NICEC
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

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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.

'The National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC) was originally founded as a research institute in 1975. It now plays the role of a learned society for reflective practitioners in the broad field of career education, career guidance/counselling and career development. This includes individuals whose primary role relates to research, policy, consultancy, scholarship, service delivery or management. NICEC seeks to foster dialogue and innovation between these areas through events, networking, publications and projects.

NICEC is distinctive as a boundary-crossing network devoted to career education and counselling in education, in the workplace, and in the wider community. It seeks to integrate theory and practice in career development, stimulate intellectual diversity and encourage transdisciplinary dialogue. Through these activities, NICEC aims to develop research, inform policy and enhance service delivery.

Membership and fellowship are committed to serious thinking and innovation in career development work. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations connected with career education and counselling. Fellowship is an honour conferred by peer election and signals distinctive contribution to the field and commitment to the development of NICEC's work. Members and Fellows receive the NICEC journal and are invited to participate in all NICEC events.

NICEC does not operate as a professional association or commercial research institute, nor is it organisationally aligned with any specific institution. Although based in the UK, there is a strong international dimension to the work of NICEC and it seeks to support reflective practice in career education and counselling globally.'

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TITLE

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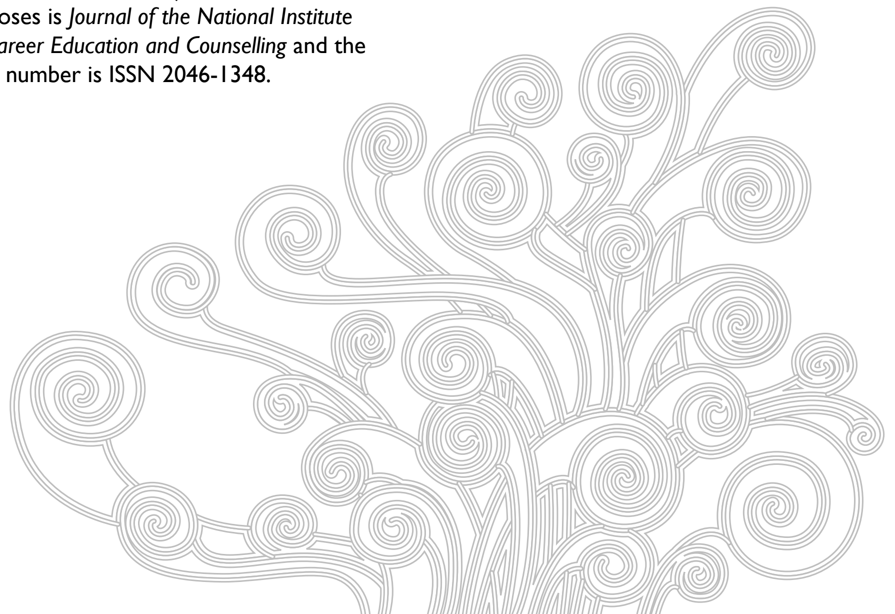
- Career development in the workplace: private and public sector, small, medium and large organisations, private practitioners.
- Career development in education: schools, colleges, universities, adult education, public career services.
- Career development in the community: third age, voluntary, charity, social organisations, independent contexts, public career services.

It is designed to be read by individuals who are involved in career development-related work in a wide range of settings including information, advice, counselling, guidance, advocacy, coaching, mentoring, psychotherapy, education, teaching, training, scholarship, research, consultancy, human resources, management or policy. The journal has a national and international readership.



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The journal is published twice a year (cover price £20/ issue) and can be purchased via an annual subscription (£30 UK, £35 Europe outside UK or £40 outside Europe, including postage).

Membership of NICEC is also open to any individual with an interest in career development (£65 p.a./full time students £50 p.a.) Members receive the journal, free attendance at all NICEC events and access to publications and seminar materials via the NICEC website. Individuals from one organization can share their membership place at events.

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The future of career development

This edition starts with two articles arising from a recent conference on the future of career development. These are followed by some recent research on the importance of celebrity culture in the career-related learning of young people. The next three articles all broadly cover the topic of career education in contrasting contexts within higher education and schools. There is also an article on young people and labour markets. We conclude with two extra sections in this edition: a research update and three book reviews. Any feedback on these additions or any aspect of the issue would be most welcome.

Lyn Barham and **Wendy Hirsh** provide a helpful overview of the *Careers 50/50* conference held in Cambridge (UK) in July 2014. This event was organised jointly by the Careers Research Advisory Centre (CRAC) and the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC). A number of key themes were identified including the politically situated nature of careers work. This gave rise to critical questions about responsibilisation, beneficiaries and vested interests.

In a further paper arising from *Careers 50/50*, **Stephen McNair** identifies four key challenges for our field: definitions of "guidance"; the notion of "adultness"; the relationship between learning and career; and the nature of professionalism. He discusses each in turn and considers implications for the future, for example, better use of existing longitudinal studies to inform lifelong career development.

Kim Allen and **Heather Mendick** report on their research with young people in relation to celebrity culture. This ground-breaking work enables us to hear about the ways young people make sense of celebrity culture such as TV shows (e.g. *Judge Judy* and *The Hills*) in career terms. The authors acknowledge that popular representations of success are not necessarily unproblematic (e.g. representations of Will Smith) and use this to argue for a critical and creative approach to career education through which young people are supported to arrive at their own definitions of success.

Laura Brammar and **David Winter** report on a significant career education innovation using a massive online open course (MOOC). They state that it is the world's first career and employability skills MOOC with around 90,000 participants from 204 countries. In addition, although working within a traditional career education paradigm, the authors synthesise bold new claims concerning contemporary career management focusing on: control, clarity, confidence and courage. They also discuss how users have been enabled to evaluate aspects of career development theories.

Morag Walling, Chris Horton and **Nigel Rayment** discuss a new approach to employer engagement with young people in schools. An overview of the programme and its underpinning rationale in experiential and co-operative learning is provided. They explain how an invitation to play the role of 'Young Consultant' led to the students engaging in research and making recommendations to the company. The role of the employees as co-learners is also extensively considered.

Paula Benton explores work placement experiences within some higher education student groups. She argues for a richer conception of employability that includes critical reasoning and evaluation. As part of this, she identifies and need for a *rapprochement* between employability and career development learning. Paula takes a social learning and constructivist approach through which students are supported to reflect upon how career development theories (e.g. matching, developmental and planned happenstance) relate to their career journey.

Gill Naylor engages in a critical analysis of the changing nature of the youth employment market and its impact upon the lives of young people on the economic margins of society. She argues that the routes from education to the labour market are seriously flawed. She identifies persistent attempts to pathologise groups of young people i.e. to see them in deficit and not the labour market, government or businesses. It is, she argues, only when the needs of young people are given equal status that the problem can begin to be addressed.

Finally, **Ruth Mieschbuehler** and **Rob Vickers** take an overview of recent research in our field and relate this to careers work practice. Book reviews are provided by **David Winter, Phil McCash** and **Lyn Barham**.

Phil McCash, Editor

Careers 50/50 – reflecting on the past: innovating for the future

Lyn Barham and Wendy Hirsh

This paper offers a summary of, and some reflections on, a conference titled *Careers 50/50*, held in Cambridge in July 2014 by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) and NICEC to mark the fiftieth anniversary of CRAC. It highlights some of the main themes from small group discussion sessions held at this event, as well as from the main speakers. The first day of the conference reflected on changes in work, society and career development over the past fifty years and the second day looked to the future. Key themes included the purposes of career guidance for individuals and as perceived by policy makers, and the dangers of the 'commodification' of guidance. To help individuals deal with continuing change and uncertainty, delegates were hoping to improve access to guidance and to combine personal, tailored career development support with much more creative use of technologically-based information and resources.

Introduction

In July 2014, CRAC and NICEC hosted a two-day conference entitled *Careers 50/50* to mark the fiftieth anniversary of CRAC. Career guidance practice in the UK was very limited fifty years ago when two young men, aware that they themselves had been unable to access appropriate help in developing their ideas about career choice, founded the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) with the purpose of addressing what they saw as this unmet need. From this initial start by Adrian Bridgewater and Professor Tony Watts, CRAC has pursued a mission to provide research, expertise and innovation across the career development field.

In the process, CRAC has 'sow(n) more seeds than it could itself develop' (Smith, 2010: 126). One such seed is NICEC, reaching its own fortieth anniversary in 2015. The conference, co-chaired by Ellen Pearce of CRAC and Professor Tristram Hooley of NICEC, also formed part of a series of activities marking the retirement of Tony Watts. The previous issue of the NICEC Journal (Issue 33, October 2014) highlighted the work of Tony Watts and included contributions from the first two of the speakers at the *50/50* conference, Ronald Sultana and Peter Plant, both International Fellows of NICEC. This present issue of the journal, focusing on the future of career development, also includes an article by Stephen McNair, prompted by the *Careers 50/50* conference.

Day One: Reflecting on the past

The first day reflected on the past five decades in the field of career development. Much has changed, as we look at the 50-year path to the present day, but the opening speakers were as anxious about the current state of affairs in career guidance as they were celebratory of CRAC's and NICEC's achievements. Professor Ronald Sultana from Malta set this scene, questioning the extent to which career guidance operates within conceptual framings which serve to reinforce existing social structures, including inequalities of wealth and power. Whilst broadly emancipatory in intent, much career guidance practice is reproductive of the status quo rather than transformative in its work with individual clients. In the context of a neoliberal capitalist system, 'success' for career guidance clients can be seen as achieving a viable place within a system much more concerned with economic goals than social justice. Meritocracy

is a myth when labour markets need spare capacity in order to function with low-cost efficiency.

Career guidance practice has traditionally placed the individual client at the centre of its concerns. Sultana, drawing on Habermas' typology of human interests or 'rationalities' as *technical*, *practical* or *emancipatory*, found that all three of these approaches to career guidance have the capacity to be emancipatory, although each is informed by different ideologies and beliefs about human development (Sultana, 2014). Career theory over the last fifty years has been framed according to all three of these human interests. However career practice, to fulfil its potential to be emancipatory, must inevitably engage with and acknowledge the socio-political approaches (Watts, 1996) by which it is informed and which it may serve to advance. This requires of practitioners serious reflection on the political aspects of their work and its impact:

> …in which ways does career education and guidance participate in the deployment of power?
> …and on whose behalf?
> …towards which ends?

This theme, of the underlying purposes of career guidance, was further developed by Peter Plant from Denmark. Career guidance practitioners are encouraged by policy makers and funders to evidence the contribution of their work, but he urged a questioning of what the problem is *presented* to be. If efforts are addressed to answering a wrongly based policy question, then there is a danger of producing 'policy-based evidence'. Rather, evidence should raise questions as to the direction of policy as a factor contributing to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of career development activities.

Plant recounted worrying changes in Denmark, where the increasingly widespread provision of career development services had until recently been a cause for celebration (Plant and Valgreen, 2014). More recent 'prioritising' of services and prescription of guidance methods has been coupled with an assumption that outcomes for clients should conform to normative, socially reproductive expectations. Increasingly, the individual worker or jobseeker is to be placed at the service of economic development. A question time contributor reflected this in referring to the 'responsibilisation' of individuals by the state: the state faced with an intractable problem of unemployment exports the blame onto individuals, vulnerable scapegoats who are at the same time serving the system's need for a reserve army of potential employees. From there, it is easy to extend the responsibility, and blame, to teachers and careers advisers, for their failure to support individuals, who are framed in this discourse as 'responsible' for their employment and wider social situation when their problems in fact arise systemically. More collective approaches were cited in some Asian and Maori societies, where the whole society takes ownership of the issue of participation by all citizens in their society, rather than framing it as an individual problem.

