolescents who have restricted opportunities or little cultural/social capitals available to them, to integrate their identity with a particular career outside their own habitus (McDonough, 1997; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Smyth and Banks, 2012).

Schools also view guidance differently depending on their institutional habitus (McDonough, 1997; Foskett, Dyke, and Maringe, 2008; McCoy, Byrne, O'Connell, Kelly and Doherty, 2010; Smyth, Banks and Calvert, 2011). Students in middle-class schools generally receive more career guidance than in working class schools (Mullen, 2009). Middle-class schools focus on subjects that facilitate college entry and they may have more advanced guidance facilities available, which reinforce student beliefs and parental ambitions on progression to higher education (McDonough, 1997). Students in Irish working-class schools have different requirements of a guidance service to those in middle-class schools, notably a much bigger demand for counselling services (Smyth and Banks, 2012).

Guidance can have a positive impact on the development of students' career-related skills and can provide the information on careers that may not be available in some homes (Foskett et al, 2008). Guidance is seen to be a significant factor in influencing students from non-academic backgrounds to consider higher

4 See 1 above.

education by challenging their assumptions, and acting as a counter to existing attitudes, knowledge and perception (McCoy et al, 2010). Guidance counsellors in schools in working-class communities can provide some of the missing resources that students in middle-class areas may take for granted (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000) and can be important sources of college-related information for young people with no family traditions, or experience, of higher education (Smyth et al, 2011).

Methodology

The research methodology was a two-phase, sequential, exploratory, mixed-method, phenomenological approach. Phase one, an online survey, was conducted in May 2013, with a volunteer sample of 273, out of a population of 837 guidance counsellors in 723 schools. This equated to a return rate of 33 per cent for guidance counsellors and 35 per cent for schools, which is within an acceptable range (Nulty, 2008). It was representative of the population with regard to school types and in terms of geographic location when compared with a similar survey involving the same population (IGC, 2013). Phase two involved 12 one-to-one structured interviews conducted in November and December 2013, which aimed to fill in gaps, provide more in-depth information and confirm or refute information from phase one. The interview sample was two-thirds volunteer, and one-third purposive. It was representative of the population in terms of school types. The questions in both phases were largely qualitative and open-ended. The research was carried out according to the ethical guidelines of St. Patricks College, Dublin City University.

Data analysis

The quantitative analytical strategy involved the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate basic descriptive statistics in order to describe the representativeness of the sample. As valid percentages had been employed in the analysis of quantitative data in two prior studies involving the same population (IGC, 2013; NCGE, 2013), both of which dealt with a very similar research topic, a decision was made to also use valid percentages in this study, in order to make judgements and comparisons about whether there were differences between the various school types. Tests of statistical significance or inferential statistical tests were not calculated. The qualitative analytical strategy was based on the constant comparative method (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), which in turn drew on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). A qualitative data analysis software package (QSR NVivo10) was used to assist in the coding and management of the qualitative data. It enabled all data movements and coding patterns to be logged and conceptual categories and thought progression to be mapped. This ensured that all stages of the analytical process were traceable and transparent. It assisted in the production of an audit trail, where all data could be traced back to an individual survey respondent or interview participant - a key criterion for establishing trustworthiness and plausibility of a qualitative study. Illustrative quotations were used as a way of providing evidence for interpreting the qualitative findings.

Findings

The eight main findings are presented by theme, with selected illustrative quotations where appropriate. In such cases, responses from the online survey participants are indicated by an individual number (e.g. Respondent 17), while comments from the interviewees are indicated by pseudonyms (e.g. Lily).

1. While the change in the method of guidance allocation had a negative impact on all schools, the biggest observed differences were between guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools and those in schools in the Free-Education Scheme (FES).[5] A greater proportion of respondents in FES schools had a negative perception of the change than in fee-charging schools. There was also a difference in the actual reduction in guidance hours between both school types, with a greater proportion of respondents (69 per cent) within FES schools experiencing a decrease than in fee-charging schools (44 per cent).

2. The reasons why a greater proportion of FES schools than fee-charging schools reduced their guidance hours were that:

5 This paper presents findings related to fee-charging and FES schools only, and findings for other school types are not presented.

- fee-charging schools were able to access additional sources of finance and funding unavailable to FES schools;
- parent power had an impact on decision-making around guidance services in fee-charging schools, and
- both the school management and the parents in fee-charging schools regarded guidance as important.

3. The decisions made by fee-charging and FES schools had different impacts and unequal outcomes:

   - affective care was eroded in FES schools, but not in fee-charging schools.
   - students in FES schools did not have the same opportunities as those in fee-charging schools to identify and discuss their aptitudes and interests.

4. Differing school management approaches to guidance allocation contributed to unequal outcomes. A guidance counsellor in a fee-charging school wrote:

   > 'No negative changes for me, but I know that is not the experience for many guidance counsellors. Little has changed in the private fee paying schools as parents demand a professional service as they consider they are paying for it.'
   >
   > (Respondent 161)

The impact of the devolving of responsibility for guidance provision to schools in Ireland mirrored what had happened in other countries, such as New Zealand and the Netherlands where the negative outcomes included increased inequality in guidance provision and a lack of quality assurance (McCarthy, 2012; Watts, 2011). It also paralleled changes in England in 2012, where schools were given the autonomy to 'decide what careers guidance services to make available for their pupils' (Andrews, 2013: 14), resulting in a deteriorating service (UK Parliament, 2013) with inherent 'weaknesses' (ibid: 12), and 'profound gaps' (Simms, Gamwell and Hopkins, 2014: 16).

5. Guidance counsellors reported differences in parental attitudes to guidance in fee-charging and FES schools. They speculated that parents from fee-charging schools recognised the importance and benefits of a guidance service for progression to higher education and that this may have influenced its retention in these schools:

   > 'Parents who send their sons and daughters to fee-paying schools expect a level of service based around progression into third level, and career guidance is seen as an integral part of getting their sons or daughters into the right course and into the right college.'
   >
   > (Lily)

6. Guidance counsellors in FES schools experienced a much greater demand for counselling than those in fee-charging schools and often it was impossible to meet the need:

   > 'I found students had difficulty accessing the service because they knew how busy I was and would often say – "I tried to see you last week, but you're a hard woman to catch and I didn't want to bother you."'
   >
   > (Respondent 12)

7. In allocating resources, many FES school heads prioritised student academic achievement and teaching over counselling. They removed guidance counsellors from guidance duties and gave them an increased academic teaching timetable, resulting in reduced counselling provision. Heads of fee-charging schools did not do this.

   > 'My biggest fear is that due to lack of time, I will not have been able to help a child in need. In my Junior classes there seems to be a wave of self-harm happening among students. I am concerned that due to time in the classroom, I cannot see these children. I can no longer provide the ongoing support to students who need it. I can only see students on a two or three weekly basis, but knowing these students need greater support.'
   >
   > (Respondent 189)

8. There were differences between fee-charging and FES schools in the quality, capacity and approach of the counselling service which suggest increased inequality:

- The counselling service was mostly reactive in FES schools and mainly preventative in fee-charging schools;
- There was very restricted access to one-to-one appointments in FES schools and easy access in fee-charging schools, as this participant from a fee-charging school explains: 'the management in our school has done everything to keep a dedicated guidance and counselling service in the school at a very difficult time, in terms of funding and teaching allocation' (Respondent 188).
- Having to wait a long time for counselling was the norm in FES schools: '…doing emergency counselling on corridor between classes. When I ask students why did you not come to me sooner they tell me "you were too busy", this is very sad' (Respondent 191). There were no waiting lists reported in fee-charging schools.
- Guidance counsellors in FES schools were under constant time pressure: 'it's a bottomless pit, it's really a case of prioritising, you're fire-fighting, you just do what you can' (Violet in a rural Community College). This was not the case in fee-charging schools as Rosemary, a guidance counsellor in an urban, fee-charging girls school outlined: 'I didn't watch the clock, if they needed a little bit more time I gave it and if they needed to come back again that was fine.'

Conclusions

Three main conclusions were reached from the research findings:

1. A diversified service model of guidance developed, as guidance was viewed differently by individual school heads.

2. While all schools experienced a reduction in guidance, this was not equal across all school types, with the biggest differences being between fee-charging and FES schools.

3. Students in FES schools experienced compromised care from guidance services, due to a large reduction in counselling appointments. The demand for counselling in FES schools increased, but as many schools prioritised career guidance, counselling was neglected and it became a reactionary crisis intervention service.

Significance of conclusions

This study has added to the discourse on educational equality and has contributed to an understanding of the different ways guidance operates in the institutional habituses of middle-class and working class schools. It reaffirmed earlier studies that guidance services in fee-charging (or middle-class) schools emphasised career guidance over counselling, mainly due to parent-power, and a greater cultural, social and economic capital, while on the other hand FES (or working class) schools experienced heavier demands for counselling. This thesis adopted a largely qualitative approach to the research, and in so doing, addressed a gap, complimenting previous quantitative studies. It provides in-depth information on the lived experiences of guidance counsellors over the course of a year of change and challenge. For policy makers, the thesis has shown that the removal of a centrally-controlled, ring-fenced model of guidance allocation, and its replacement by a devolved, flexible responsibility to individual schools for allocating guidance resources, has had largely negative outcomes, resulting in a weakened care structure in some schools and increased inequality in guidance provision across schools. To quote McCarthy (2012): 'the discretionary approach promotes inequality of access to services... and inequality in obtaining comparable career learning experiences and quality assured experiences' (p. 8).

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'I'm Just a Plain Old Careers Adviser' – Recognising the Hidden Expert

Nalayini Thambar

A new 'employability climate' with a greater attention to graduate outcomes has emerged within Higher Education in recent years. Consequently, careers advisers find their established practice and their claims to be experts in student career development questioned, even though the increased interest has potential for greater recognition of their role. An exploration of the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education suggests that they are challenged in their professional identity, yet are strongly committed to their purpose. On this basis recommendations have been developed to confirm careers advisers as experts in this increasingly visible aspect of the student experience.

Introduction and context

For careers advisers in higher education, the recent high-profile interest in careers and employability heralds a time of great change. In 2001, school careers advice in England was absorbed into the Connexions service at the expense of a specialised careers service. In contrast, university careers services flourished where institutions allowed, sometimes expanding to encompass enterprise, volunteering and placement activity and Skills Award management. During this period careers services experienced varying, but generally limited levels of attention and expectation particularly in relation to institutional profile and performance measures. Services within the sector ranged from two or three-person bands to large multi-functional teams and in the latter, the role of careers adviser gently shifted from a pivotal service influencer to a careers education and guidance specialist. Nonetheless, university careers advisers continued to exercise their professional judgement to support students in their career planning and decision making.

In 2010, it was announced that from 2012 undergraduate tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year would be introduced for English students in the UK and for students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at English universities. This change put the spotlight on 'return on investment', which was interpreted by many as 'ability to get a graduate job.' For careers advisers, the 'new' employability climate offers opportunities for greater recognition of their work, yet is more questioning of established practice and seeks greater accountability. Meanwhile, Heads of Careers Service have seen their role move often from being a 'senior partner', or 'first amongst equals', to a leader and manager, sometimes the institutional employability lead and almost always with responsibility to contribute to the University league table position via first destination data.

I am a careers adviser by training and a Director of Careers and Employability at a large, international, English university. I was drawn to research in this area through my experience of management within a careers service during this change, and by my commitment to careers advice as a critical factor in student employability success. As the employability agenda has grown in prominence, I have noted with interest, and frustration, a recurrent lack of recognition or acknowledgement of careers advisers as professional experts in this arena; either at an institutional level, by groups within institutions, or by careers advisers themselves.

I undertook this study to understand the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education across the UK in this new employability climate. In this context, professional identity is defined as 'the experience and self-understanding of those

fulfilling a particular occupational role'. Based on this understanding, recommendations have been developed for careers service leaders and managers, and careers advisers themselves, so that they can strongly position and equip careers advisers to meet institutional expectations, whilst enabling students to follow fulfilling careers when they graduate.

Professions and professional identity in the literature

A key attribute of a profession is that it solves a problem using specialist knowledge. The nature of the problem is one which is recognised by the public, who therefore value, and/or are dependent on the work of the professional (Torstendahl, 1990). Wilensky (1964) describes a profession as a group who control their own training and admission to practice and evaluate their own standards of performance, although a critical perspective on professions suggests that this is motivated by a desire to preserve a monopoly in the area of work, in order to gain privilege through money, status and influence (Scott, 2008), rather than to maintain standards.

Studies have also considered the impact of social and technological change on the purpose and nature of professions. Spada (2009) noted a decline in the positive public perceptions of professions, linked to post-industrial values, particularly a decline in deference to authority and a move away from a focus on physical and financial well-being, towards individual self-expression. This means that rather than 'simply' having their problem solved, an individual expects more personal enrichment and benefit from a professional service. However, they are less likely to defer to the professional providing that service as they are no longer perceived to be an 'authority figure'. The speed and breadth of universally available information, as a result of rapid technological changes, also complicates the dynamic between the professional and the public (Abbot, 1998) as professional power through the perception of the possession of knowledge is eroded.

Previous investigations demonstrate the challenge of establishing a collective professional identity for a particular profession. Considering architecture, Cohen et al (2005) suggest that working context (private or public) has an impact on professional identity, while Jawitz (2009) suggested that academic professional identity is linked to their discipline and the institution in which they work. In considering the professional identity of teachers, Beijard et al (2004) identify four features of professional identity; a process of interpretation and re-interpretation; development as a result of the individual and their context; harmonisation of sub-identities; and involvement in professional development to support 'agency'.

There are also factors which challenge professional identity: a lack of public recognition of expertise (Crawford et al, 2008); multiple and non-descriptive job titles within a profession (Adams, 2008); and a lack of control over professional work (Lindsay and Sandhu, 2014). The rise of 'professional managers' can be seen as a threat to members of a profession, as their work is directed and configured by those who are privileging an organisational perspective over professional judgment (Scott, 2008). However, Noordegraaf (2011) suggests that this does not need to be a challenge and that 'Organized Professionalism', which absorbs management issues into professional thinking and judgement can overcome a dualistic conflict of 'management versus professionals' (Noordegraaf, 2011:1355).

Studies into the professional identity of careers advisers suggest that, outside higher education, the identity of careers advisers in the former Connexions service was challenged by the imposition of management imperatives on their work (Colley et al, 2008), and that now, a clear descriptive job title and engagement with continuing professional development (CPD), contribute to the professional identity of careers practitioners (Neary, 2014). My study aims to make a contribution to knowledge by specifically considering the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which has been found to be an effective methodology for the investigation of identity issues (Fragkiadaki et al, 2013; Butcher, 2012). The approach enables an insight into a chosen phenomenon, in this case the

professional identity of careers advisers, adopting a social constructionist stance that reality is the meaning that individuals make of their experience (Crotty, 1998). The outcome of such an approach is to achieve 'theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalisability' (Smith et al, 2009: 51). Within IPA there is a role for the researcher to interpret the respondent's own interpretation of their experience (the 'double hermeneutic'), while acknowledging the researcher's own experience. A reflective journal was kept throughout the study in order to 'be sensitive to the subtle differences between compelling interest in a subject, advocacy and out-and-out bias' (Rossman and Rallis, 2003:35).

Data was collected through 21 semi-structured interviews with careers advisers at 14 institutions across England, Wales and Scotland, identified by stratified sampling of league table data. The institutions included the key mission groups: the former 94 Group, Million Plus, University Alliance and the Russell Group. Of the 21 respondents, two thirds were female, one third male, 76% worked full-time and 24% part-time. Interviews were analysed individually to identify themes and then considered collectively to identify super-ordinate themes which shape the professional identity of careers advisers. By understanding these themes, a suggested professional identity of careers advisers emerged.

Findings

Analysis of the respondents' accounts of feeling like a professional and being recognised as a professional, in higher education, yielded five super-ordinate themes that shape the professional identity of careers advisers. Respondents also shared a range of perspectives on how the new employability climate might affect their role. These findings are outlined here.

1. The experience of Professional Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The findings suggest that the early stages of working as a careers adviser in higher education are challenging: those with a Diploma or Qualification in Careers Guidance did not feel prepared with the knowledge required, while those coming from another role were surprised at the assumption that they would know what to do. In some cases, they have never completed a careers guidance qualification, yet are now experienced practitioners. CPD was welcomed and valued, although some respondents commented on the challenge of finding the time to undertake it and, for those new to the profession, of establishing their own guidance style.

2. Association with the undergraduate-facing elements of the academic community.

At a very practical level, the majority of respondents depended on their academic colleagues to gain appropriate access to students to deliver their services. At the same time, respondents compared themselves and their role with academics, sometimes unfavourably, through the lens of their qualifications. Opportunities for careers advisers to work in partnership with academics, particularly co-teaching, were prized, as it fostered a sense of being a peer. However, it is important to note that while respondents rightly used the word 'academics', they were almost always referring to those who focus on engagement with undergraduates, not those who would necessarily have high levels of influence within their school, on institutional agendas, or be connected to postgraduate activity.

3. By seeking personal credibility from elsewhere

This theme emerged from a broader context. Many respondents experienced a lack of understanding of their role by students – the impact of the Connexions service – and by academics, who demonstrated their lack of understanding by, for example, asking a careers adviser to run a session on graduate job hunting early on in a first year programme. Linked to this, respondents had a clear sense that being a careers adviser was not highly regarded, which seemed to affect how they saw themselves. It is perhaps, then, no surprise that respondents sought credibility elsewhere: expressing preference for an alternative job title to 'careers adviser', such as 'Deputy Head of Careers', when taking on management responsibilities; emphasising to students their strong links to graduate recruiters; and drawing on experience in previous

non careers-advisory roles, even though they much preferred being careers advisers.

4. By framing their purpose through student interactions rather than institutional goals

Respondents were strongly motivated by helping students which provided the emotional rewards that meant that they loved what they do. There was a consistent view that the careers adviser role was not about a bigger picture, to the relief of those who were not interested in broader institutional issues and 'politics', and to the frustration of those who had moved into a practitioner role following periods of management.

5. Using a range of conceptualisations of the role

Across the sample, different terms were used to describe the role: Non-Expert; Generic; Facilitator; Educator; Empowering Educator and, in only one case, Specialist, where the respondent had senior experience in the sectors about which they provided advice. The preference for a broader conceptualisation, rather than a sense of expertise, was supported by a lack of references to a specific body of knowledge, unlike other professions. Here, as in relation to CPD, respondents felt that this was partly due to the time they felt they had to develop their knowledge.

In terms of the new 'employability climate', some respondents felt that the increased interest provided an opportunity to promote what careers advisers and careers services do. For others, it presented a threat, as they would be exposed to scrutiny and were not resourced to meet increased institutional demands.

The professional identity of careers advisers in higher education

From these themes, a professional identity for careers advisers emerges, which lacks definition, does not recognise and is not fully recognised by the higher education context in which it is situated, is lacking in confidence yet is driven by a strong dedication to the purpose of the role. Careers advisers' perceptions of their professional identity can be summarised as: - Undefined, Locally Focussed, Unrecognised, Unconfident and Dedicated.

Careers advisers are seen as *undefined* as a profession: the paths to practice vary; it is possible to practice without a qualification; and there is a variety of titles within the role. This, combined with the assumption that those with a careers qualification, or other relevant professional experience outside the sector, will know what to do in a university setting, leaves careers advisers vulnerable to a sense that 'anyone can do this job'. Sometimes neglected in this context, is the support to develop a guidance style, considered by many to be the key distinguishing skill within the role, leaving careers advisers feeling far from the expert problem-solver that a member of a profession is publicly understood to be.

The role is *locally focussed,* leading to a failure by careers advisers fully to recognise the context in which they work and, perhaps, the challenges that their heads of service face. By aligning themselves predominantly with the undergraduate experience, they distance themselves from the full context in which their academic contacts operate. This is demonstrated by a perception that undergraduate teaching represents parity with an academic, rather than the equivalent of a research profile, doctoral supervision and additional management responsibilities, all of which contribute to higher academic status. Careers advisers' reluctance to describe themselves as experts and the lack of reference to a defined body of knowledge also demonstrate some lack of contextual understanding given the academic imperative of disciplinary expertise.

Equally, careers advisers report feeling *unrecognised* in their university setting by their students, academic contacts and sometimes by the institution itself. The latter seemed linked to their own lack of interest in wider institutional issues which perhaps leads to a focus on student-facing activity, rather than conversation and activity that builds institutional networks. Careers advisers might collude with this lack of recognition through self-disassociation with their role, emphasising instead previous roles they consider to be of higher status, welcoming alternative job titles to those which clearly represent the role,

and emphasising their links to graduate recruiters. The latter association positions careers advisers as a conduit rather than an expert, highlighting 'who' rather than 'what' they know, when such contacts are easily transferred. Perhaps unsurprisingly, careers advisers convey an *unconfident* professional identity, where contributory factors include a lack of recognition of their role and a comparison with the higher level of qualification which academics routinely possess. Careers advisers express a strong desire for 'kudos' and 'credibility', both words which did not feature in the interview questions for this study. The use of diminutive language such as 'I'm just a plain old careers adviser' and 'my own little part of the careers advisory room' also point to a low level of confidence or perceived importance. However, alongside this lack of confidence is a strong sense of dedication to their role. Described by one as their 'lottery job', careers advisers express a passionate commitment to helping students.

This identity presents both a challenge and opportunity to leaders and managers of careers services in higher education, who seek to position their service, and this core professional role, as institutional employability experts. There is challenge in the lack of definition and recognition of the role, and in careers advisers' own lack of recognition of their institutional context. However, careers advisers' dedication to the purpose of their role provides a powerful opportunity for leaders and managers to work with them to redefine and strengthen their professional identity. If achieved, careers advisers would be positioned as a strong professional force, working in the interests of students' career development, the careers service and wider institutional priorities. The following recommendations suggest ways that this might be approached.