Discussion groups throughout the day were asked to frame their suggestions around 'what we should remember, and do more of' from the past fifty years and those 'things we should forget, or do less of' in the coming years. Whilst groups were structured to address different client groups and settings, a number of cross-cutting themes emerged. One such was the need to 'forget' approaches that are based on assumptions that clients conform to a standard model, whether as schools students or those approaching retirement. Essential to providing good career support is listening to the specific needs of individuals: not pushing unprocessed information at school students, nor – in the workplace – for employers to treat workers as undifferentiated assets, but rather as people each with unique potential for change, development and contribution to the enterprise.

Conversely, the discussion groups wanted to see more approaches focused on developing career management skills so that people of all ages can address their career progress in conjunction with their overall wellbeing. This was highlighted by groups discussing guidance work in schools, in employing organisations and the transition to retirement. Whilst raising individuals' aspirations is a concern across the course of working life, it is seldom achieved through uncoordinated 'inspirational' inputs and piecemeal, tick-box provision to satisfy policy makers who

want measurable processes. Instead it needs well-trained school staff and professionally qualified career practitioners working within coordinated networks with each other and the wider world of employment and communities. Such networks provide experiential learning (for school students, in the workplace and for those developing research careers, as well for those within vocational and FE pathways); such learning is fluid and intergenerational, but is not amenable to simple measurement in a 'What works?' sense. Rather, it provides and encourages supportive networks addressing individual needs in individualised ways.

Blue sky thinking addressed the potential to do things differently: for example, employers with accessible premises (such as large supermarket chains) could use their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes to provide on-site career support for their own staff and for the public. Such integration with other activities of everyday life would not only greatly improve access to career services, but also position paid and volunteer work alongside other valuable social roles.

Inputs from Stephen McNair and Tony Watts addressed the 'reflecting on the past' conference theme. McNair, whose article appears later in this issue, depicted the stratified, class-ridden society of 1964 when only 5% of the population (mainly male) entered university. Gender, ethnicity and age balances in the workforce were very different then from now. Such structural division has been succeeded by dramatic inequalities in wealth and associated differences in life chances. Watts described the past dearth of career information, now much improved, but cautioned that the recent commodification of career guidance processes risks pushing career support practice towards mechanistic processes rather than individually tailored support from career professionals.

At the heart of career development work sit clients who almost universally want a better world. A university careers adviser commented on the very strong response by students to employment opportunities which encompass 'work to change the world' in NGOs, charities and social enterprises. Conference participants carried away from Day 1 the need to hold in mind the bold and diverse aspirations of our clients for a decent role in a better world.

Day Two: Innovating for the future

The second day of the conference turned from reflecting on the past to looking forward to the next fifty years in career development. The international flavour of Day 1 was sustained with contributions from India and Canada as well as the UK. Some research fields capturing popular attention, including neuro-science and behavioural economics, were explored to see if they may yield fresh insights into issues of learning and career choice.

Abhijit Bhaduri from Wipro – a global IT, consulting and outsourcing company headquartered in Bangalore – looked at the changing nature of work and careers. He highlighted two major features of labour market change. Continuing proliferation in kinds of work will challenge the labels of standardised 'occupations' (doctor, lawyer etc) replacing them with varied combinations of work tasks and skills in many 'shades' like the many variations in one colour we see on paint colour charts. The second continuing trend will be automation. The work likely to require human input will be either 'high tech or high touch' (the latter being personal services); but erosion can be expected in some previously secure professional fields like accountancy and some aspects of healthcare. 'Pockets of growth' in jobs will occur and challenge individuals to shift their existing skills into these new areas. Although the central message about continuous learning and re-skilling is a very familiar one, Bhaduri's vision of the future is more nuanced than the rather hackneyed career narrative about 'changing your career several times' over a working life. He sees individuals as needing to develop both generic strengths (such as working with people, complex problem-solving and the ability to learn across disciplines) and specific areas of expertise, which they will need to adjust continuously over time as opportunities shift.

Tom Hartley, a cognitive neuroscientist from the University of York, helped the delegates put what he called 'neurohype' into perspective and gain some appreciation of what neuroscience may tell us about what is going on in the human brain as we think, understand, learn and feel. Hartley emphasised the

need to integrate important understanding from psychology with what we can now see from images of brain activity. Neuroscience is already shedding light on different mechanisms at work in the brain as we learn in both unconscious and conscious ways: the former useful for routine tasks but the latter key to dealing with unexpected problems. Training, for example to be a London taxi driver or a musician, leads to measureable change to particular structures in the brain. It will be fascinating to see what will be discovered about the role of nature (our genes) and nurture (our experiences and training) in influencing our aptitudes. Neuroscience is also revealing the importance of intuitive behaviour and *'that what we call the "mind", our conscious thoughts and memories, is a small part of what makes us behave in the way we do.'* So maybe we should not expect career decision-making to appear conscious or rational. Knowing more about how our brains work may help us in time to learn and to make decisions more effectively.

Behavioural economics, like neuro-science, has been in vogue over recent years. Lynne Bezanson from the Canadian Career Development Foundation gallantly stepped outside her usual work interests to help the conference explore how – if at all – behavioural economics might be of relevance to career development. Behavioural economics takes the theme of unconscious decision-making one step further, suggesting that human beings are 'cognitively wired' for '*predictably* irrational' decision-making (Kahneman, 2011). Previous experiences and decisions can 'prime' us and lock us into patterns of thought and behaviour which are both predictable and not effective. Behavioural economics has to date concentrated mostly on decisions that can be measured in financial or efficiency terms, but may over the coming years give us new understanding of how to support individuals in challenging their previously 'primed' or 'anchored' career thoughts and unlock their opportunities.

John Lees highlighted the uncertainty faced by individuals, especially when employers are not really interested in helping individuals plan for or develop their careers. He sees individuals as ambivalent about taking control of their own decisions, including how to play the 'end game' of retirement. Jon Turner from the University of Edinburgh, like John Lees, emphasised the increasing value placed by employers on individuals who have the opportunity and ability to learn from a range of experiences. Employability skills, including experiential learning, is therefore something for us to take further in the coming years. Jimmy Brannigan from NETpositive Futures reminded the conference of the environmental sustainability agenda – another example of those links between individuals and wider society which was such a strong theme across the two days.

Two small group discussion sessions in different parts of Day 2 encouraged delegates to explore with each other their views on future careers and future career development practices respectively. This time the groups were asked for both these topics to reflect on *continuity and change:* challenges, ideas and practices that will still be relevant over coming years on the one hand and changing or new ones on the other.

Delegates identified several key themes in relation to the future of work and careers. Technologically driven change will be all around us, creating the risk of ever-widening gaps between those who can keep pace and those who are less agile and may become further detached or excluded from work. Technology will also influence the location of work and the nationalities of workers, but with some types of work being much easier to move geographically than others. Questions were raised about the future dominance both of 'jobs' (as opposed to more fluid ways of defining work and deploying skills) and the influence of large companies (as opposed to micro businesses). Most of these changes were seen as further extensions of existing trends. Some of the career issues raised included the over-stretched psychological contract with ever more pressure to be flexible placed on the employee and a risk of too little support from the employer for either re-skilling (including time to learn) or worklife balance. Several groups were interested in implications for young people just starting out on education and work. Will all these pressures and uncertainties make them ask 'Who do you want to be?" and not just 'What do you want to do?' Will the education system be radical enough to equip future generations with the generic and employability skills they will need?

In relation to their discussion of future career interventions, the delegates were interested in how best to combine personal, tailored career development support with much more creative use

of technologically-based information and resources. Several groups hoped that better trained career professionals would have a strong presence over the coming years, often in facilitative roles. Individuals will be using diverse sources of career support including peers, parents, teachers, alumni of universities and colleges, employers and industry/professional bodies. The integration of career support into learning and work is a big challenge for leaders both in education and employing organisations and our current language around career guidance is not easy for them to understand or find immediately relevant. There is scope to link career development support more strongly both with individual financial planning and with health and wellbeing.

All conferences have a mood as well as their specific content. This one, held at a difficult moment in the short history of careers work in the UK was, perhaps surprisingly, rather optimistic in a calmly reflective and collaborative way. The irresistible charm of Cambridge in summer may have had a lot to do with it, as did many old friendships renewed, new connections made and the brilliant timing of Michael Gove's sacking as Education Secretary.

So as we look forward to the next fifty years of career development, we take with us a powerful sense of the need to see the individual in the context of wider society, to examine real evidence of labour market trends and to be vigilant with regard to the purposes others may have for career development interventions. New fields of research, as yet only embryonic, may help us understand how individuals could adopt more effective approaches to decision-making and to learning. Career professionals are faced with the exciting challenge of working with educators, employers and many other networks to help individuals prepare for and navigate what Tony Watts referred to as their '*possible, probable and preferable futures.*'

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Adult guidance – where from, and where to?

Stephen McNair

This article is based on a presentation on adult guidance, made as part of the celebration of NICEC's 50th Anniversary. It reflects on how the policy questions in England have changed over that period, from the perspective of someone who was involved in national policy for much of that time, having come to adult guidance, like many of its founders, from adult education, where you see vividly how learning can transform the lives of adults; and with qualifications in English literature, which provides a foundation of understanding of the diverse ways in which people understand themselves and the world. Adult guidance exists to help people address the questions: 'Who am I', 'Who do I want to be'? and 'How might I get there?' Devising ways of addressing them remains a challenge for practitioners, and Government continues to be uncertain about how far it wants to engage. I suggest that four issues continue to concern us: our definition of 'guidance'; the notion of 'adultness'; the relationship between learning and career; and the nature of professionalism. Each is discussed, before some comments on implications for the future.

Fifty years of change

Fifty years is a long time. In 1964, we still had a fiercely stratified education system, with only 5% going to university and thence to 'graduate jobs', but there remained high skilled and respected manual jobs, and lifetime employment was both an expectation and a reality for almost all men, and for a small, but growing, number of women. We had full employment, much of it in manufacturing and extractive industries, but white collar jobs were expanding, opening doors for a growing middle class, and creating the illusion, which persists to this day, that the tide of 'social mobility' can raise all boats. Few lived a decade beyond retirement, and for many, retirement meant five years in poor health.

Twenty years on, this world was still a fresh memory, though the reality had already been transformed. In 1984, I was appointed to head a new Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE). Our predecessor, the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE 1982), had convinced Government that adult guidance was worth investigating, and our first remit was to produce policy recommendations on the development of what was then called 'educational guidance for adults'. The resulting report, The Challenge of Change, was published in 1986 (UDACE 1986).

Thirty years later, we live in a different world. Society is ageing rapidly. Most children born today will live beyond 90, raising questions about the sustainability of an economy where retirement lasts for 30 or 40 years, not five. Despite a notionally more equal education system, and much higher participation in higher education, social and economic inequality has risen to levels not seen since they last peaked in 1914 (Piketty 2014). The notion of a predictable and continuous lifelong career has gone for almost all. While we are still the world's 6th largest manufacturing country (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2009) we employ less than half as many people to do it, and fewer are in recognisably skilled roles. The cultural dominance of the West, which was a simple fact of life in the 1960s, has gone, and perceptions of economic and political incompetence have challenged the notion that our model of capitalism and democracy are the inevitable culmination of human progress. Technological change has transformed how we live and interact, much of it for the better, but, having destroyed much skilled manual work, it is now starting to take over the professional roles which are the foundation of the

security of the middle classes. Work, for most, has become less predictable, and more precarious, and even the question of what 'work' is, is no longer self-evident.