Recommendations

It is suggested that leaders and managers of careers advisers work in partnership with careers advisers to: -

1. Define an externally understood body of expertise and knowledge while encouraging an evidence-based approach to practice. This will strengthen careers advisers' confidence and align their role more closely with academic practice and other clearly understood professional roles.

2. Encourage and facilitate professional development to maintain and develop careers advisers' skills and expertise. This includes a rigorous induction process and opportunities to develop deeper levels of knowledge about industries and sectors by, for example, work shadowing graduate roles for enhanced insights.

3. Enable careers advisers to understand better their role in the institutional context. This will include an understanding of their institution in terms of funding, research and wider business engagement, how it compares to its peers, how the careers service is situated in that context and the challenges facing careers service leaders.

4. Promote the work of careers advisers in the context of the institution, focussing on student employability issues that careers advisers address and the knowledge that they have, rather than focussing on the activities they deliver.

There may also be a role here for the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). Originally a membership organisation for heads of service and careers advisers alone, now as the professional body for all careers and employability professionals across the higher education sector, AGCAS perhaps needs to consider ways to strengthen the identity of its original professional membership without feeling that it compromises its voice and its relevance to the broader employability agenda.

Conclusion

The interest in employability across the higher education sector has focussed unprecedented levels of attention on careers services and the careers advisers within. This is seen by some careers advisers as an opportunity, but by others as a challenge or threat. Closer investigation of their professional identity suggests that deliberate approaches by leaders and managers and careers advisers themselves are required, if the role of careers adviser is to be defined and deployed in ways which are clearly understood, and reflect their actual skills and knowledge,

institutional priorities, academic practice, and a stronger professional position.

By doing so, careers advisers will be strongly placed to support their leaders and managers in the positioning of careers services as centres of employability expertise, confirming themselves as experts in their field of career planning, problem solving and decision making, while continuing to support students in the development and fulfilment of their career and life ambitions.

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An exploration of young careers in an uncertain labour market

Louise Badelow

This interpretative study sought to explore the story of two young people in relation to their engagement with career. Within what Bauman (2000) describes as 'liquid modernity', how do they respond to uncertainties and agentic expectations in their own careers? Whilst the study did not set out to validate any specified theoretical principle, it became evident that both established career theory and post-modern thinking, had shaped their stories. For one young person, this was especially in relation to the role of adversity in building resilience. Equally, the conclusion appears to validate that effective programmes of career learning and development (CLD) can help to prepare young people for a rapidly changing labour market.

Introduction

Career. A construct with which most are familiar, albeit that as Yates (2014:11) attests, thus far career practitioners have universally failed to arrive at an agreed definition. Nevertheless, irrespective of an apparent impasse relating to description, it is of note that despite the vast canon of published work within the field, it is only recently that the meaning of career from an individual perspective has been explored. In a post-modern world, where 'change is *the only* permanence, and uncertainty *the only* certainty' (Bauman, 2000:2), is the concept of increased agency and personal responsibility, as advocated by many academics, including Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994, 1996), genuinely embraced, especially by those at the start of their career? Equally, is the guidance profession, which seemingly remains wedded to practice methods borne out of a bygone era (Savickas, 1997:150), adopting appropriate strategies in order to equip young people for a 21st century, predominantly neoliberalist, society?

It was against such a contextual background that this paper set out to explore the career stories of two siblings. Based on two pieces of research; the dissertation element of the MA Career Management and a project funded by Canterbury Christ Church University Research and Knowledge Exchange, the aim was to better understand their engagement with career and the extent to which they were able to exercise control, whilst responding to the societal uncertainties defined by Bauman's (2000) 'liquid modernity'. Furthermore, with one participant being a Music graduate ('Ruby') and the other forging an acting career ('Huwie'), it might be construed that these uncertainties were potentially greater than for those aligning themselves with a more 'traditional concept of career' (Patton, 2005).

Nevertheless, in this regard they both provide an especially valuable insight as to the attitudes of those who experience precarious work patterns. Huwie in particular provides a better understanding of apparent coping mechanisms, which in turn appears to reinforce the universal value of resilience, including for those who do not necessarily choose an insecure lifestyle, yet still face the consequential challenges (Phillips, 1991). That said, the research also raises questions about how practitioners reconcile the neoliberalist dogma of individualisation, and its emphasis on an internal 'locus of control' (Rotter, 1966). The reality is that for many young people, career success or failure is impacted by more than their ability to exert control and demonstrate resilience. In other words, are we doing our clients a disservice, or worse still

causing harm, by peddling the notion that the fulfilment of ambition rests firmly with the individual? And by extension, are we in danger of apportioning personal blame when success (however defined) does not materialise, inferring they 'have not studied and trained hard enough' (Sultana, 2011:182)?

The study did not set out to validate any specified theoretical principle, nor did it seek to deliver outcomes that might result in any paradigmatic shift as far as careers guidance practice is concerned. Still, it became evident that both established career theory and post-modern thinking, the latter being derived from this new era of uncertainty and 'jobless work' (Savickas, 2011:3), would shape the analysis of both stories. Accordingly, the research findings support the notion that factors seen as beneficial for career management can have their origin in early experiences. These include career resilience; not just the ability to cope with difficult situations, but rather the idea that success is related to the 'staying power of individuals and their perseverance in overcoming obstacles, adapting to change and dealing with adversity' (Bassot, Barnes and Chant, 2014:8). Or as defined by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly (2007), the extent to which an individual is able to demonstrate 'Grit'.

Equally, the conclusion appears to validate the assertion that effective programmes of CLD can help to equip young people with the skills they need to negotiate a rapidly changing labour market.

A review of literature

By using individual career stories as the basis of this study, the precise nature of the literature that would underpin the research only fully revealed itself once the interviews had been transcribed and the data analysed. Notwithstanding this, it was notable at the outset the extent to which theatrical metaphors are used throughout career literature, e.g. Inkson (2004) and Goffman (1959), and these texts, along with others, usefully informed the work. Nevertheless, with Ridley (2012:99) suggesting that an early question in compiling a literature review should be 'What do I know about my research topic?' it was noticeable that there was little material pertaining to those who choose a career within the performing arts. As articulated by Kogan (2002:1) '[why have psychologists] been so negligent in pursuing the study of performing artists when so many other professional occupational groups have been subjected to intensive scientific scrutiny?'

Where specific material existed it fell into two distinct categories. The first focussed on the psychological pre-requisites for maintaining a career within the performing arts sector, e.g. *The Person Behind the Mask: a guide to performing arts psychology* (Hamilton, 1997), and offered advice in order to 'survive'. The second sought to provide an empirical approach to understanding the personality factors and motivations of those pursuing a performance-based career, e.g. *Psychological Profiles of Professional Actors* (Nettle, 2006). However, unlike the narrative approach of this research, it was notable that these studies were quantitative in nature, providing explicit answers as to how people maintain a career within the performing arts. This methodology was in stark contrast to the constructivist principles of interpretation and the location of meaning within an individual's story, with Nettle (2006) concluding that ultimately, it was simply a question of 'fit' between environment and individual characteristics (Holland, 1985). Nevertheless, with this research firmly allied to the concept of social constructionism, its unequivocal aim was to replace scores with stories (Savickas, 1993), utilising hermeneutic methodology to identify the anchoring themes of the here and now, as well as those of the past (Savickas, 2011).

Methodology

Epistemologically, the research was firmly located within constructivist methodology. Loosely-structured, hour-long interviews were conducted, albeit that occasional guiding questions were employed as appropriate. These interviews were transcribed, analysed, shared and re-visited, adopting the interpretive techniques of biographical narrative inquiry. A qualitative approach, the starting point was not a paradigm, but rather two stories that needed exploration. As Punch (2014:24) points out, 'first we need to establish what we are trying to find out, and then consider how we are going to do it'. It seemed apparent that the ontology of the question lay firmly within the interpretivist domain, where the desire

was to draw meaning and gain understanding from Ruby and Huwie's self-constructed and self-expressed career narratives, whilst at the same time recognising my position in the research. Indeed, as Merrill and West (2009:31) assert, we cannot write stories about others, without considering how our own histories, psychologies, social and cultural locations reflect on those accounts.

In this context, my story was intimately aligned with that of my participants. Two siblings, our familial relationships are especially interwoven. Although this mitigated the requirement to build trust between us (Gray, 1998 in Bell, 2010:21), there was concern on my part that this might result in self-censorship as they told their stories. Furthermore, as a novice researcher, I was anxious about playing the role of expert interviewer with people I knew well. Nevertheless, I was equally mindful of the benefit of what Merrill and West describe as 'opportunist sampling' and the advantage of 'one enthusiast [over] an army of the press-ganged!' (2009:107).

In actuality, these anxieties proved unfounded, albeit that they were later superseded by the ethical dilemmas often presented by narrative research. These, as described by Josselson (2011:33), are created by the gaps between the participant's understanding of their life, and the researcher's interpretive analysis of that life. In other words, despite detailing the purpose of the research and obtaining written consent, I was unsure whether Ruby or Huwie fully understood the extent to which I would scrutinise and interpret their words. Indeed, given that the purpose of the research was not to infer generalities with the wider population, but rather interpret the meaning of their individual stories, the risk of unwelcome, intrusive analysis (from their perspective) seemed all too apparent. As it was, whilst I shared the full transcripts with both participants, neither responded nor expressed any interest in reading my subsequent analysis.

Findings

Despite my inner discomfort in relation to the research, I took solace from the notion that my findings were an interpretation of the *data* collected, rather than an analysis of the *individuals* themselves. As Josselson asserts, '[w]hat we are analyzing [*sic*] are texts, not lives' (2011:37). Consequently, I set about scrutinising the data, utilising Merrill and West's (2009) proforma method as the analytic tool. This approach enabled themes to be identified and interpretations made as to their possible meaning. Some of these themes, which were distinct for each participant, are as follows:

'Right, I'm going to dance'

The control that Huwie has exerted over his career, from an early age, is evident. He describes his progression from watching a particular stage production at eight years old and deciding that 'I have to really seriously consider doing this as a career', to winning the lead role in a UK tour of one of the world's most popular musicals some 16 years later, as a series of meticulously executed steps. Indeed, it is apparent that Huwie has always had a very clear vision for his future, and continues to implement judicious planning, and an uncompromising approach, in relation to the career decisions he makes.

'That was hard…being the only boy in a dance school of girls'

Huwie's self-belief which, it could be assumed, is at the heart of his apparent resilience, is palpable throughout the interview. He attributes this to his upbringing, but is firm in his assertion that it was an inherent, rather than taught quality. When talking about the challenges of dancing as a young boy, and the consequential ridicule encountered from classmates, he says 'I think those younger years gave me the mentality of almost going into my world and…focussing purely on myself…and ultimately I think that sort of mentality gives me the basis to…do what I've done.'