Although this history highlights the risks of trying to predict decades into the future, it is still worth considering what are the big issues of the past, how far they remain relevant, and what we can learn from our successes and failures. I suggest that four issues continue to concern us: our definition of 'guidance'; the notion of 'adultness'; the relationship between learning and career; and the nature of professionalism. I will discuss each in turn, before considering some implications for the future.

What is it that we do?

The first issue is the nature of 'guidance', and its boundaries. This is partly a matter of terminology: what do we call what we do, to policymakers, practitioners, clients/ customers/ beneficiaries, and to ourselves, but also one of scope. In the late 1980s, working with a large group of experts of all kinds, UDACE sought to establish a consensus around 'guidance' as the overarching term, embracing all the ways in which 'services' (public, private and third sector) might empower adults to make decisions about their lives: helping them to answer the fundamental questions – who am I? who (not only 'what') do I want to be? and how might I get there? We did not argue that this was an ideal umbrella term, but that in the absence of any consensus, we should try to build support around one term.

We proposed that 'guidance' embraces seven activities: informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling, advocating and feeding back, with educating added later as an eighth. Some agencies, services or individuals might offer all eight, while others might specialise in one or a few. The Government's response was surprisingly positive. They recognised the argument that better guidance could address the failings of a market in education and training, and funded us to provide development support through a National Educational Guidance Initiative. However, they were uneasy about the scope of our ambitions, and chose to support only information and advice, and a severely limited notion of counselling – now unhelpfully renamed 'guidance'. The result was the clumsy, and limiting, term 'IAG', or more recently 'CEIAG' which brings in careers education, but which clearly excludes the remaining activities. The terms have never become widely adopted outside the profession, and the general public remains uncertain about what it is we do, and why.

In drawing these boundaries, money certainly played a role – 'counselling' sounds suspiciously expensive; but it was also ideological for an increasingly radical Government of the right. On one hand, the State has no business meddling with people's minds, while on the other, enabling clients to act, and advocating on their behalf, sounded suspiciously like asking the state's employees to campaign against it (or against their employers). The idea of 'feedback', that guidance practitioners might gather useful intelligence to inform employers and the state about policies and practices, also suggested that we might be getting a false sense of our own importance.

Over the intervening years we have seen much progress. We have a national adult careers service (NCS), but much more needs to be done to make it visible and accessible to the whole adult population. We still need a clearer consensus on what we call what we do. More fundamentally, we need to find ways of enabling the NCS, or its partners, to address the much broader vision of adult guidance which UDACE proposed, to enable adults, not just to find the 'right' course or job, but to make sense of their lives in an uncertain and rapidly changing world.

How is 'adult' guidance different?

My second issue is 'adultness': is 'adult guidance' different from guidance for young people? Although this has often been presented as a simple age based divide, in reality it was more complex, rooted both on history and ideology. In the late 1970s we had an established, statutory, careers service for young people, run by Local Authorities, who were also responsible for almost all the schools in their areas. Some of those services also offered limited services to adults, but this was always seen as ancillary to their main mission.

However, in the 1970s a range of factors began to demonstrate that adults also had needs, too important to ignore. These included the exposure, in the mid-70s, of the scale of adult illiteracy, and the damage it causes; growing resistance to the systematic exclusion of women from education and the workplace; and concern about rising structural unemployment in an increasingly uncertain labour market.

Two parallel developments responded to this. The first was the creation, in 1971, of the Open University. It is easy now to underestimate what a radical and powerful innovation this was in its time. The OU opened the door to mass higher education, especially for women, and for those who had been failed by the initial education system. Crucially, it recognised from the beginning that a complex distance learning institution, where students lacked the day to day physical contact with staff and fellow learners of a traditional university, required some kind of advisory system, to ensure that learners could relate their own curricular choices to their individual needs and aspirations, and did not simply become lost in a maze of modules. At a stroke, the OU created a cohort of 'guidance' staff, and for most of the time since, it has supported, directly and indirectly, the development of guidance provision for adults more generally.

Alongside this was a more radical agenda, concerned with social exclusion, unemployment and poverty, which drove the creation of a number of specialist services, mostly funded precariously on short term project grants, offering what was usually called 'educational guidance for adults', notably in Belfast, Inner London and Bradford. For many of those working in these services, adult guidance was a political (or at least civic empowerment) project, and they did not feel at home in the world of the traditional (young peoples') careers service, with its perceived emphasis on fitting school leavers into jobs in the established labour market. Adult clients often needed much confidence building before they could contemplate entering education or the labour market. These services took from the adult education tradition the view that adults, unlike school pupils, bring experience and knowledge of the adult world which changes the nature of their learning needs and aspirations. Adult services should therefore begin from the belief that well informed adults will make good decisions about their lives, and should be supported in implementing these, whether or not they are convenient for the state or employers.

This was a more radical view of guidance than that of many existing careers services, and the tension created rival professional bodies, literature and aspirations, and two services competing for public recognition and resources. The divide has lasted for more than 30 years, and though there has been some coming together, like the creation of the Career Development Institute, in recent years Government policy has sometimes driven an increasing wedge between the two (Department for Education 2014).

These issues may not be well described as 'adult' versus 'young people's 'guidance. Rather, they are a divergence of vision: is guidance about helping people to fit into the existing world, or to challenge that world? How do we help people to make sense of their lives, as lifespan expands, and patterns of paid work and everyday life become increasingly complex? The recent NIACE Mid-life Career Review project has confirmed what adult guidance workers have long known: that career decisions are no simpler, nor less important, for people in later life than for school leavers (NIACE 2014). Furthermore, the last decade of research into the older labour market and retirement shows clearly, and unsurprisingly, that people do not want to switch off their lives at retirement, and spend thirty years with their feet up (McNair 2006). Just like younger adults, they continue to want to contribute to society, with some purpose and structure to their lives, which may, or may not, involve paid work. However, we lack good models of what a society might look like, when a third of the population is 'retired', and when patterns of paid and unpaid activity across the life course are much more fluid and unpredictable. In addressing these issues, we might want to make better use of the evidence about how people manage their lives, from longitudinal studies, which have been tracking large cohorts in detail since birth (Centre for Longitudinal Studies 2014). Now that the oldest UK cohort is 68 (MRC 2014), and the oldest US cohort are now in their 90s, or dead (Vaillant 2012) we have the chance to look at whole working lives in context.

How do learning and guidance interact?

My third issue is the relationship between learning and guidance. Adult guidance services grew from roots in radical adult education: from the notion that education gives adults the means to change their lives, to challenge the status quo and overcome disadvantage. Paid employment was only one dimension of life, and for the founding cohort of social activists, learning was central – guidance was not primarily about fitting pegs into predetermined holes, but about learning how to make new holes. The central questions were about understanding who you are, who you might become, and how to challenge the barriers to achieving that. Information and advice was obviously crucial, but secondary to the prime purpose. The proposals of The Challenge of Change implied that good guidance, which enabled people to take control of their own lives, is a learning process, in which (perhaps transformed) educational methods and institutions have a key role, but that, if resources are short, they should be put into helping people to make good decisions, rather than providing courses to pursue other peoples' purposes. Learning also raised other issues. Learning for adults is by its nature different – adults come because they choose to, not because they are required to enrol in an educational institution. From adult learning also comes the importance of group work: 'guidance clients' can learn a great deal from each other, and models of guidance based exclusively on one to one conversations ignore this potential.

In 2014, adult learning remains a Cinderella area of policy. Public recognition of its importance remains underdeveloped, and although participation in training between 20 and 50 no longer declines with age as steeply as it once did (McNair 2014), what is offered and undertaken, by many people, remains very limited, focused on the current job and statutory requirements, and is rarely designed to open horizons, to empower or to challenge preconceptions. The Web has transformed access to knowledge and (to a more limited extent) to online learning, but participation in some traditional forms of adult learning has declined steeply as Government has focused resources increasingly on young people, and on qualification bearing courses whose relevance to most adults is, at best, questionable. In a world where much lip service is paid to 'lifelong learning', it is strange that almost 90% of all expenditure (public and private) on post school learning, is spent on people under 25. It is even odder that only 3% is spent on the third of the workforce who are over 50 (Schuller & Watson 2009).

What is 'professional'?

Finally, we face the issue of 'professionalism'. The mix of resources for guidance is being constantly enriched by a vast wealth of online resources, and support from peers, online and face to face, increasingly offering sophisticated interactive processes, and building on complex data gathering and analysis (for example BIS 2011). However, we share with our funders, clients and Government, a proper concern to ensure that the service which our clients receive is as good as it can be. Much has been done to achieve this through the conventional routes of professionalism - quality controlled education, formal qualifications and supervised practice. Yet we know that most people will spend much more time talking about these issues to 'unqualified' people (family, friends, and workmates) than to level 6 qualified professionals. Those people will bring their own knowledge, prejudices and interests to bear on those conversations. At their best, they provide the kind of counselling, enabling and advocacy support that public services find difficult, or too expensive, but at its worst it may be seriously damaging. However, the boundaries around what is professional advice in our field will never be policed like those around financial advice. At a pragmatic level, because money is limited, we need to make more, and more appropriate, use of these informal and 'unqualified' resources. At a more conceptual level, we need to consider how the skills of the 'qualified' professionals fit into a new landscape where much more information, and peer support is available from 'non-professional' sources.

One area where there is probably more to be done is in the use of group methods, and 'courses', as supplements or alternatives to more traditional one to one models. The evidence of the power of mutual support groups is evident in mid-life review, in voluntary jobclubs, and most dramatically in the University of the Third Age, which now has a quarter

of a million members (U3A 2015). All show how a group can support and empower its members. Professionals may have a role, sometimes as a source of knowledge, more often as a facilitator, but the other group members elaborate the arguments and evidence, interpret and support each other. However, the experience of pre-retirement education, which seeks to adopt similar models and purposes, and has struggled to establish itself over some 40 years, demonstrates the difficulties of establishing (and funding) adult programmes of this kind.

The emerging policy context

Where does adult guidance sit now in the policy environment? We believe that people's lives will be happier and more productive, and society and the economy healthier, if individuals make good personal decisions about how to use their time and resources, in paid work and other activity, rather than being directed into routes which suit funders, Government or even employers. However, the scale of investment, financial, political and institutional, in the current model of educational institutions, courses and qualifications makes it difficult for radical voices about how people learn and manage their lives to be heard. Despite a Government policy agenda to extend working life, parts of Government remain locked in an outdated model of the life course and the nature of work and life which prioritise young people and formal qualifications (DWP 2014). As a result, though the creation of the National Careers Service represents a massive step forward, we still have far to go to recognise a genuinely lifelong perspective, and to embrace the full range of issues and decisions which people face. As professionals we also have a challenge to demonstrate that guidance does indeed deliver better results for adults, and that they would not be better off left to their own devices, or to the market. We are properly critical of the performance measures which policymakers sometimes adopt: which make the measurable important, rather than the reverse. However, this means that we must rise to the challenge, to produce and sell politically, better measures of success which recognise, for example, that for some people the decision to retire 'early', or to reject a job which is humiliating and exploitative, is the 'best' decision for the individual and society.

A brief window appeared to open in the late 2000s, when policymakers became seriously interested in the notion of 'wellbeing'. Respected academics argued that, since it can be demonstrated that there is little or no correlation between wealth and happiness, perhaps Government should concentrate more resources on those things which do make people happy (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi 2011; and Layard 2011). It was an argument that chimed well with the underlying beliefs of adult guidance world, and although the argument has been driven out by economic alarms since then, it still lurks on the margins of the political landscape. Understanding how one uses one's life, what makes it rewarding and gives it meaning, is clearly central to such a vision. Can we show that guidance focused in that way would be more valuable than slotting people into any job for 13 or 26 weeks?

We also need to be seen as a profession acting for the clients. Since the 1980s it has been fashionable for politicians to suspect all professions of being the self-interested 'conspiracy against the laity'. How do we demonstrate this, without falling to the trap of becoming merely noisy and 'difficult' lobbyists for awkward individuals?

We also need a united voice, cohering around a broad notion of our mission, but allowing for diversity of practice and focus. Policymakers instinctively avoid fields where warring tribes appear to be constantly squabbling about technical issues and competing ideologies. Over 40 years we have repeatedly tried to bring together the various wings of the guidance world – from the Standing Conference of Guidance in Educational Settings (with 20 professional bodies, from the Library Association to the British Association of Counselling) in the 1980s, through the National Guidance Council, which died when it lost its funding stream, to the creation of a single professional body - the Career Development Institute - which has replaced three (but sadly not all four, since AGCAS remains separate) rival ones. We have a National Careers Council, but its life is limited, and as a Government appointed body, its ability to speak independently for the profession or for clients is limited. We have the Careers Alliance, which brings together most of the agencies providing guidance in its various forms, as a political lobby, but with fragile resources, and potentially vulnerable to the

charge of self-interest. Sadly, however, Government's latest initiative, the New Careers Company, merely emphasises the youth/adult divide once again.

A global context

These are all technical challenges for us to tackle as guidance professionals, but we should not ignore the wider picture, most of whose challenges are not new, but more urgent than in 1964, when most of the defining features of today's economy and society were inconceivable.

No 'career decision' made today can be relied on to be sustainable in twenty years' time, or even ten. Some of today's graduates go into jobs which simply did not exist when they left school three years ago, or when they chose their GCSEs. The changing global economy, climate change, and new patterns of migration will all transform what work might mean in this country and worldwide. The collapse of confidence in democratic government may radically change the relationship between individual and the state, undermining some of our most cherished certainties. Medical developments will extend life for many, raising questions about how people plan for and manage the decades of 'retirement', and we are increasingly vulnerable to global epidemics. Inequality of wealth, at levels not seen for a century, will transform life chances for many if not all of us (Piketty 2014). Perhaps the most unpredictable, but radical influence, will be technological change. The current consensus of specialists in artificial intelligence, is that within 40 years machine intelligence will have overtaken human (Bostrom 2014), and our relationship with the machines will become like chimpanzees with us. What will 'work' mean then?

We will not solve all these issues, and the one certainty is that most predictions will prove wrong. Against this background, we need to develop a range of services to help our clients to understand this, and to develop resourcefulness and resilience, and strategies for mutual support, to cope with the unexpected. The radical vision of the pioneers of adult guidance -that guidance can help people to make sense of their lives and transform their worlds - has never been more vital.

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Celebrity culture and young people's aspirations: a resource for careers education?

Kim Allen and Heather Mendick

This article presents findings from the research project 'The role of celebrity in young people's classed and gendered aspirations' (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council). Drawing on interviews with 148 young people in England, the project addresses concerns about the impact of celebrity culture on youth aspirations. The article presents selected findings to demonstrate how celebrity culture variously informs the ways in which young people think and talk about their futures in work, and makes some suggestions about how careers education might engage critically and generatively with celebrity.

Introduction

In England, media and policy discussions of celebrity and young people's aspirations contain contradictory messages. Celebrities have been used as 'role models' promoting educational initiatives. This includes national campaigns using footballers endorsing literacy (National Literacy Trust, 2007-08); African American musician will.i.am encouraging young people to learn coding for campaigns such as code.org; and celebrity physicist Brian Cox being cited as inspiring more young people to pursue STEM careers (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) (Channel 4, 2011).

Yet, alongside this, there are growing concerns that celebrity culture is having a negative impact on young people's aspirations, encouraging them to value fame, fortune and 'quick wins' over achievement based on hard work or skill. These concerns have been raised by many organisations and individuals, including UK teachers' unions, politicians and media commentators (see Allen and Mendick, 2012). For example, in the wake of the 2011 English riots, Conservative politician and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, said:

> *X Factor* culture fuelled the UK riots… Kids are meant to believe that their stepping stone to massive money is the *X Factor*. Luck is great, but most of life is hard work. We do not celebrate people who have made success out of serious hard work. (in Wintour and Lewis, 2011)

Meanwhile, small-scale surveys are regularly cited as evidence of teenagers' 'unhealthy appetite for fame', and claims that young people with celebrities as 'role models' are more likely to be disengaged from education (DCSF 2009). Recently, Primary Headteacher Andrea Downey wrote on a popular teaching blog that young children in her school look up to celebrities but have little understanding of 'the level of sacrifice that goes alongside careers' of premiership footballers (Teachers Toolkit, 2014).

In the context of this growing chorus of voices decrying the negative impact of celebrity culture on young people's aspirations and work ethic, celebrity arguably occupies a fraught terrain for practitioners' working with young people, including those in careers education. While academic researchers have demonstrated how popular culture operates in young people's everyday lives (Allen and Mendick, 2012; Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Nayak and Kehily 2008),

in practice, celebrity and popular culture is often relegated from classrooms and the 'serious' work of schools and colleges.

Our own research on 'Celebrity Culture and Young People's Classed and Gendered Aspirations' (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Project Reference: ES/J022942/1) suggests that rather than dismiss it, celebrity culture could be a useful resource in careers work with young people. In this article, we share some findings of the research in regards to the role of celebrity in how young people think about their futures in work, and discuss the potential implications of this research for the development of careers education.

The study: making sense of celebrity talk

As the first UK-based empirical study of young people's relationships with celebrity, we set out to produce knowledge about a relationship that was hitherto assumed. Our starting point for the research was to consider how young people's understandings about achievable and desirable educational and career pathways are informed by celebrity culture, and how these intersect with young people's class and gender positions. As sociologists of education and youth, we were motivated to do this research by a much larger commitment to considering how these processes relate to broader agendas around educational inequality and social mobility.

In this project, we argue that young people's talk about celebrity is more than just 'talk about celebrity'. Rather, we see young people's talk about celebrity (both about individual celebrities and wider celebrity culture) as part of their 'identity work', understood here as the ongoing processes through which people come to understand their place in the world. The idea that identity requires 'work' suggests that our identities are not fixed or innate but always in process, and produced through 'discourses' (sets of meanings and practices) that are available to us within particular contexts. Such identity work is not entirely of our choosing: we cannot simply 'be' whoever we want to be. Rather, our identities are shaped by broader social, cultural and economic processes. Schooling systems, family practices, legal frameworks and popular culture are part of this context, informing how we come to know ourselves and think about our place in the world. Thus, in our research we have been interested in how ways of talking and knowing about celebrity (and individual celebrities) form some of the ways that young people think about themselves and others.

In this research, we examined the discourses of aspiration (and associated meanings like success, ambition, talent, fulfilment and work) circulating in celebrity representations and how young people negotiate these in constructing their own aspirations for education and work. To do this we combined interviews with 148 secondary school students aged 14-17 years old (school years 10 and 12), with an analysis of celebrity representations. We selected young people in these year groups because they were at points in their educational careers where they were making decisions about their futures.

In total, we conducted 24 group and 51 individual interviews in six 11-18 co-educational state schools in England, two in each of: London, a rural area in South-West England and Manchester (a city in Northern England). In each school, we held four group interviews, two with students in year 10 and two with students in year 12. The participants were made up of 81 females and 67 male from a diverse range of ethnicities; 63 of the participants said that at least one of their parents had been to university and 64 that none had, with the remainder unsure or choosing not to answer.

We used the group interviews to examine the shared negotiation of meanings around aspiration and celebrity, for example asking participants to identify celebrities who they most liked and/or disliked, what they thought makes someone an 'ideal' celebrity, and how they consume celebrity. In individual interviews, we explored in more depth participants' perceptions of celebrity as well as their educational biographies and aspirations for the future. From the group interviews, we selected 12 celebrities who generated most discussion among participants. Over six months we tracked and analysed their media representation across selected outlets (such as national newspapers and social media platforms such as *Twitter* and *YouTube*).[1]

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1 For further details of the project methodology please visit the project website: http://www.celebyouth.org/about/

Thinking about careers through celebrity

Our research suggests that celebrity plays an important role in young people's understandings about their lives, broader society and their place in it. In relation to their career aspirations, our research shows how 'celebrity talk' is implicated in the ways in which young people think about their futures in work. In the research, discussions about celebrities often led young people to have in-depth and energetic debates about what different jobs and workplaces *they* might be like to work in, and what they thought makes for a 'good job' and 'fulfilling work'. In other words, by talking about celebrities they liked or whose jobs they would enjoy having, young people in our research were saying something about themselves, using celebrity talk to construct and perform an imagined future self in work.

One example of this is in participants' interest in and talk about a relatively new type or 'genre' of celebrity: what we came to label as 'geek celebrities'. These included public figures from the fields of technology, business, enterprise and technology, such as Microsoft's Bill Gates, Facebook's Mark Zuckerburg, and a group of *YouTube* celebrities (mainly young people who had acquired a following through the global video sharing site). These celebrities were overwhelmingly discussed in positive ways and admired for their talent, innovation and wealth creation. Several participants referred to these celebrities as doing the kinds of jobs they would like to achieve. In the example below, two young men (Year 10) from a London school (who both chose the pseudonym Bob) discussed whose celebrity life they would most like:

> **Bob1:** Richard Branson, who's like really rich, and he like he has a big business, so you can like improve someone's ideas and make better business as well. He owns a private island, that's pretty cool as well.
>
> **Bob2:** I would say Bill Gates because he's really rich and yeah. I just like his lifestyle…because he created like a whole new generation to like technology, and that's something I want to do. Cos he's really successful because of what he created, so that would be really nice.
>
> **Interviewer:** How about you with Richard Branson?
>
> **Bob1:** Sometimes business can help people you need business to like run or start like business or marketing or something and some people's careers are to be businessmen and to have like Richard Branson as inspiration, he can help people get some ideas to how to make money and stuff and make profits.

In another discussion between year 10 pupils about the wealth of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Mark Pincus (the creator of the social network gaming company that created *FarmVille*), we see how these celebrities become associated with particular ideas about what makes 'good work':

> **Penelope:** They work but they, what they are working [sic] is good.
>
> **Laura B:** Like they enjoy what they do.
>
> **Bob S:** They have to earn it though.
>
> **Tim:** Yeah but at the end it's like with their mates.

In these examples, we can see how celebrity talk can provide a way in to bigger discussions about what kinds of things are important to young people as they think about their working futures: self-fulfilment, creativity, autonomy, recognition, making a difference, enjoyment, good colleagues, as well as monetary success.

Our research also provides evidence that celebrity culture can provide a resource that prompts young people to investigate careers of which they were not otherwise aware of or think were possible for 'someone like me'. For example, several participants discussed how texts from celebrity and popular culture had inspired them to pursue particular career paths and make particular subject choices. Sabeen a working class, British Asian participant, discussed how she had been inspired to pursue a career in law after watching the TV show *Judge Judy*:

> **Sabeen:** I'd like to be a lawyer…
>
> **Interviewer:** And what is it about becoming a lawyer, do you think? Er, just listening to people, helping people out. You're making sure they're happy

by doing like, you can, through law, through bringing them justice and in general making them happy… to know that I've actually brought some justice and truth.