'If you're clever and turn down things as well as take things, then you can form yourself a good, eclectic career.'

When asked about extended periods of unemployment, which are often self-imposed, Huwie responds 'I'm quite self-assured…because I've done

really good work, it gives me that inner-confidence that when the right thing comes along, I will get it… [I am] comfortable when I'm out of work because I know I will be in work at some point. And in the meantime, I'm going to work on myself so that when the opportunity does arise, I'll be ready.' Equally, when he fails to get a part, he concludes that it was either because he did not produce 'what I know I can deliver' at audition, or because 'they've gone for someone who's got what I haven't actually got. It might be a different type of hair…or particular style of voice.' Either way, he systematically characterises the reasons for failure as purely objective, either totally within his control, or completely beyond it. There was no middle ground.

'In terms of my own career destiny…I have all the control in the world, because I'm young.'

Time is a recurring theme for Ruby. She suggests that whilst career may be important in the future, 'I'll probably live until I'm about 100 anyway…so I've still got about another 70 years to think about it.' Although working to fund her travelling plans, she appears unwilling to contemplate any longer-term options, saying 'I don't think it's time to be thinking about the future yet.' However, despite this apparent *laissez-faire* attitude, revealingly she repeatedly uses the word 'panic', saying 'I don't need to panic yet…I'm sure I'll figure it out in the end' and '…maybe if I get to 50… that's when I'm going to panic a bit. But at the moment, [I'm] not panicky at all'.

'It annoys me that [working five days a week] is just life, that really irritates me…I hate the idea.'

Ruby's feelings of frustration and anger are evident. Whilst seemingly directed at her current employer, there is a sense she is annoyed with herself too, frequently adopting the words 'should' and 'could' in relation to the choices that have impacted her career to date. For example, when talking about her AS results, Ruby says they did not reflect 'what I am [capable of]' and she should have re-taken them. By not doing so, she says her degree options were 'limited' and she had no alternative but to select Music. Had she achieved a better outcome by re-taking the exams she claims 'I could have done something completely different at university.' She also appears to blame her attitude for lack of direction, describing herself as being 'lazy' and suggesting that if she were more 'pro-active' or could only 'insert a little bit of enthusiasm [then] maybe I'll figure out what I want to do'.

'I know what I want…financial security and I quite like the idea of having a job for life.'

Notwithstanding her repeated assertion that 22 'is the time to be selfish', to do 'whatever I want to do, [go] wherever I want to go', it is notable that Ruby ultimately craves the stability associated with the concept of a job for life. Indeed struggling to identify suitable options beyond teaching (which she has vehemently ruled out, together with performance), she randomly selects nursing as a possible career, saying 'there aren't many jobs for life are there? I can only think of nursing...so maybe that's my job for life.' Furthermore, despite acknowledging that remaining single would mean she must 'think in terms of money basically, because I've got to provide for myself', it was nevertheless surprising to hear a woman of her generation refer to 'getting a husband' by the age of 32.

Conclusion

Despite their shared upbringing, and being only three years apart in age, the interpretation of their stories seemingly indicates that Ruby and Huwie's relationship with career is very different. Huwie, having chosen a notoriously uncertain path from an early age, appears to have wholly embraced the notion of agency and concept of personal responsibility, recognising their critical role in accomplishing his career ambitions. Furthermore, rather than exert a negative influence, the unpredictable nature of the performing arts industry seems to both empower and energise him, as well as build upon the resilience first developed in childhood. Indeed, when describing the ubiquitous audition process, he uses the metaphor of a rollercoaster, saying 'it's like…when you come off and say, I'm so happy I did that…it's an amazing feeling when you get through and it's a really terrible

feeling when you don't, but if you don't try, you will never know. I'd much rather find out than go, no I'm not going on that rollercoaster because it looks really scary.'

Conversely, Ruby's story suggests a very different attitude. Like Huwie, it would seem evident that she had very little in the way of professional guidance, either at school or university. She says 'we did have a big careers service, which was obviously really useful for some people, but …I didn't go to them.' In other words, she appears to have felt no personal responsibility or imperative to seek out possible opportunities. Even now, one year after graduating, her narrative suggests that she continues to delay any meaningful decision-making, explaining '[I'll] come back [from travelling] and then that's when I start thinking seriously about career'. Significantly though, it is both her sense of powerlessness in relation to her degree choice ('I wanted to go to [a good] university, [and so] I [just] chose my best subject'), as well as the notion that she appears to believe the answer may lay 'out there', which strongly indicates Ruby's external 'locus of control' (Rotter, 1966). She says 'maybe travelling will give me some time to think about what I want to do. So it would be quite good if I could come back and think, OK, *this* is what I want to do.'

Whilst it is likely that issues relating to gender difference are also relevant to both career stories, the limitations of this article prevent further exploration. Of note however is the commonality between them, in terms of 'biographicity' (Alheit and Dausien, 2000), and how Ruby and Huwie are able to re-interpret their biographies, and experience their lives, dynamically. For Huwie this dynamism is actively chosen, whereas for Ruby it appears to be an unavoidable by-product of her apparent lack of control and ownership.

In conclusion, the outcome of this small-scale study suggests that despite a societal shift towards neoliberalism, and the consequential emphasis on the power of the individual (Sultana, 2011), for some young people the weight of personal responsibility is paralysing, rather than empowering. As such, whilst effective, contemporary, programmes of career guidance and counselling, learning and development are always welcome, they must perhaps do more than seek to furnish young people with the perceived beneficial qualities of resilience and decision-making. Agentic, resilient young people like Huwie seem well-equipped to enjoy the thrill of a 21st century, metaphorical career-rollercoaster. However, this research suggests that in the first instance at least, the needs of those like Ruby are a more fundamental. Preparation for and an understanding of the world of work, countering gender specific expectations, is a process that takes time and is best started in the early years of secondary school at the very latest (Barnes et al, 2011). Consequently, a social constructivist approach to CLD, and to individual support, may afford young people like Ruby with the navigational skills of biographicity (Savickas, 2011). By so doing, she is helped to recognise the thread in her own narrative, which in turn can enable the construction of a meaningful career identity.

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Parental involvement in career education and guidance in secondary education

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A European political focus on involving parents in education seeks to reduce the dropout rate, in order to improve the efficiency of the educational system. This is a valuable drive because the research literature suggests that parents are important influencers and advisers. Internationally, interventions have been designed to involve parents more in adolescents' career development since the 1960s. These interventions can be arranged in three models: (a) career information-centred; (b) family learning; and (c) family therapy. Moving forwards, it is important to develop stronger models for parental engagement in career guidance, alongside an accompanying research agenda.

Introduction

European countries that have a political drive to involve parents in the educational and career decision making of their children in secondary education include Denmark (Katznelson and Pless, 2007), Northern Ireland (Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister for Education, 2016) and the Netherlands. The latter assumes that involving parents to a larger extent will reduce the dropout rate in education and thus improve the efficiency of the educational system (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2013).

Involving parents in the educational setting in the career building and career decision-making of their child(ren) is valuable, considering the way in which parental influence on career development is highlighted in the literature.

Parents[1] lay the foundations of career development in childhood (see for an overview Watson et al, 2015). In adolescence, parents (Schultheiss et al, 2002) influence careers outcomes such as vocational aspiration and achievement; career decisiveness; career exploration; career commitment and career self-efficacy (Young et al, 2001: 191). Older adolescents, in dealing with the demands of transition from school to further, higher education or to work, can benefit from parental influence (Whiston and Keller, 2004). And as Levine and Sutherland (2013) observe in 'History Repeats Itself': adults take the initial result of the parent-child interaction with them and subsequently reproduce this in their own parenting (also see: Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

Parents can be unconscious of influencing their child's careers. Examples of these implicit, unplanned forms of influence include the psychological elements in the family processes such as parental attachment (e.g. Ketterson and Blustein, 1997) and the daily pattern of decision-making in family life (Penick and Jepsen, 1992).

Parents also influence careers in explicit and purposeful ways. Young et al (1988), Young and Friesen (1992) identified 10 categories of parental intentions to facilitate their adolescents' career development:

1. skill acquisition;
2. acquisition of specific values or beliefs;
3. protection from unwanted experiences;
4. increasing independent thinking or action;
5. decreasing sex-role stereotyping;
6. moderation of parent-child relationships;
7. facilitation of human relationships;

1 Where referred to parents in the text, please also read carers and family (members).

8. enhancement of character development;
9. development of personal responsibility; and
10. achievement of parents' personal goals development.

Regardless of socio-economic status (SES), parents report a need for help in providing support in career development and in educational planning throughout their children's childhood and adolescence (Otto, 1989; Arrington, 2000). Thus, aside from a political drive, there are additional reasons to involve parents more in their child's career in an educational setting, including their role as important influencers and as a response to their own need for help in providing career support.

Parent-involved career interventions

There is a wide range of career interventions which have been designed to involve parents and to help them to support their child's career. These can be observed internationally, both in- and out-side of the educational context and in examples dating back to the 1960s. My own impression of a number of career development interventions involving parents that I have examined makes me agree with the recent professional call for 'informed' interventions by family, schools and community or collaborative interventions of schools and families (see special issue IAEVG-Journal 2015, 15(2)).

In this section I will explore further the career interventions found in the literature and on the internet. To clarify my position in this research: I am interested in this subject, as I designed and conducted research into a parent-involved career intervention.

The variety of career interventions that involve parents includes: guides to inform parents about the educational system, or about their role; booklets with tools for parents or with exercises for parents and child; programmes to support all or specific parents (e.g. lower SES); and materials to support school staff in parental involvement.

While exploring the interventions from the perspective of a secondary school, I could distinguish various aspects such as the aims of the intervention, who is involved, its format and underlying assumptions on the participants and those supporting the intervention. I developed a taxonomy for the interventions found.

Is this career intervention

- **i.** initiated by the school?;
- **ii.** aiming to provide information and/or support/help?;
- **iii.** focusing on parents only or on the pairing of parents and child?;
- **iv.** assuming an active role of the participants?;

and

- **v.** assuming trained facilitators?

In applying the taxonomy, I could distinguish the approaches of the parent-involved career interventions in (a) information-focused interventions; (b) family learning; and (c) family counselling or family therapy. Their main features can be found in Table 1. In the sections that follow, each category will be described briefly, examples given and, if available, the research findings.

Information-focused interventions

General, non-personalised, information-focused interventions by schools and targeted at parents is a common practice in many countries. Such interventions may not use or recognise the label 'parental involvement'. In such interventions there is no specific role assumed for the parent, other than being the parent. School-staff will stay in their assigned school-role: being a teacher; a tutor or a careers teacher/leader. An information-focused intervention can take the form of a one-off plenary, an individual parent-teacher session, a website or making the offer to parents to contact school staff by email or telephone. These interventions aim at all parents to notify them about and raise awareness of a current issue in the educational and career planning of their child. Important features of this category are that the intervention is one-off, directed to all parents and is supply driven: the school takes the initiative and decides what will be presented. Parents can have an active role in these interventions, for instance, by being invited to talk about their occupation for all students or, as in an example below, to be an active observer and feedback provider.

Table 1.
Categories and main features of parent-involved career interventions

	Information-focused interventions	Family learning	Family counselling or family therapy
Aim	Informing Notify about and raise awareness of current issues	Help parents in 'remedial' or preventive ways	Address specific issues that affect the psychological health of a particular family
Labelled as 'parental involvement' at school?	No	Yes	No
Directed to	All parents	(Particular) parent(s) together with child/ student	Particular family: parent(s) together with child/student
Role assumed of parents and child	No specific role	Teacher, coach and/or adviser for their child; Both parent and child being actively involved	Clients; Both parent and child being actively involved
Role assumed of school-staff	Assigned school-role	Professional facilitator	n/a
Form	One-off plenary; Individual parent-teacher meeting; Learning package; Written information; Website; Offerings parents to contact school staff. One-way direction	Resource and small group session(s) facilitated by trained school/specialised staff. Interactive	Family group session(s) facilitated by professional trained career development staff Interactive
Frequency	One-off	A subsequent series	A consecutive series of meetings
Initiated by	School; supply driven Individual parent: demand driven	School; supply driven but tailored to needs of participants	Parent; needs driven

The career interventions found are either directed at parents (and their child) at home or school staff.

Examples of information-focussed provision which are targeted at parents (and their child) at home include:

- A guide and resources for American Indian parents to support the career development of their daughters (USA - Thomson, 1978). Research found no evidence that parents could significantly improve the career development of their child assisted by this programme;
- A career search program, including testing interests and values (USA – Castricone et al, 1982);

- A handbook with background information and exercises (USA - Otto, 1989);
- An interactive learning pack and set of six short leaflets (Scotland - Semple, 1993). Research showed that both the learning pack and leaflets were effective in changing both perspectives on educational/employment possibilities and the parent/child relationship;
- An online resource empowering parents to engage in a career conversation with their child (Australia - State Government of Victoria, 2013a);
- An online resource with tools for parents for personal and identity developmental help while their child transfers to and through secondary education and to post-secondary (Canada - Ordre de conseillers en conseilléres d'orientation du Quebec, no date); and
- A national strategy for the 'upskilling of parents in career guidance', with online tools (New Zealand - Careers New Zealand (CNZ), 2014).

Examples, targeted at school-staff to achieve an information-focussed provision, involve:

- A handbook, involvement strategies and a student portfolio (USA - Burkhardt et al,1977);
- A web portal to compile own webpages to inform parents about the CEG the school offers (Netherlands - VO-raad, 2014); and
- A national strategy for the 'upskilling of parents' engagement in career guidance', with online tools and good practice in schools (New Zealand - CNZ, 2014).

Family learning interventions

Family learning interventions help parents to support their children and aim to improve the quality of their child's career development and educational planning. Schools will label these interventions as 'parental involvement'. The role assumed for the parents is 'teacher', 'coach' and/or 'adviser' for their child (Ladd and Pettit, 2002). The intervention may be a resource accompanied by small group sessions, or small group sessions with guidance or facilitation undertaken by school/specialised staff. This professionalised guidance is considered important to make the intervention work, to achieve learning. Further core features of this category are that the intervention consists of a series of sessions; aiming at particular parents: either 'remedial' or preventive in educational terms (low-educated, minority parent, parents with a child with special educational needs or disabilities). The intervention is supply driven (the school takes the initiative and decides what will be presented) but tailored to particular needs. Both parents and their child are supposed to be actively involved in this type of intervention. Examples are:

- Three sessions through which a group of parents of 10 students are introduced to a Career Conversation Manual and parents sharing their experiences in having conversations with their child. Osguthorpe (USA – 1976) found that parents felt more able to help their children in career planning;
- A self-administered programme with three workbooks with exercises supplemented by (work) groups. Research suggested that parents can function effectively in fostering the career development of their children, when provided with a structured programme (Canada - Palmer and Cochran, 1988);
- A parent, observing during a single counselling session with their child, is asked for feedback after each step. Research showed that the impact was modest, however surprising when taking the time spent (60 to 90 minutes) into account. (Canada - Amundson and Penner, 1998);
- Background materials and resources for workshops 'Future To Discover' (FTD) by guidance practitioners and educators, directed to parents of youth that are under-represented in post-secondary, lower SES (Canada – CCDF, 2001, 2007). Research showed a rise in high school graduation/educational attainment and increased post-secondary enrolment (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation/ SRDC, 2012).
- The 'Engaging Parents In Career Conversations' Framework (Australia - State Government of Victoria, 2013b) supports career practitioners

and teachers with resources for various two-hour workshops with parents/families of students with a disability, lower SES or English as an additional language.

- A structured parent-involved career intervention provided by trained teachers took place in the class before and after students went on a one-week internship in a company (Germany - Mayhack and Kracke, 2008, 2010). Research showed increased parental involvement in career development and enhanced exploration activities and planning strategies of students.
- The needs-tailored 'Parents as Career and Transition Supports' programme with three workshops to equip disadvantaged parents to support their child. National findings (Australia - Borlagdan and Peyton, 2014) showed that parents felt more confident in supporting their children's transition decisions and felt it helped them to navigate complex post-school systems.
- Individualised Learning Plans (ILPs) as a college and career readiness strategy in the USA (Solberg et al, 2014) may engage families in ILP activities. This might be an annual student-led parent-teacher conferences, as for instance in Milwaukee, where research is being planned.

Family therapy

Family counselling or therapy is designed to address specific issues that affect the psychological health of the family, such as major life transitions. These interventions will not take place on the school site. The role assumed for the parents is client. The intervention takes the form of a family group session with guidance undertaken by professionally trained career development staff. The intervention is a consecutive series of meetings, aiming at a particular family, and is (their) demand driven. Both parents and their child are supposed to be actively involved. Examples include:

- Greenough (1976 in Palmer and Crochan, 1988) reported on a parent counselling series of interviews, lasting 30 to 45 minutes, between the counsellor and the parents of high school students in their last year during three weeks. These were centred around the needs, abilities, and aspirations of the student; the available career options and the likelihood of success in terms of the student's potential. Greenough concluded that satisfaction with a vocational choice five to six years later was strongly related to parental involvement.
- Whiston (1989) described a counselling group for parents in high school which was designed to blend information concerning students' career choices and techniques from the family systems theory (e.g. Minuchin, 1974; Bowen, 1978), to promote effective family communication patterns and more productive family environments.
- The research by Young and his colleages since the 90s, involved parents and adolescents, (young) adults with family challenges, such as the effects of immigration or disabilites, that could affect the family career development and relationship "project". Young et al, (2006: 6-7) emphasise that their procedure is not meant as a programmatic intervention nor can it be routinely implemented in counselling or career development (ibid.: 18).

Some final reflections on school-based, parent-involved interventions

The different rationales to look for good practice in school-based, parent-involved interventions are the political drive in some European countries, the important influence of parents/family in their child's career and the parental need for help in supporting their child, as found in the literature.

Various interventions were found in the literature and internet. According to the taxonomy applied, these interventions were arranged in three models: (a) information-focused interventions; (b) family learning; and (c) family therapy.

In general, few examples of researched career interventions can be found in the literature (Watson

et al, 2015), and these are even more rare for school-based, parent-involved career interventions. This may have to do with the limited practice and maybe too with the relative short period of existence of such practice. For example, the German project of 2010 has vanished and the Canadian "'Future To Discover' delivery is now piecemeal" according to R. Ford, research director of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation/SRDC (personal communication, 2 December 2014).

Having an excellent programme with excellent research results is not enough to make an intervention work in a school. Barriers at various levels (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011) need to be considered. In the literature, a whole-school approach for parental involvement in careers work is generally preferred. Moving forwards, it is important to create stronger models for parental engagement in career guidance and in meeting conditions for implementing a lasting and sustainable intervention, alongside an accompanying research agenda.

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From emplotment to employment: becoming a career critic

Catherine Reynolds

Synthesising concepts from career and literary theories creates frameworks for a new approach termed career criticism. Careers can be seen as stories, conscious and unconscious texts; analysing elements such as structure, plot, narrators, and narrative techniques enables students to interpret surface and below-surface meanings of career stories. Techniques can be taught in formal career learning to enable clients to understand influences and consciously take action in relation to them. This paper draws on methods common in Humanities to present a model of career criticism. Developed in higher education, the approach could be applied to careers work in multiple settings.

Introduction

Career criticism is an approach to career learning combining narrative methods common in literary and career studies. In their NICEC article, 'What can careers workers learn from the study of narrative?' Hooley and Rawlinson (2011: 7) challenged us to 'capitalize on the potential of narrative approaches'. I address their question by synthesising ideas about narrative in career theory and literary theory to develop a new approach that I am calling career criticism. Practitioners introduced to the approach were asked to reflect on it and their responses are included at the end of the article.

Key related examples from the broader literature include Frigerio and McCash (2013:56), who advocate using 'career development theories to engage in *multiple readings* of career' and propose career literacy for career coaches. Moore and Hooley (2012:6), compare career literacy with functional literacy making the point that people who deliver 'careers information and education need to be aware of…career vocabulary, language and concepts' used by their clients. For me, career literacy involves developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding; for reading, listening, speaking and writing about career narratives.

Narrative as a means to provide information about careers is dismissed by Pryor and Bright (2008:81) because stories 'tie up the loose ends of reality in a way that amounts to oversimplification of complexity'. However, stories are texts that can teach people about careers and, in education, practitioners can use them to create opportunities for learning. Looking below the surface, exploring the style in which a story is told reveals more about events and people. By teaching our students to use this technique, we equip readers to become duly critical, questioning such stories.

Career texts are both oral and written. Online publications such as iCould and the Vitae databases of career stories are produced specifically for education purposes. Others are created for different or multiple purposes, for example, to provide information about studying at a particular institution (marketing material); to show the career progression of former students (alumni profiles); to explain the background of current employees (biographies on employer websites); or for entertainment (Desert Island Discs). The different sources of a career story and its purpose may not always be explicitly stated or obvious to the reader. Another example of a written career text is a CV, constructed to tell a certain story for a specific purpose. In practice, educators teaching career concepts use all these resources.

Speakers, often alumni, invited to talk about their progression after completing a course, are common

in careers classrooms. Additionally, informal anecdotes from many sources contribute to people finding out about careers. Analysis using career criticism enriches these learning opportunities. The social nature of career learning means people not only listen to stories, they re-tell them, change them and others learn from them too. Being critical of stories by understanding their social construction is an essential tool for career tellers and listeners.

Figure 1. Combining narrative techniques from career and literary theory to highlight career criticism

This article reviews concepts in career and literary theory, combining the two to develop, explain and review a new approach to critical inquiry represented in the dark overlap of Figure 1, which I call career criticism.

Career theory

The study of narrative approaches in career theory began in the 1990s and relates to both telling and listening to career stories.