Interviewer: Yeah. And is there, do you have an early memory about when you first decided that that's what you wanted to do, or become interested in it?

Sabeen: Yeah [laughs] it was in Year 6, in primary school, and I saw *Judge Judy* [on the television] and she's just going on and on. [laughs] And I was like, I want to be that. I want to be a part of, in the courts, defending people and having arguments [laughs], which you get paid for. I was like 'how am I going to do that, I want to do that'… Just the control that she had over them. And she's straight to the point, no messing, and she got it done, she got the job over and done with. Which is quite good.

Similarly, Mariam a working class, Black African and Muslim participant discussed how she was inspired to pursue a career in fashion promotion by the reality television show *The Hills* about women working as interns for fashion magazine *Teen Vogue*. After watching the show, Mariam started researching careers in fashion journalism and promotion, exploring local college courses she could take to achieve this aspiration.

By transmitting information about careers, celebrity might be seen to provide forms of 'hot knowledge' (Ball and Vincent 1998) and 'imagined' social capital (Quinn 2010). These may be particularly valuable for pupils who are unable to access such knowledge and capital within their immediate family networks. In these ways, celebrity can be a resource within existing careers education pedagogy that 'contributes to social mobility, helping people to discover and access opportunities that might exist outside of their immediate networks' (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014). Encountering different worlds *through* popular culture – from *Judge Judy* to *The Hills* to *YouTube* - can allow them to think about themselves in professional careers that are not normally possible or imaginable for 'people like me' because of their class, ethnicity or gender (Allen and Mendick, forthcoming).

However, it is important to stress that while these spaces of imagination are important, they can only do so much. While our participants' accounts prompt us to consider how we might take seriously the role of celebrity culture in careers education – as a catalyst that triggers ideas about future careers and generates interesting conversations about 'work' – celebrity culture is not an unproblematic resource within young people's identity work. As we discuss in the next section, care is needed to ensure that young people's engagement with celebrity is drawn upon critically and in the pursuit of social justice.

Working critically with celebrity culture

As we have found in this research, celebrity – and popular culture more generally – is replete with stories of 'success' and upward mobility based on personal 'assets' of hard work, self-responsibility and passion (see Mendick et al, 2015). African American film star and musician Will Smith is a prime example of this, both his on-and off-screen persona advocating the power of hard work and determination to the achievement of his goals:

> Where I excel is ridiculous, sickening work ethic. While the others guy's sleeping, I'm working… I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. You might be more talented than me, smarter than me, but if we get on the treadmill, there's two things: you're getting off first or I'm gonna die… Whatever goal you want to reach, whatever you want to do in life, your success originates from your attitude.[2]

These ways of speaking about oneself connect to powerful ideas circulating in UK society about the role of the individual in shaping their future within a 'meritocracy', where politicians such as David Cameron assert the importance of hard work to achieving one's aspirations and finding happiness (Cameron, 2012).

As sociologists we are concerned with what these stories of celebrity 'success' open up and close down for young people. If success and failure become

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2 This quote comes from the *YouTube* video 'Will Smith shares his secrets of success' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5nVqeVhgQE

understood as outcomes of an individual young person's resilience, determination and drive, only he or she is to blame for not achieving their aspirations. Asserting the power of the individual to determine their future problematically obscures of the presence of forms of class, gender and race inequality which continue to shape young people's opportunities and school-to-work transitions.

Indeed, despite significant progress in educational achievement and career advancement across social class, gender and ethnicity over the last 50 years, inequalities persist in young people's choices and opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; McDowell, 2012). In the wake of the financial crash of 2008 and implementation of austerity measures, young people face particularly bleak futures with a drastic rise in university fees, a growing number of young people in low paid and casual work (Resolution Foundation, 2014), and a withdrawal of social security providing safety nets for young people in need. Alongside this, evidence suggests that top professions such as Law, Medicine, Politics and the Media remain the preserve of a narrow social elite (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014).

So while it is important to acknowledge how celebrity stories can be resources for young people to imagine different futures for themselves, it is also crucial that we consider such stories circulating within celebrity culture might work to mask the presence of inequalities in young people's opportunities to realise their aspirations. Indeed, when we asked Mariam what might prevent her from achieving her aspiration to work in the fashion industry, she – like many participants – looked to herself: '*What might stop people achieving their dreams? If you work hard, you will achieve your goals…I guess I need to change myself and be more determined to get what I want.*' Yet, research shows that access to the fashion industry – like many professional sectors – remains unfairly skewed to favour those with resources such as industry networks and funding to undertake unpaid internships (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014).

Furthermore, the research demonstrates the continued significance of factors such as gender, class and ethnicity on the kinds of careers young people think are even possible or desirable. This was reflected in some of ways in which young people talked about different celebrities and the career-identities these celebrities were associated with. For example, while 'geek celebrities' were popular with participants, this group of celebrities were overwhelmingly represented by white and middle class male celebrities. Furthermore, young male participants were far more likely to identify with these celebrities when talking about their own career aspirations. Such patterns resonate with research on young people's relationships with STEM which suggest that for young women in particular there remain conflicts between their 'self-identity' and perception of what it means to be a 'scientist', 'mathematician' or 'engineer' which may deter them from pursuing these pathways (Archer et al. 2012; Mendick 2006, Macdonald 2014).

The question then is how celebrity can be used within careers work to open up a *critical* dialogue about inequality and social justice in relation to young people's access to particular careers. Such a dialogue must not seek to deter them from aspiring to these careers, killing off their optimism or hope. Rather, it must provide the tools and vocabulary through which young people can better locate their experiences, and identify the the gendered, classed and raced dimensions of the world around them, and thus of their own imagined (and real) futures.

Conclusion: Using celebrity generatively and critically within careers work

As part of this research project, we developed a website that makes available some of the research findings for practitioners to use within their work with young people (http://celebyouth.org/mythbusting/). The site also busts several myths that circulate around young people, celebrity and aspirations. One of these is that '*there is no value talking to young people about celebrity in schools*.' As we hope to have shown in this article, celebrity and popular culture can provide an accessible and informal way to engage young people in critical discussions about their futures in work.

Through the course of the research, we met a number of teachers, youth workers and career educators. Some of these were provoked by the study to explore further the role of celebrity in the lives of the young people they worked with, and think anew

about how celebrity could be used generatively and productively within their work. For example, teacher Jon Rainford (2013) asked his students if they'd like to be famous. What emerged were interesting and revealing discussions about their views on achievement and routes to 'success' more broadly. Arguably, such discussions about abstract and distant figures within popular culture can provide a useful jumping off point for more personalised discussions about individual young people's aspirations and plans including critical conversations about opportunity, fairness and the structural inequalities shaping young lives (see also de St Croix, 2013).

We have provided some suggestions about how celebrity might be used critically and generatively within careers work in schools and colleges. Furthermore, the project website is intended to stimulate dialogue with practitioners about how celebrity features in their work with young people – now and in the future. However, while celebrity talk can spark interesting conversations with young people about their futures, in a wider context of austerity and cuts to funding for careers education, we realise the limitations to this. If young people have increasingly limited and unequal access to good careers guidance and support (Hooley et al., 2014) in order to move forward with their ideas, such conversations can achieve very little.

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'I've been astounded by some of the insights gleaned from this course': lessons learnt from the world's first careers and employability MOOC by both instructors and participants

Laura Brammar and David Winter

This article examines the design and delivery of the world's first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) focused specifically on career and employability skills. It explores the context of MOOCs and why a university, such as the University of London, may choose to provide an open access learning experience particularly aimed at career development skills. The article examines the content choices and pedagogical design of the MOOC and provides an insight into the key learning points for the authors who were co-instructors on the course. Finally, it outlines plans for future iterations of the *Enhance Your Career and Employability Skills* MOOC.

Introduction

In 2011, Bimrose, Hughes and Barnes wrote in their report for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills that those within the careers workforce who felt less threatened by the developments of ICT in their field were able to identify:

> …a future where there would be a shift away from ICT used primarily to deliver information – to a range of services that not only expanded and complemented information giving, but offered added value in terms of the guidance process overall. (2011: 30)

In this paper we will describe one attempt to deliver such added value through the design and delivery of a MOOC entitled *Enhance Your Career and Employability Skills*.

MOOCs – what are they?

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are essentially short online courses which are open access, i.e. they are free of charge and do not have formal academic entry requirements. MOOCs also have the ability to support an indefinite number of participants which means the learning platforms they are hosted on, such as *Coursera* for example, are scalable to a huge extent.

Coursera is one of several MOOC providers based in the US, alongside *EdEx* and *Udacity*. In the UK, the Open University launched its own MOOC platform, *FutureLearn* in 2013. *Coursera*, established by two Stanford Computer Science academics in 2012, has now over 10 million students, or 'Courserians', studying 891 courses. It works with a range of respected global university partners to deliver MOOCs.

The University of London International Programme (ULIP), part of the University of London International Academy (UoLIA) is the oldest flexible and distance learning provider in the world offering awards to distance learners since 1858. The International

Programme has over 54,000 registered students in 180 countries, who are studying a range of over 100 programmes across both undergraduate and postgraduate level, in addition to diploma and certificate levels, across a wide variety of subjects. In 2012 it also became one of *Coursera's* partners and in 2013 became the first English HE provider to successfully launch a series of four MOOCs, on topics such as English Common Law and Creative Programming, with 91 per cent of participants rated their experience of taking a University of London International Programmes MOOC as 'Good', 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' in the student evaluation survey (Grainger, 2013).

Why do universities offer MOOCs?

Like many Higher Education Institutions, the University of London recognised the potential of MOOCs to attract a wider and diverse audience to their 'brand' and through a positive open access experience, to entice some of those MOOC students to join a fee paying course.

There was some evidence that a number of students who initially completed a ULIP MOOC went on to apply for a University of London degree programme (Grainger, 2013). Additional motivational factors for HEIs in offering MOOCs include the opportunity to be pedagogically innovative and also to enhance the offer to current distance learners.

Why a 'careers' MOOC?

It is this aspect of enhancing the distance learning experience which first led UoLIA to work with The Careers Group, University of London to develop and deliver the world's first careers and employability MOOC, alongside their academic subject MOOCs. UoLIA were increasingly aware of the need to support distance learners in their career development. Many of them are studying in order to enhance their career but do not necessarily receive the same level of careers support that on-campus students have available.

There is wider evidence from the University of Pennsylvania that participation in MOOCs is often associated with learner's career or career aspirations, with 44% taking MOOCs to gain specific skills to do their current job more effectively and 17% doing a MOOC so as to gain specific skills to get a job (Christensen, Steinmetz, Alcorn, Bennett, Woods, and Emanuel, 2013).

The attraction of a MOOC aimed specifically at career development may have been clear but how to design such a course successfully was less clear. How could we produce materials that would be relevant to individuals at many different career stages from a range of cultural settings and yet avoid being generic to the point of unhelpfulness?

Content design and considerations

Designing the content for such a broad audience required us to make some basic assumptions about the demographics of the participants who would engage with the MOOC: they would have some career experience, at least undergraduate level education and some sense of wanting to advance themselves further in their careers.

Nevertheless the challenge was to provide a learning experience which would enhance the 'digital career literacy' (Longridge, Hooley and Staunton, 2013: 9) of all our participants by addressing core principles of career management. We identified four high-level qualities that we wanted interaction with the course materials to increase in participants.

The distilled principles were:

- **Control**. We wanted all participants to have a greater sense of control over their career development leading them to be more proactive and to take the initiative.
- **Clarity**. To enable that sense of control we wanted participants to be better equipped to articulate their needs and goals through enhanced self-reflection.
- **Confidence**. We wanted participants to be better able to identify and articulate their strengths and to have confidence in their decision making.

- **Courage**. Given that career management in a rapidly changing, global market often involves stepping outside one's comfort zone in order to stay employable, we wanted to encourage participants to try new things in order to develop and grow.

Although expressed in more accessible terms, these elements relate to personal characteristics linked to success which feature in the wider career management literature: namely core self evaluations (Judge, 2009), career management self-efficacy (Ferris, Johnson, Rosen and Tan, 2012), career decidedness (Restubog, Florentino and Garcia, 2010) and proactivity (Strauss, Griffin and Parker, 2012). Within our definition of courage we also included elements of 'risk taking' from Planned Happenstance (Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz, 1999) and the idea of an incremental or growth mindset (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). In one of our polls, the vast majority of participants choose courage as the quality they felt they needed to develop in order to be more successful in their careers.

These principles informed the blend of activities which we offered participants, such as video lectures, interactive polls embedded within the videos, additional readings, reflective exercises, links to external websites and repeated links to relevant threads on the discussion forums where they could reflect on their learning and experiences. By these varied means we aimed to encapsulate each of the seven elements needed to develop digital career literacy which Hooley has previously outlined, from connecting to creating (Hooley, 2012).

Taking the principle of courage as an illustration, in week one, we linked this to the Test and Learn approach to career self-management (Ibarra, 2003) and we encouraged participants to engage with proactive activities linked to "crafting experiments" (Ibarra, 2002: 4) in order to help them learn more about their own career values and priorities. In week two, we linked courage to the need for participants to improve their skills by taking on more daunting developmental activities that would stretch them. In week three, we addressed attitudes linked to career success and the aspects of courage linked to proactivity and resilience were emphasised. Weeks four and five were about effective self-presentation, so courage took a back seat to confidence and clarity. In week six, we addressed the need for courage to overcome social anxiety linked to expanding their professional network.

Pedagogical design and considerations

Although we had a free reign in the design of the MOOC we were limited by the expected number of participants and had to work within the prescribed 'learning model' of the *Coursera* platform. At the time we designed and delivered this MOOC, *Coursera's* learning model was essentially a 'teach-then-test' based approach; video teaching is tested through quizzes and peer assessment and that process is supported by 'help forums', mainly dealing with technical queries.

Instead of this, we wanted to move as far as possible to a model where we enabled clients to think and learn and reflect for themselves. This involved working creatively within the limitations of the platform and using the available teaching tools in different ways. We settled on a learning model based on the following activities:

- **Stimulating new thinking.** Using short video lectures and downloadable self-reflection activities, we encouraged participants to think in new ways about their career situations. Throughout, we encouraged active reflection and forum discussion on the material presented.
- **Applying it to your life.** Each chunk of stimulation led to a range of Core Activities that participants were encouraged to undertake which would have practical relevance to their career development. This could be further reflective activities or experimenting with new career directed behaviours, such as informational interviewing.
- **Sharing the results with others.** The activities were designed to produce concrete outcomes that the participants could report back to the MOOC community as Core Contributions using the Forums or the Peer Assessment system. This had a dual purpose of encouraging participants to complete the activities and of enabling participants to learn associatively rather than just instrumentally.

- **Receiving constructive feedback from peers.** Participants were then encouraged to ask questions about each other's Core Contributions and offer suggestions and refinements.

We chose to present our material in a sequence of six modules which we have summarised below:

1. **'What do you want?' Self-Awareness and Decision Making:** How to make good decisions in your career by developing a greater awareness of your career values.
2. **'What can you offer?' Skills Awareness:** How to identify what employability skills are, which skills employer want and how to develop them in yourself.
3. **'Are you ready to find success?' Career Readiness**: How to strengthen and develop the qualities and behaviours that make you ready to further your career such as self-efficacy, resilience, the ability to create opportunities either within organisations or through your own business.
4. **'How do you express yourself?' Articulating your experiences:** How to articulate your skills and experiences to employers and academic selectors in written applications and through your online brand.
5. **'What impact do you make?' Making a good impression in person**: How to make a positive impact in face to face interactions such as meetings, interviews and presentations.
6. **'How do you build fruitful relationships?' Networking online and in person**: How to establish and maintain relationships with people whose acquaintanceship could bring about some professional advantages.

However, another key pedagogical aspect which we had to take into consideration was lack of control we as 'instructors' had over the 'route' our participants took through our material. Whilst we may have presented our material in a sequence of six modules, covering standard career management topics from self-awareness to networking, we needed to be open to the fact that many participants would not choose to progress with the course in a linear fashion, but rather select a sequence, or explore individual modules, in a way that suited their immediate needs.

We could no longer presume that our students had already covered the materials in weeks one to three, for example, just because they were engaging with week four. We needed to articulate our concepts in a way which acknowledged our learners' decision making about where to start, whilst at the same time making them curious about the rest of the material; 'If you find this difficult, you might find it useful to do A from Week B first. Equally, if you feel happy with this, you may be interested to now explore Y from Week Z'.

This in turn reminded us of our practice as guidance professionals. So often with clients you need to start where they are, rather than where you'd expect or prefer them to be. They are the starting point and we use our time with them to cross reference to other aspects of their career development to raise awareness of their other needs. In this way as instructors on the MOOC we began to reframe our role as facilitators, who co-curated the sequence and shape of the learning with our participants. This co-curatorial element was also particularly strong within the discussion forums.

With a few gentle nudges, participants learn from each other about their career development

A MOOC focused on career development, such as ours, whilst comprehensively informed by the academic literature was also distinct from discipline specific MOOCs in a number of ways. For example, unlike many MOOCs, we were keen to not only condone but actively *encourage* plagiarism between our learners. Similar to the harnessing of 'collective intelligence' which Hooley, Hutchinson and Watt's refer to (2010a: 11) we wanted our students to learn from each other and replicate similar stories of career learning and career decision making though the means of the discussion forums which were an integral part of the MOOC.

However, not even we expected the scale, diversity and enthusiasm for the discussion forums which occurred. As well as polls in the videos we also had reflective questions with direct links to related forum threads. Furthermore, learners were given the opportunity to start their own threads in areas of interest. With nearly 3,000 (2,855) individual discussion threads by the end of the course there were over 20,000 (20,521) forum contributions and almost 93,000 (92,994) forum views.

Some of the most popular threads linked directly to activities embedded within a respective video lecture, such as 'How will you know your career needs are being satisfied?' which alone attracted nearly 1000 posts (962) and almost 10,000 views (9,156). Other popular threads were entirely generated by the participant community such as one entitled 'Confused and Delusional' which was begun by an individual musing on the challenge of simultaneously having a diverse range of career ideas.

The most rewarding elements of the forums were when students supported or even coached each other with no 'interference' from the guidance practitioners:

> **Student A:** I am attending this course to understand why I have lost any wish to work at all. I become very lazy and frustrated. Does anybody has similar experience and what you would recommend to do?
>
> **Student B:** Hi, I can relate to your situation in some respects. Are you not doing much to find other work because you feel discouraged or because you are comfortable in this job?
>
> **Student A:** I have started to think about your questions you have pointed out. I have never thought about me like this.

These exchanges reflect a heutagogical approach to teaching and learning (Blaschke, 2012) which can be seen as an expansion of 'self-directed' learning to 'self-determined' learning. Within this theory, the focus is on learner-directed activities which enable learners to understand not only 'what they learn' (content) but also 'how they learn' (process). Within this context the notion of an 'instructor' expands to that of a 'mentor' whose role is to support the learner's own identification of their educational goals and their confidence and capability to achieve those goals. Web 2.0 distance learning experiences such as this MOOC are particularly suitable for this form of learning as they provide a rich landscape for such learner-generated content and autonomous learner collaboration.

The development of such proactive competencies would clearly be helpful to an individual who needs to successfully navigate the unpredictable complexities of the modern workplace. Yet how much appetite is there really for such online self-determined learning regarding career development rather than for academic disciplines?

Appetite for new model of service delivery using remote access technology is massive

As the first MOOC of its kind, the level of interest in the *Enhance your Career and Employability skills* MOOC was untested. Given that career development was often cited as a reason for pursuing a distance learning qualification our project partners UoLIA were confident that interest would be high amongst their students. However demand beyond that cohort was completely unknown.

What transpired exceeded any of our expectations: 157,396 students registered from 204 countries across the globe with 89,157 (57%) of those registrants going on to participate in the course in some way. The latter figure is particularly significant given the common drop out between registration and participation on many MOOCs (Grainger, 2013). Details of participants' engagement are summarised here:

- 948,944 unique videos watched
- 39,832 quiz submissions
- 14,740 peers assessments
- 14,922 forum posts
- 2,850 discussion threads
- 89,665 forum views

Figures one to six illustrate the biographical, geographical, educational and professional diversity of the participants on the MOOC:

Figure 1

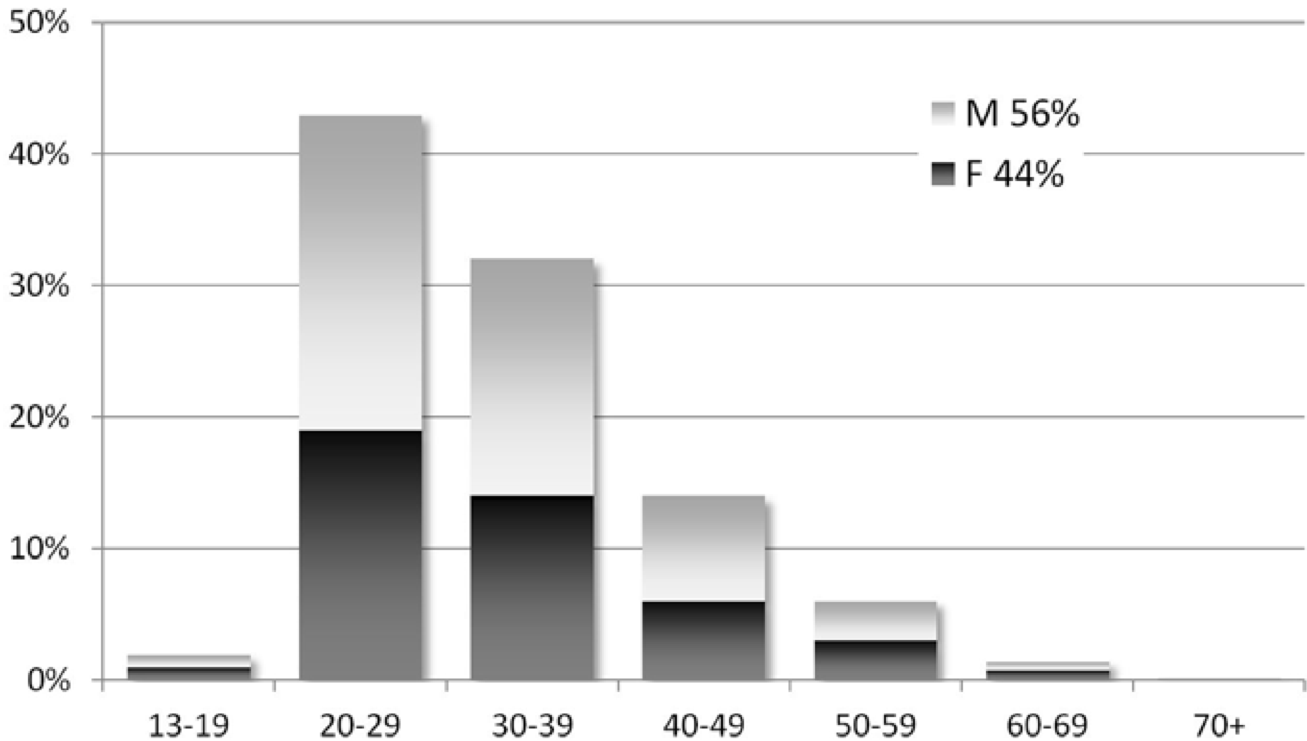


Figure 2

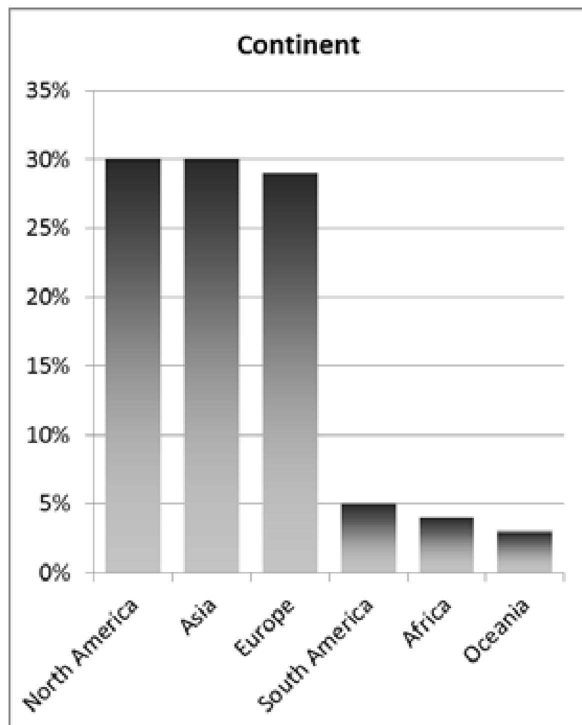


Figure 3

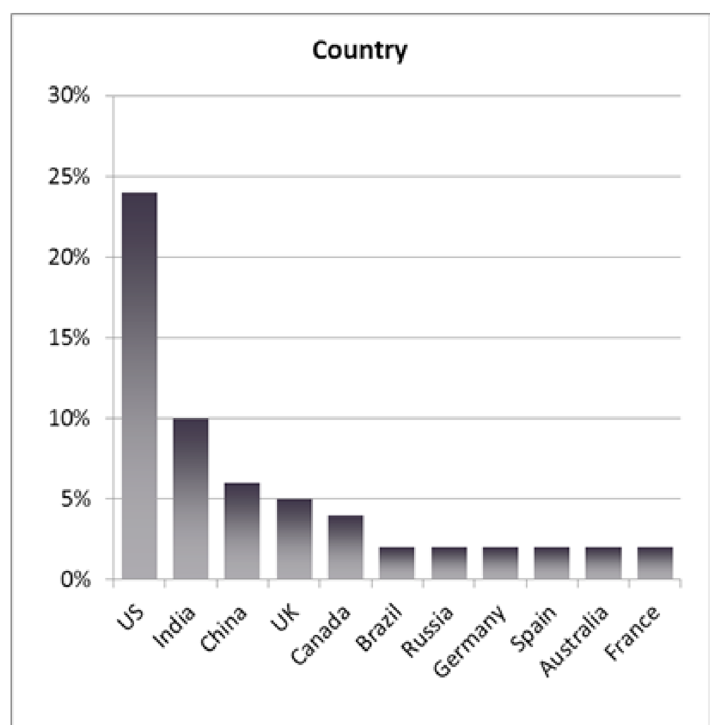


Figure 4

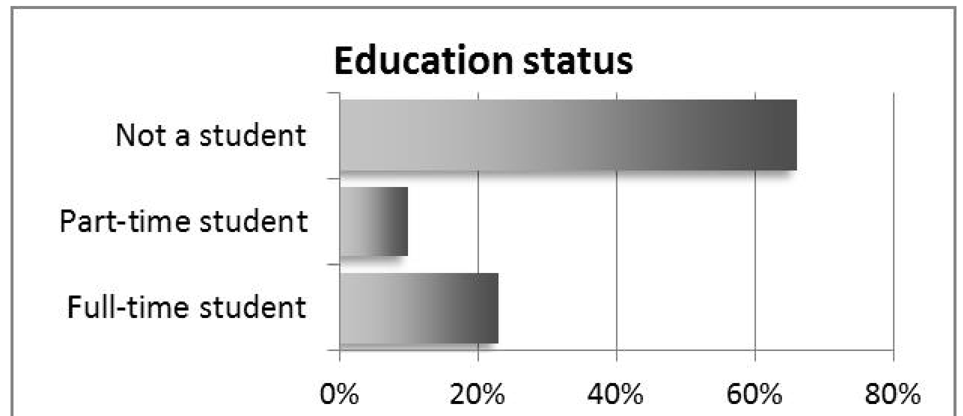


Figure 5

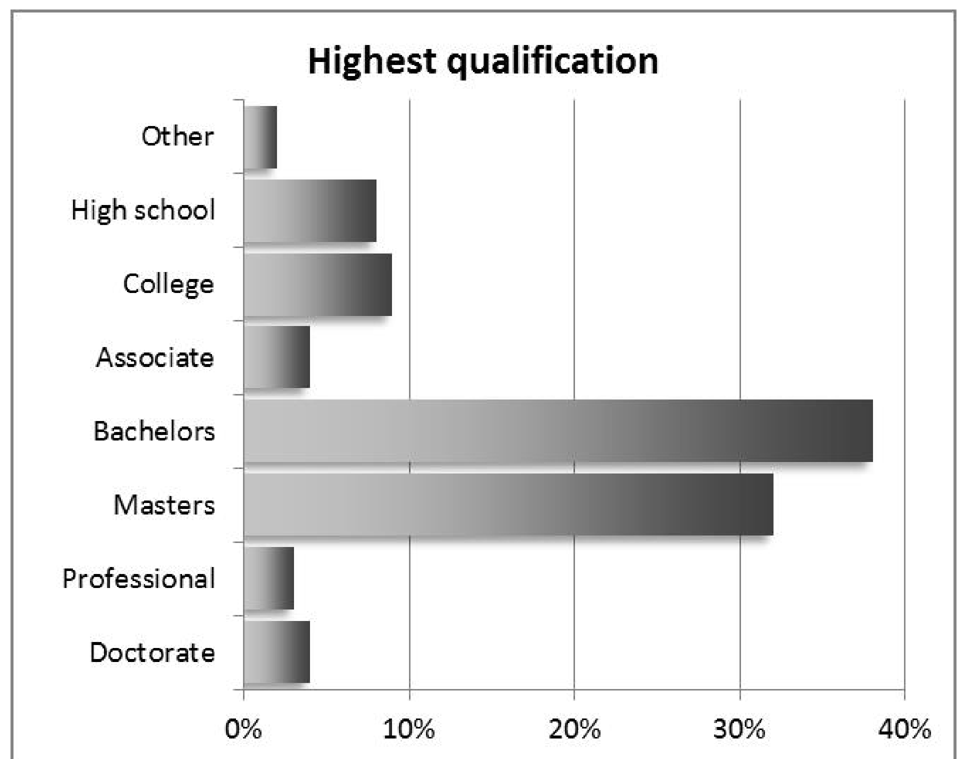
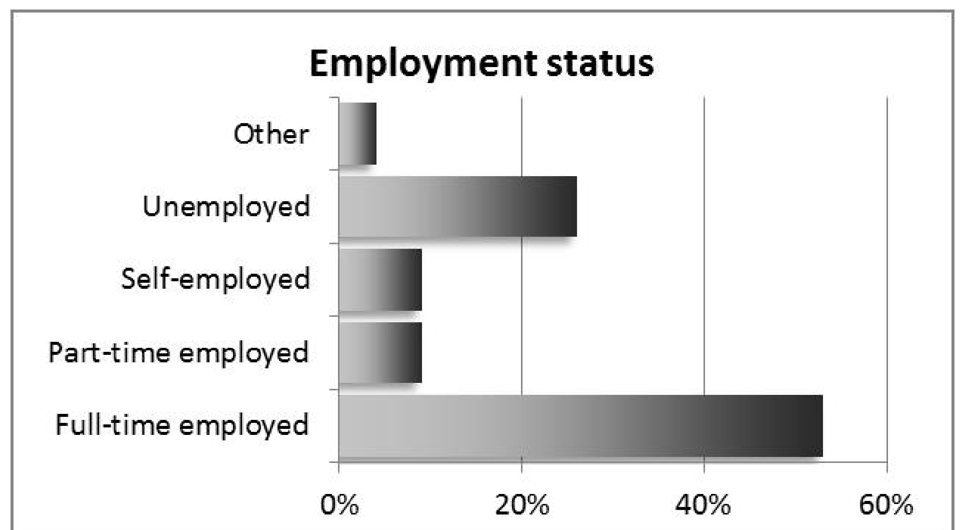


Figure 6



Beyond this quantitative data which reveals the mass appeal of online career development, the forums are littered with qualitative examples of reflection in action from participants across the globe articulating genuine moments of career development learning as they explored the activities:

> I looked back at when I felt particularly stressed and identified these as when other people had too much control over my life. Made me realise having choice over the structure and priorities of my day is very important. This in turn made me realise I am probably not good at delegating as I don't trust others to do the job properly!!

> I've been astounded by some of the insights gleaned from this course, for example I had no idea that being an expert was important to me. It is a common element within the themes of my life.

> It is insightful doing the activities AND writing about the results. It forces you to identify the real feelings, frustrations and values by putting a name to them.

Perhaps most significant, and most moving, was the transformation of the MOOC discussion forums into a space where participants not only explored their own career development processes and choices but also took solace and support for hearing similar experiences from their global peers:

> It's kind of a relief to see so many people have similar experiences, similar ups and downs, needs and emotions in similar situations. In a way it is inspiring. So many people need – like me – recognition, a sense of purpose and achievement, and some room to grow. If we think about that while working with other people, we can probably contribute a lot to creating a more satisfying workplace for ourselves and others…

The post course evaluation survey illustrated that participating in the MOOC had been a positive experience in terms of career management with 93 per cent reporting that they felt more confident about how they will approach their career development in the future as a result of the course and 91 per cent reporting specific actions they will take as a result of the course.

With this high success rate, could this form of online career management delivery be utilised elsewhere?

This mode of delivery of career development can be applied in a wide variety of settings

As figures one to six demonstrate, the breadth of appeal of this MOOC is significant as it indicates that such online career development delivery could be applicable in a range of settings, from schools through further and higher education and into employment. Given the initial assumptions we made about our demographic, we were surprised by that fact that some of participants were teachers who told us they were using the materials in schools.

Beyond educational establishments, recent research (Radford, Robles, Cataylo, Horn, Thornton and Whitfield, 2014) has indicated that an increasing number of employers are interested in potential employee's engagement with MOOCs as a positive indicator of qualities such as motivation. Furthermore, 83%of employers were using, considering using or could see their organisation using MOOCs for professional development purposes.