Telling stories. Cochran summarises his narrative approach as being different from earlier vocational theories because 'the central problem… is not matching but *emplotment*' (1997:ix). He uses literary concepts such as plot, character, roles, enacting and action to describe the nature of career stories, which he terms 'dramatic units of life' (1990:77). Cochran's central theme is that careers counsellors can adopt narrative analysis to the life histories of their clients and re-construct the story to make explicit its patterns and hidden details. This assists clients in understanding their own life history, producing a new version of the story and future narratives for the client to enact. The focus of Cochran's approach is on one-to-one guidance and emphasises the role of the counsellor in re-framing a narrative with the client.

I think we can also teach clients to be independent, able to expose meanings and patterns in their own and other people's stories. I propose pedagogy for career learning to enable students to become better critics engaging in listening, close reading and analysis of career stories.

Listening to stories. By encouraging his students to listen to the career stories of other people, Inkson (2007:228) concluded that story telling is good for the teller and good for the listener. To enhance listeners' ability to elicit meaning from career stories he argues that subjective elements, objective elements, theme, plot and character must all be assessed.

Career stories presented to students by alumni and representatives of occupations or sectors are reviewed by Horn (2009:26) who identifies the limits of learning from interactions with external speakers when the 'intended outcome of career research seemed to be an encounter with employers or employees, rather than an educational output linked to the learning from that encounter.' Much more learning could be achieved if students were prepared and taught to analyse alumni narratives and made aware of their own idiosyncratic interpretation.

The construction, design and navigation of websites hosting career material lead readers towards a certain type of interpretation. Cochran's (1997:6) comment about the manufactured 'synthetic' nature of narrative applies to each site as a whole. Each is a compendium of multiple stories, which can be interpreted. A collection of stories presented by a series of external speakers can be critiqued and assessed as an anthology of texts chosen, selected and edited by the course organiser.

Literary theory

Narratology, the study of narrative, has effective tools to increase understanding and reveal hidden meaning of texts. Close reading, common in literary studies, applies concepts such as plot, narrative voice,

character, points of view, sequencing, causation, endings and performativity. These help find answers to the pertinent question: how is this story being told? This assists interpretations but is unlikely to reach a final definitive answer as Bruner (2002:15) states: 'narrative is an invitation to problem finding, not a lesson in problem solving'. Before outlining the model, I will first offer definitions of the elements of narrative that later I will synthesise into my new approach.

Narrative voice. Who is it, why is she or he telling this story? An author chooses a particular narrator or group of narrators to tell the story and an audience might or might not trust that narrator. Focalisation involves a set of techniques which determine who sees what; and from whom the events are brought into focus. As different perspectives bring different versions of events, knowledge of the position or consciousness of this voice increases understanding of the events. Narrators can let readers look through the eyes of someone else and careers speakers sometimes report these additional points of view. Some examples of this would be 'Because my manager told me I was doing exceptionally well, I started to look for promotion…' 'My tutor told me I was not cut out for academic study…' 'My parents were really worried about my returning to study…' The points of view and influence of other characters are relevant.

Audience. A text is often created to appeal to an intended audience and this influences editorial decisions. When a careers speaker is representing a particular organisation or professional body, other motivations might influence the performance as the speaker is being paid to present that body in a positive light. This is particularly relevant if the speech is recorded and likely to be published on a website or other forum where it might be publically available.

Sequencing relates to the re-ordering of events, presenting them in a dislocated fashion rather than in an accurate chronology. The writing of a CV involves decisions about chronology. By grouping similar activities together under one appropriate sub-heading, the writer may dislocate a sequence to generate a new text serving a specific purpose.

Causation involves triggers to action and the distinction between connected and disconnected events. Forster (1927:87) makes the distinction between 'The king died and then the queen died', which links two events in a time sequence and 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' which links the events by an explicitly stated cause. The cause of the second event is explained as being a consequence of the first. Porter Abbot (2002:37) argues that people are 'made in such a way that we continually look for causes of things'. In analysing narratives, readers should resist the fallacy that things that follow other things are caused by them. Readers are 'prone to inferential errors' (Bruner 2002:29) and need caution in drawing conclusions about consequence because sometimes, but not always, 'post hoc ergo propter hoc' (after this, therefore because of this). Individuals have their own biases in interpreting causation and career criticism helps expose these. To gain a fuller understanding of how careers develop, questions about what happened, and what caused the next event to happen, could be asked to look below the surface of easy explanations. Considering possible alternatives to the consequent events, if that had not happened then what else could have replaced it? Counterfactual questions, 'What if…?' might be asked at various stages of a career narrative.

The endings of stories. The last incident or event in the narrative may be assumed to be the end but the arbitrary status of endings concerns narratologists. T.S. Elliot observed that 'to make an end is to make a beginning' (Little Gidding, 1942, Verse V) and texts can have open endings. Soap opera survives by having no finale, in *A Thousand and One Nights* Scheherazade saves her own life by ending each story with a climax so exciting that the king re-calls her for the next instalment. The ending of a story may not be permanent or unproblematic.

Career stories have provisional endings but endings can come to define texts and sometimes, previous events tend to be understood as inevitably leading towards that particular end. The dénouement gives authority to the decisions and explanations of the author who constructed the text and might not allow for future events. Readers of career texts might benefit from allowing their imagination to predict future events and so acknowledge the impermanence of the ending presented in the story.

Foreshadowing occurs when a significant event is told in advance and the reader interprets the proceeding text with this in mind. This can lead

to false connections. When a careers speaker is introduced to an audience as being a particular type of worker, a teacher or banker, for example, a type of foreshadowing might occur. The readers of the text may make false connections between that role and the events that lead to it. It is possible to interpret the events leading to this role as being in some way relevant to that inevitable end point when this is not the ending, but just another in a series of events which is not yet complete.

Performativity means asking questions about a text to explore what it is doing or how it performs. Analysing techniques used in the creation of a text reveal their impact in shaping responses to the narrative. In some cases, unusual filming techniques might be interrogated; structured interviews sometimes include interviewers' questions that can be evaluated; accounts might be following a specific brief that may be hidden from the reader but could be explored to reveal intentions behind the brief. Some career stories appear as unprepared streams of consciousness and this form could be analysed too. Career texts have the capacity to influence readers' career decisions, so analysis of the format and how it functions deserve attention. Notions of performance are much more prevalent in literary studies than in career studies.

Career criticism

Combining concepts from the two theoretical stances develops techniques of career criticism, which help us understand more about the relationship between author and reader. To produce an informed commentary explaining what is happening in a career narrative means knowing more about its construction and to achieve this students can be taught to apply key questions aligned with clusters of concepts.

Table 1 shows how questions arise from clusters of narrative concepts linked to the events, people and style of a text. Table 2 develops these questions to explore what happens when we engage with a career story. In answering them, readers interrogate the text, assessing, evaluating, creating and acknowledging their own interpretations which, in group settings, can be articulated and defended. Having learnt the questioning technique, the critic can apply it to other career stories and to their own career situation so they will have:

1. Experience of applying a series of questions to a career text.
2. Skills to listen attentively, to observe and concentrate on a text.
3. Understanding different ways to interpret a text.
4. Ability to articulate opinions and vocabulary to describe careers.
5. Open mindedness about interpretations and acceptance of alternative views.

Table 1. Clusters of concepts related to a key question

Literary Theory	Career Theory	Combined Concepts	Key Question
Plot/action Temporality Causality	Plot Emplotment Changes	**Events**	**What?**
Narrator Characters Points of view	Characters Roles and identity Points of view	**People**	**Who?**
Audience Performativity Structure Foreshadowing Endings	Synthetic Style	**Style**	**How?**

Table 2.

A career criticism approach using three sets of questions

1 EVENTS
What? Questions to do with events, the plot and structure of a text
What happens in this story? What is the chronology? Were there any surprises in this story? Can events be presented on a time line? What causes the career transitions? Is there a pattern to the events? What could happen next in this story?
What? Questions about your personal career story
How do you order and explain events when you tell your own career story? How might you re-present your CV for different jobs? What can you change and what is fixed?

2 PEOPLE
Who? Questions to do with people and characters presented in a text
Who is telling this story? What roles are presented? Who else was involved in the story? What attitudes and behaviours are displayed, described and prioritised?
Who? Questions about people in your own career
Which people appear in narratives of your own career? What roles do they play? How can you enable people in your story to support your career progression?

3 STYLE
How? Questions to do with performance
In what style is this story told? What is the significance of this? Are there any re-current themes or words? Do you know why you are being told this story? Who is it for and what can you learn from it? Are there aspects of the story that appear to be missing? Why are these gaps significant? Have challenges been glossed over?
How? Questions about telling your career story
How do you present your story differently in conversations with friends or family? How does this change in a selection interview? How do you decide which parts to emphasise?

Table 3.
Learning activities

EVENTS *What happens?*	Draw a time line representing the events of the narrative and show any gaps or areas of confusion. Describe causes of change in this series of events. List the difficulties that were overcome. Write counter-factual questions relating to this narrative and try to answer them.
PEOPLE *Who is involved?*	Write questions to the main character asking why they did certain things. Ask another group to answer your questions by referring to the attitudes and behaviours of this character as evidenced in the text. List the characters mentioned in this text and present the relationships between them diagrammatically. Identify the different roles presented in this text. These might include work, study, family and friendship roles.
STYLE *How is this being told?*	Use dramatic voices to re-tell the story from different points of view. Prepare an alternative presentation of the same story told to a different audience (for a different purpose). Imagine entering the editing room, what will you find 'on the cutting room floor' and why is it there?
COMBINED	Role play the main character in the story and complete these statements in a private conversation with a trusted friend: • What I really like about my job is... • What I can't understand about my working life is…. • What I most want to happen next is… Review your opinions about the story and prepare an argument to present as a commentary explaining the narrative.

Teaching and learning – new pedagogy for career learning

Techniques of career criticism can enable three learning outcomes:

1. Know that each career text can be interpreted in different ways.
2. Be able to analyse career texts in classrooms and other settings.
3. Understand how some careers develop.

Some examples of creative pedagogy for career learning are given in Table 3.

Research methodology

Trans-disciplinary methods, based in constructionist epistemology involved synthesising concepts from literary, career and education studies. Attitudes to narratives, collected in a survey of 15 careers workers, resulted in this new critical approach. This was applied to nine cases for in-depth analysis and then active participatory research, including interviews with six professional practitioners, was used to evaluate and refine the approach.

In reviewing the approach, careers workers reflected on their experience of applying career criticism to a sample from nine selected career texts created in

a range of formats. These included an iCould video; two employees' profiles on company websites (one written, one video); a university promotional video for postgraduate research and an invited 'live' speaker. The practitioners acknowledged the constructed nature of career narratives and saw benefits in enabling better learning from everyday interactions. One said, 'Everyone covers the tracks of their own fictions so ably, we mustn't take stories at face value'. Questions helped one practitioner to, 'Notice how I was being influenced; my personal response is not the whole story. It's opinion not fact and I picked up things that were unsaid.' They reported that the process helped them to 'think about the text for a lot longer'. 'I made notes and engaged with the material more deeply'.

The practitioners all said they would use the approach with university students to improve the quality of their career learning and development.

Conclusion

New ways to teach career studies encompass critical engagement with concepts of career development learning. Rooney and Rawlinson adopt a combination of approaches from literature and sociology in 'contesting the dominant discourse of employability' (2016:20). Techniques of career criticism are generated at the intersection between career and literary narrative. In group settings, learners can be taught to ask a series of questions, responding to career texts creatively and interrogating them deeply. Educational activities can be designed to enable learners to read more closely and increase their interest and collaboration in responding to texts. This helps to make sense of the complex nature of career development and techniques can be re-used in informal settings, bringing deeper levels of understanding to multiple career texts encountered in everyday life.

The strengths of combining other disciplines with career learning can be explored and core concepts from other disciplines tested. Trans-disciplinary approaches will continue to enrich the 'employability agenda', I suggest we keep addressing the question: What can career workers learn from the study of other disciplines?

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Opportunity or risk for higher education careers practitioners? An exploration of peer influence on career behaviours

Anne Delauzun

A proportion of higher education (HE) students appear to be taking careers and employability support into their own hands, organising workshops, employer talks and networking events. Perhaps it's time careers professionals stepped back and left them to it? Whether through transmittal of expectations or information, as 'flesh and blood' role models, collaborators or supporters, there is much to suggest peer influence could be better harnessed as a means of increasing and deepening opportunities for students' career learning. Drawing on this, implications for the design and delivery of HE careers and employability support are considered.

Introduction

Engaging students with careers provision in Higher Education (HE) continues to be a challenge for many HE careers practitioners (Purcell, Elias, Atfield, Behle, Ellison, Luchinskaya, Snape, Conaghan and Tzanakou, 2012). With constraints on resources growing tighter, do we need to rethink HE careers provision in order to meet the needs of students other than those who are 'confident, articulate and well-enough connected' as Law suggests (2009: 4)?

Law argues that instead of 'somehow getting them to pay more attention to our expertise' we should seek ways of better engaging the 'natural dynamics' (2009: 5) of learning that happens informally through communities, such as peer groups. As an HE careers professional I regularly encounter evidence of peer influence on career behaviour, e.g. students initiating careers-related events for the benefit of their peers (Delauzun, 2015; Leslie, 2015). Struck by this, and by Law's comment, I decided to investigate this theme further for my research project.

An initial literature review reveals that peer influence on career behaviour has been recognised in much existing research (Vinokur and Caplan, 1987; Wanberg, Glomb, Song and Sorenson, 2005; Kenny and Medvide, 2007; Greenbank and Hepworth, 2009), albeit with a focus on occupational choice and the job search process. Today's careers practitioners however, generally acknowledge a much broader definition of career behaviour, as exemplified by the life-design framework with its goals of adaptability, narratability and activity (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck and van Vianen, 2009). Research into student attitudes to extra-curricular activities, for example, suggests social norms amongst peer groups play a key role in take-up (Greenbank, 2015) - noteworthy given the positive relationship between participation in extra-curricular activities and entry into graduate level jobs (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013). Similarly, a study of peer-led learning in an academic context reported participating students' deeper engagement with and greater ownership of their own learning (Keenan, 2014) – certainly positive behaviours in the context of career planning.

This article explores evidence from a range of contexts, including relevant literature and practitioner experience, of peer influence on HE students' career behaviour. Savickas et al.'s concept of career adaptability (2009) and Law's community interaction theory (2009) provide a means of linking references to

existing career theories, and implications for practice are considered throughout.

Peer influence and career adaptability

Using Savickas et al.'s components of career adaptability (2009) as a framework for categorising references identified in the literature, it appears that control, curiosity and confidence are the dimensions in which peer influence on career behaviours is perhaps most in evidence.

Control: Developing autonomy

According to Savickas et al., control is about using 'self-regulation strategies to adjust to the needs of different settings' and exerting 'influence and control on the context' (2009: 245-6). Young, Antal, Bassett, Post and DeVries suggest that it is the 'egalitarian and reciprocal' (1999: 528) nature of peer relationships that is key to the development of adolescents' autonomy, particularly when compared to other significant relationships such as those between adolescents and parents or teachers which are typically hierarchical (ibid.). They cite behaviours such as 'co-operation, collaboration, intimacy, and sharing' (ibid.) between peers as key to the development of this autonomy or independence. Student participants in a project to trial peer mentoring in the teaching of undergraduate research reported their rapid adaptation to a new way of working as a real benefit (Henderson, Buising and Wall, 2008). The authors also cite evidence to suggest that the peer support to adapt to new environments or approaches to learning continued beyond the immediate project, with several project alumni mentoring more junior students in the early stages of their careers (ibid.). This is perhaps unsurprising as many higher education institutions (HEIs) run programmes through which students are mentored by alumni as a means of supporting access to the graduate labour market. However, this example makes for an interesting comparison, suggesting that in this case the mentoring relationships were established at an earlier stage within a shared environment. In contrast, formalised mentoring schemes run by many HEIs typically initiate mentor-mentee contact after the mentor has left the HEI environment. It could be argued that Henderson et al.'s model offers a basis for a stronger, more productive relationship (ibid.).

Curiosity: Encouraging exploration

Savickas et al. identify 'curiosity about possible selves and social opportunities' as a means of increasing people's 'active exploration behaviours' (2009: 245-6) - a key component of many career theories. Increasingly HE careers practitioners work hard to engage students and stimulate curiosity at the earliest possible stage. Several references in the literature suggest peers have a positive influence on both self-exploration and also the seeking of external information. Kracke (2002) identifies a positive correlation between peer interactions on careers topics and exploration and information seeking behaviours and also the key role peers play in the process of self-exploration. In their small-scale study of peer interactions about career, Young et al. identify exploration taking place through discussion, reflection and comparison, which helped to 'elicit ideas and preferences', facilitating 'the maturation of adolescents' values' (1999: 532). Blustein (1989 cited in Young et al. 1999: 537) proposes that these kinds of 'supportive interaction' between peers can create 'success experiences', which themselves encourage further exploration activity. He also suggests that this process builds adolescents' self-confidence around career decision-making, which in turn also encourages further exploration (ibid.).

Confidence: Building self-assurance

In the context of career adaptability, Savickas et al. suggest that confidence 'includes the capacity to stand by one's own aspirations and objectives, even in the face of obstacles and barriers' (2009: 245-6). Young et al. propose that through careers-related conversations with peers, adolescents can 'take ownership of their beliefs and values' (1999: 531). They propose that it is the egalitarian nature of this peer relationship between adolescents which is a critical factor in promoting empathy, encouragement and unconditional support 'which resulted in the peers' mutual validation' (ibid.: 533).

Ford's study (2000) of under-employed graduates noted that peer support and the discovery of similar, shared problems contributed to helping to restore self-confidence - later supported by Frigerio's concept of the 'sideways glance' (2010: 18-19). This is the

suggestion that particularly during these key transition points, students frequently 'compared themselves with actual or perceived behaviours of their peers and defined themselves as similar to some and different from others' (ibid.). Frigerio cites examples of how this process affected confidence both positively and negatively (ibid.).

Peer groups as communities of influence

Expectations

Law suggests that 'expectations may be transmitted through the values of family or peer group', where expectations can refer to 'the cues, pressures, and enticements that are often embedded in membership of groups' (2009: 17-18). As Law points out, this is evident in Willis' (1977) study of adolescent male peer groups but is also evident in Frigerio's concept of the 'sideways glance' (2010: 18-19) and Greenbank et al. (2009, 2015) cited previously. Sax and Bryant (2006) also propose that the orientation of a peer group could influence student career choice into roles considered to be stereotypically masculine or feminine, whilst highlighting the question as to whether such expectations from peers are simply perceived or actual.

I have also observed this influence first hand, particularly in the context of student-led clubs and societies. Student organisers investing time in arranging guest speakers or building relationships with community organisations create an expectation that their peers will support them by attending or taking part. Indeed, students have openly admitted to me attending such events primarily out of loyalty towards their friend, the organiser. Surely then engagement with core careers support provision could be increased if we made better use of the draw of these peer organisers, unique to the peer relationship.

Support

Kracke identifies that 'peers have an important role as emotional support during adolescence' (2002: 21) and Jong, Cohen-Schotanus, Dekker and Verkerk report that 'the engagement of peers helps participants realize that they are not alone' and that support within the group structure 'makes them believe they can rely on each other' (2009: 510-11). Terrion and Leonard (2007 cited in Packard, Marciano, Payne, Bledzki and Woodard, 2014: 434) suggest that an added benefit to peer mentoring relationships (as opposed to supervisory mentoring relationships) is that they are more apt to include emotional support and friendship.

Modelling

Law suggests that modelling may be transmitted through communities of influence, in the sense of opportunities to meet and understand 'flesh-and-blood' (2009: 17-18) examples of ways of life beyond what a person may have otherwise encountered. In the context of peer communities, Young et al. (1999) confirm that this is the case. Drane, Smith, Light, Pinto, and Swarat (2005) reported that for ethnic minority students, the simple presence of other minority students as role models and leaders in the context of peer-led workshops had a positive impact on student retention. Delauzun (2015) and Leslie (2015) both cite cases of students as 'flesh-and-blood' examples of how to proactively source work experience or complete an effective application for a legal training contract. I've encountered many more examples of this, specifically students sharing their experience of placements or years abroad with those who are about to embark on such activities. Student feedback on these interactions consistently demonstrates their value. Occasionally I've also observed evidence to suggest the importance of the 'realness' of these role models. For some students, case studies of high-achieving alumni (written for the purposes of institutional PR) appeared to be demotivating, rather than inspiring, with some students feeling the perceived gap between their own positions and those of the alumni to be too large.

Information provision

Law uses the term 'information provision' to refer to 'the communication of impressions, images and data which people distil from conversations in the groups of which they are members' (2009: 17-18) and suggests that this is another way in which communities can influence an individual's career behaviours. Young et al. describe how students bring 'information about the world of work' (1999: 528) to their careers related conversations, and Delauzun (2015) and Leslie (2015) provide evidence of the communication of information

through peer groups. The latter of these deals with specific information about the legal sector and I have observed similar behaviour within some of the more vocationally focused student-led societies within my own institution. Research into peer co-mentoring undertaken within a music conservatoire found that students valued information and support from peers that helped them to better understand and integrate into the professional music community (Gaunt, Creech, Long and Hallam, 2012). These examples call to mind Lave and Wenger's concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' to describe 'the process by which newcomers become included in a community of practice' (Wenger, 1998: 100). It could be argued then that at least some student-led clubs and societies operate as communities of practice themselves, offering their members considerable opportunity to learn from each other.

Implications for practice

Peers as accessible support

An interesting theme that emerged from the literature was students' apparent perception of peers as a more accessible source of support than staff. Walsh, Larsen and Parry (2009) propose that the way in which students access support during their time in HE is tiered, with peers effectively operating as a first line of support for pastoral issues and academic tutors for academic matters. They suggest that 'specialist' support services including careers, finance and counselling are only accessed as a second tier if needed, and used in general much less frequently. In research into a peer group mentoring programme in Finland, student mentors reported getting most support from other students (even those who were not mentors) rather than staff (Skaniakos, Penttinen, and Lairio, 2014) and in the context of lab-based research students reported greater levels of comfort in peer-led classes than with those that were staff-led (Henderson et al., 2008). This is consistent with Greenbank's finding that 'the fact that careers advisers did not 'know them' was seen by many students as a major barrier for seeking their help' (2011: 36) with many preferring to seek advice from 'people they know and feel comfortable with' (ibid.). Given this, basic training could be provided to student 'careers champions' within HEIs to enable them to more effectively support and signpost their peers. Students supported by peers with some of the 'basics', for example simple questioning to explore career ideas or CV writing, could then take greater advantage of the higher level professional skills of HE careers practitioners.

Recognising peers as knowledge-holders

Law (2009) makes a case for using the concept of franchise to enhance the effectiveness of careers support and harnessing the way in which people naturally learn from each other and elsewhere (1986) presents ideas for how this approach could be implemented. This theme was also identified in Carter and McNeill's research into student induction in which 'it was largely the peer guides who took on the mantle of the expert' (1998: 7). Young et al. offer evidence that peers can be 'resources to each other in a meaningful project in their lives' in contrast to the 'expert-novice dyad' (Rogoff 1995 cited in Young et al., 1999: 537) most often associated with careers-related activities for adolescents (ibid.). As careers practitioners we can do our best to understand and empathise with students' experiences of career management and job search, but should we do more to highlight to students the useful knowledge held by so many of their peers with first-hand, current experience?

Scope and longevity of peer support

Consistent with Savickas et al.'s (2009) assertion that a holistic and life-long approach to life-designing is required, it could be reasonably expected that peers provide support with life roles beyond those of student and worker and that peer relationships may continue beyond the HE environment, in likely contrast to those between students and staff. A key argument of Law's community interaction theory is that 'students' and clients' career management is more influenced by what happens between them and the people they spend most time with, in whose company they feel most at home, and whose opinions they take most seriously' (2009: 2). Whilst many HE careers services continue to serve alumni, few are able to offer all students the same level of consistency or longevity in terms of the practitioner/s supporting them. In order to capitalise on this, a means should be found of helping students to learn how to critically evaluate information and support available from their peers.

Engaging new audiences

Given this evidence, perhaps careers practitioners could do more to encourage student-led careers and employability initiatives which could reach different audiences? Similarly, co-delivered events (students and careers practitioners) could perhaps offer 'best of both' – where the presence of a peer leaders increases engagement whilst involvement from careers practitioners acts as a mechanism for quality control, as exemplified in Leslie (2015). Many HEIs are already using peers as a form of informal referral market through student ambassador/buddying schemes, and de Jager and Ntlokwana (2011) reported an increase in referrals to student counselling services as a result of peer helping programmes. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether this approach would be effective in increasing impact (i.e. engaging with those not already accessing services) or whether it would simply generate more service demand from those already engaged.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that there is evidence of peer influence on career behaviours in a range of contexts, operating in a range of ways. Also, there is scope for HE careers services to recognise and/or harness this more explicitly in order to better meet the needs of all students they serve. Encouraging and supporting peer-led careers and employability events would be a relatively straightforward first step. Certainly if a significant repositioning of career-work professionalism (Law, 2009) is required, perhaps one in which other students and non-careers professionals play a greater role, the implications of this would be wide-ranging.

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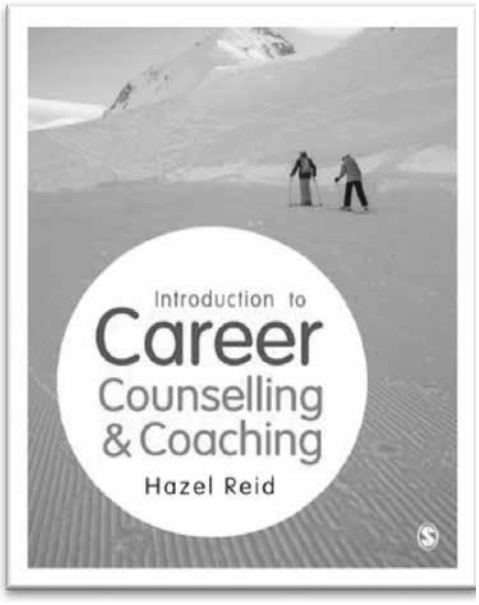
Research Project:

A conceptual model of peer influence on career behaviours, completed as part of the PGDip Careers Information, Education and Guidance in Higher Education at the University of Warwick.

Publications



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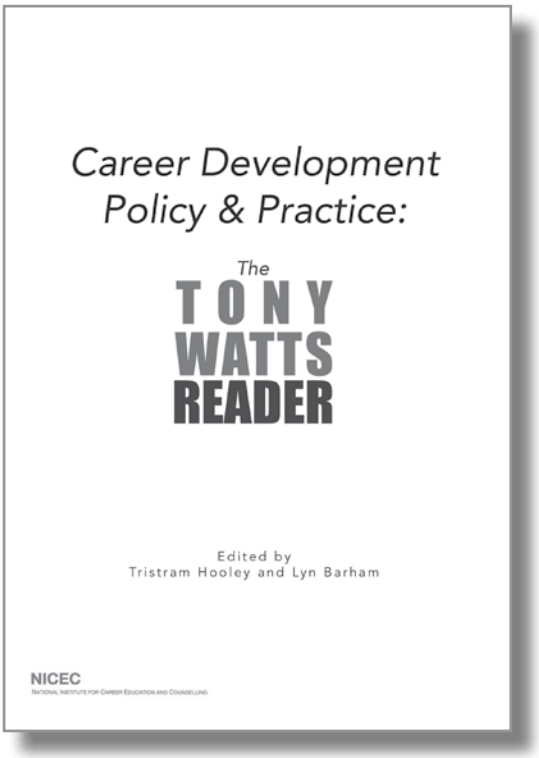

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NICEC/CDI Research into Practice: Exploring our professional status as career practitioners through professional identity and professional development Lyn Barham, John Gough, Rosemary McLean and Janet Sheath, NICEC Fellows	The Pitt Building, Cambridge	Wednesday 12 October 2016 10.30am-4pm
Seminar: Appropriate attire for careers. Prof Tristram Hooley and Julia Yates, NICEC Fellows	Hamilton House, London	Thursday 24 November 2016 5pm-6.30pm
Seminar: The contribution of careers events to career learning. Claire Nix, NICEC Fellow, and Ian McIntosh	Hamilton House, London	Tuesday 24 January 2017 5pm-6.30pm
Network meeting: Topic TBC	Venue TBC	Wednesday 15 March 2017 2pm-5pm
Seminar: Topic TBC	Hamilton House, London	Thursday 11 May 2017 5pm-6.30pm
Seminar: Topic TBC	Hamilton House, London	Monday 19 June 2017 5pm-6.30pm
Network meeting: Topic TBC	Napier University, Edinburgh	Tuesday 19 September 2017 2pm-5pm
Seminar: Topic TBC	Hamilton House, London	Thursday 23 November 2017 5pm-6.30pm

Event Costs:

Seminars and Network Meetings:

- included in membership fees for NICEC Fellows and members.
- £20 for seminars; £40 for network meetings for non-members.

Forthcoming events

CDI Training and Events Programme

Training and Skills Events		
Advanced Career Guidance and Coaching Skills	Somerset Edinburgh Birmingham	Tuesday 8 November 2016 Thursday 8 December 2016 Thursday 19 January 2017
Careers of the Futures (Early evening CPD)	Edinburgh	Tuesday 22 November 2016
Motivating Clients – Inspirational and Creative Techniques	Southampton	Friday 25 November 2016
Introductory Level Management Training: Managing Teams	London	Tuesday 10 January 2017
Personal Branding	Glasgow	Wednesday 18 January 2017
Two Day Course for Careers Practitioners in Guidance Theory and Practice, QCF Level 6	Manchester	Tuesday 8 & Wednesday 9 February 2017
Conferences, Exhibitions and Shows		
Scottish Student Conference & Exhibition	Napier University, Edinburgh	Wednesday 23 November 2016
National Career Guidance Show	Leicester London Leeds	Wednesday 23 November 2016
Webinars (Free)		
Alternatives to Higher Education	Wednesday 9 November 2016	
Quality Awards for Careers	Wednesday 16 November 2016 Thursday 26 January 2017	
Student Finance, Scholarships and Bursaries	Thursday 8 December 2017	
Researching Higher Education Options and New Degree Courses	Tuesday 10 January 2017	
Taking a Year Out, How to Make the Best Use of Time	Wednesday 15 March 2017	

For details and booking of all CDI events visit the CDI website at:
www.thecdi.net/Skills-Training-Events

Please note that the CDI has now launched a brand new online event booking system. This enables booking of multiple delegates, a clean new interface and the ability to pay online by Paypal or Credit/Debit Card.

If you are looking for training and CPD opportunities that are not currently available here, we can create events and courses to meet your needs. Please contact sarah.garratt@thecdi.net

ABOUT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector. We have a rich heritage, bringing together the membership of ACEG, ACPi (UK); ICG and NAEGA to create a single voice for a diverse sector.

We have a key role to play in influencing UK skills policy as it affects those with whom career development practitioners work and a clear purpose to improve and assure the quality and availability of career development opportunities for all throughout the UK.

We have a strong and growing membership of individuals, students and affiliate organisations – all of whom subscribe to a Code of Ethics and are committed to continuous professional development. We are also the custodians of the UK Register for Career Development Professionals and the National Occupational Standards for the Career Development sector.

We have established:

- A powerful brand supported by an evolving website **www.thecdi.net**; social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) presence; and quarterly magazine *Career Matters*;
- A schedule of events and conferences based on a training needs analysis of members and an Annual Conference and Exhibition;
- A media presence with the CDI as the *expert voice* in the field; advising politicians, speaking at conferences and commenting on policy;
- The UK Career Development Awards celebrating the best in day to day practice, including *Careers Adviser/ Coach of the Year* and *Careers Teacher of the Year*;
- Business development success winning several major tenders including the National Occupational Standards and projects with the Skills Show;
- A platform for a career progression pathway for the sector.

The CDI has a critical role to play in setting standards and articulating what quality looks like for the sector. Importantly we are an awarding body, managing the Qualification in Career Guidance (Development in Scotland) and the UK Register for Career Development Professionals, which is pivotal to our ongoing quality agenda and is fast becoming recognised as the sector's equivalent to chartered status.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with NICEC on the Journal and future research-focused events in the career development sector and now have a seat on the NICEC Editorial Board.

The Journal will be distributed to all CDI members twice a year – with the April and October edition of *Career Matters*.

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