Whether in the workplace or in school this mode of delivery of career development has shown itself to be malleable enough to appeal to a diverse cohort and could be an innovative and cost effective way of meeting the career development needs of a range of audiences. It could be argued that MOOCs such as this one, reflect the technological changes which Hooley, Hutchinson and Watts once identified as having 'the potential to increase the efficiency of service delivery within the career support market, to enhance existing services, and to develop new paradigms of career support.' (2010b: Executive Summary).

Careers theories can be 'evaluated' by huge cohorts due to massive research potential of MOOCs

Our final key learning point relates to the opportunity MOOC cohorts provide to gain evaluative feedback on career development concepts and ideas. Indeed it is the 'massive' element of the MOOC which is

particularly interesting from a theoretical standpoint. For the first time we were able to gain feedback on aspects of different careers theories from cohort sizes far larger than we could have accessed within our respective academic institutions.

Furthermore, we were able gather data relating to key areas of interest in our field, from skills recognition to interview etiquette, from a huge variety of participants located across the globe. Indeed, the potential for MOOCs to provide rich research data is now being explored more explicitly by platform providers such as *Coursera*.

Final thoughts

Perhaps the overriding lesson from the *Enhance your Career and Employability Skills* MOOC is that there is obviously a great demand for careers and employability support, with many people feeling lost and confused in their careers. Indeed this need stretches across age ranges, time zones, level of education and stages of employment experience.

The help we gave, though high quality, was not especially tailored and addressed some very fundamental principles of career management. It is clear that the tens of thousands of people who took this course were unaware of these core principles, despite their established inclusion in much of the literature. Given that the majority of participants were university educated, a possible conclusion is that the university system, whilst getting people into work, is failing to equip them to deal with the most common career issues that they will face in their careers. It is also possible that our cohort consists of individuals who have never sought or received careers support before even when it was available.

In the next iteration of the MOOC, due in summer 2015, we will investigate this question by explicitly asking about their previous experiences of careers support. Even if it is a case of people not taking advantage of the opportunity to learn career development skills, this should strengthen the resolve and motivation of careers professionals at every stage to help their clients realise that they will depend on these skills in the future and that online learning may be an effective way to enhance those skills.

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Towards a deeper understanding of employer engagement in the context of young people's development of career management skills relevant for the 21st century

Morag Walling, Chris Horton and Nigel Rayment

This article will explore the pedagogy and outcomes leading to findings which support the theoretical underpinning of an employer engagement programme with young people, Step Up for Success (SU4S). This was possible as a result of an evaluative case study of a programme that occurred in partnership with a secondary school, a third party facilitator, a large international employer, and a careers professional acting as researcher. Central to the theme covered here is how the impact of the programme might relate to the learning of career management skills by the young people, which could have implications beyond this individual case study.

Introduction

The article aims to contribute to the greater academic understanding that Mann, Stanley & Archer (2014) highlight is needed in this area. They assert that although employer engagement with education has been the focus of various policies and practical initiatives since the 1970s, its impact is poorly understood. Mann et al. discuss what happens when young people in an educational setting come into contact with the business community. They argue that there is still more to be understood in this area but nevertheless draw out factors that contribute to success of activities such as '…matching of student and activity; timing; levels of support; volume of activities; duration; matching of activity to its objectives; resource for managing employer activity; and preparation and the quality of input from employers' (Mann et al, 2014: 257). They also argue that by its very nature employer engagement in education implies a partnership and that deeper examination of the impact of different types of partnership on the outcomes for young people would be welcomed.

This article explores such a partnership and sheds light on several aspects touched on by Mann et al, including pedagogy and impact. It makes the case for a personalised approach, which benefits the young people, the employees and the organisation.

In late 2011, Tim Breedon, the serving CEO of FTSE 100 financial services company Legal & General (L&G), declared his company should actively respond to the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) exceeding one million. Consultations were held with Magnified Learning (ML), an existing supplier, which for several years had been training and coaching L&G employees through facilitation of in-school financial awareness days. This resulted in L&G commissioning ML to design and facilitate a NEET prevention programme, which L&G branded Step Up for Success (SU4S).

SU4S ran for two years, partnering with schools within easy travelling distance of L&G's offices in Cardiff, Surrey, and London. Participating L&G staff were released from their normal jobs to spend the entire week working in pairs and acting exclusively as managers and coaches to teams of five students. In total, almost 150 students from four schools and more than 60 L&G staff directly participated.

Each partner school was asked to identify a cohort of 30 Year 10 students adjudged capable of but at risk of not achieving five A-C grade GCSEs, the minimum threshold for educational progression. To help students have belief in their potential to achieve, their successful completion of the week's activities plus attendant reflection would lead to achievement of a bespoke four unit Level 2 award, entitled The Young Consultant Award. During twilight briefing sessions held for prospective participants at each school, students were told: 'If you can prove to yourself your ability to clear a Level 2 hurdle, all you have to do in Year 11 is develop your stamina to complete a whole circuit of the track.'

From the outset, L&G made clear that it was uninterested in a narrowly instrumental work experience programme aimed at recruiting young people into the financial services sector. Rather, it wanted to equip them with insights into the broader culture of corporate employment, together with greater self-confidence, self-awareness and raised aspirations for a fulfilling career.

To achieve this, Magnified Learning designed a programme to enable the students to conduct secondary and primary research and make reasoned recommendations to help shape L&G's thinking on substantive issues such as: how the company might make best use of social media and how it might develop its reputation as a leader in corporate responsibility. L&G was authentically keen to uncover the thoughts of young people on these issues and what transpired was in no sense a simulation.[1] Positioning the students as Young Consultants disrupted the often perfunctory and transmissive expressions of work-experience and, in keeping with co-operative learning (CL), promoted their role as that of both learner and teacher (Kearney, 2015). Moreover consideration for the CL conception of self-help which holds that, 'developing individual capacity and resilience…can be achieved only through purposeful co-operative engagement with others' (Rayment, 2011: 18) meant space was deliberately designed for L&G's participating employees to simultaneously learn through and from their interactions with the young consultants and their own colleagues. This was critical since ML differs from other organisations working at the education/business interface, insofar as its core business is the design and management of corporate coaching programmes.

The employability attributes that SU4S aimed to develop in the young consultants had to be acquisitions, which, irrespective of career intentions, could be taken back into the classroom, and, which, with planned follow-up involving tutors and the mutual support of their SU4S peers, could be built upon to boost Year 11 performances.

With this purpose in mind, ML devised an SU4S Student Framework. This was informed by its experience of supporting schools and FE providers on Wider Key Skills, Personal Learning and Thinking Skills, and emotional intelligence, as well as by employer-led and economic frameworks such as SEMCOG's Lifelong Skills Framework (2012). Self Management headed this framework, reflecting its prominence in the joint CBI & NUS report (2011: 13) and echoing Duckworth and Seligman's observation that: 'A reason for students falling short of their intellectual potential [is] their failure to exercise self-discipline… Programs that build self-discipline may be the royal road to building academic achievement' (2005: 944). The congruent co-operative learning (CL) value of self-help, noted above, also contributed to its prominence. The four remaining framework categories were: Engaging and Connecting; Standards; Reflecting and Innovating; and Communication.

Prior to their SU4S week each student completed an age-appropriate psychometric test derived from this framework. The test addressed the fact that for any group of learners barriers to achievement arise from multiple and complex factors. Its output allowed ML to share individual profiles with the relevant L&G managers.

The Student Framework resonated with aspects of L&G's in-house Six Behaviours Framework, which the company had begun rolling out in the months leading up to SU4S (L&G, Feb. 2012). Just as it was essential for the students to be able to transfer their learning to the classroom, it was essential that employees would be able to apply their own learning in relation to their behaviours framework back in their workplace roles. So mirroring the students' pre-programme

1 Following recommendations for an online game presented to senior digital managers by Young Consultants in 2012, L&G reported: 'On 11th March 2013 we launched our very first game for smart phones and tablets. We've developed the game to connect our brand with a younger market whilst giving a light-hearted education into personal protection.' http://media.panaceaadviser.com/main/st7918

psychometric, each employee completed a self-assessment to identify areas for development across the six L&G areas of: Lead Like You Mean It; Take a Wider Interest; Set Higher Expectations; Take Informed Risks; Connect with Customers; and Take Ownership. Their development priorities were then shared before the week with their designated ML coach and personal development objectives were negotiated and, through their work with the young consultants, were the subjects of active experimentation during the week. The process aspired, then, to exemplify the CL principle that participants should be learning both with and from one another. However, as Kearney has noted, 'there is always a threat lurking in the background of it (CL) degenerating into a pooling of ignorance. This is where structure becomes God' (2015).

To guard against this, the programme was highly structured both in terms of content and pedagogy. Employees each undertook 1.5 days' training before meeting their teams of young consultants; students all attended a formal briefing plus a pre-week Meet the Managers session. The overriding objective of this session was for each student to meet with their two L&G managers for a 1:1 review of their student psychometric and to establish their specific areas for development over the programme. These development points would provide the focus for each student's daily 15-minute 1:1 performance review with their manager.

As theorist and practitioner Alan Wilkins observes CL is not only 'interactive and collective' but also 'by implication experiential' (2011: 7) and, throughout each day of the week, both sets of participants, managers and young consultants, systematically worked through several iterations of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, via concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1983). The constant presence of the managers during team activities facilitated informal and reactive intervention for individual young consultants to reflect on their performances, to assimilate through explanation and use of on-hand resources including video clips, on-line and printed materials, and to rapidly test this new learning through active experimentation.

In addition, each student's development points gave a personalised focus to their two managers' observations, which provided the substance of their daily 15-minute 1:1 performance review, with one or other of these managers. The structure of these sessions closely mirrored the coaching sessions that ML coaches facilitated for the managers at the end of each day, and took their inspiration from Jacobson and Ruddy's five questions (2004). In this case the questions asked were variations of

- How do you feel? (reflection)
- What happened? (reflection on concrete experience)
- What was the consequence? (reflection)
- Why do you think things happened that way? (abstract conceptualisation)
- What will you do differently next time? (planning for active experimentation).

The significance of these sessions, and the programme's emphasis on self-awareness and on taking active responsibility for self-development, was reinforced on day one of the SU4S Week through the first element of the Young Consultant Award, 'Understand the Principles of Self-assessment in the Workplace.' This required students to:

- Describe why employers value individuals who know their strengths and areas for development;
- Describe existing personal strengths and give examples of times when they have demonstrated these;
- Describe which skills it is most important for them to develop and why.

The programme's personalisation hinged on the highly structured plan, which both sets of participants followed throughout the week (see Table 1). During this they shared in acclimatisation to unfamiliar situations (in the case of the managers, this was working with their team of young consultants); exploration and research of a genuine business problem, synthesising information, drawing conclusions and making workable recommendations. Each stage was accompanied by formal and informal spaces for experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. ML coaches were present throughout the week to observe the managers and to ensure that the plan was honoured. On day one and the morning of day two, ML coaches facilitated the process to promote co-operation and to initiate the research activities (see Table 1). This involved, for instance, a timed carousel to allow each student to interview 15 peers using questions generated in their

work teams under the guidance of their managers. The latter had been briefed to use the carousel to observe the inter-personal and communication skills of their team members. By Tuesday afternoon, ML's coaches stepped back to allow managers to take greater facilitation of the plan. At the same time, this carefully designed structure permitted managers to progressively loosen the reins on their young consultants, affording both sets of participants greater scope for personalised active experimentation.

Table 1

Pre-SU4S Week
Employee Briefing to share planned outcomes for students and employees, and introduce employee self-assessment (2 hrs).
Employee Training to share structure and roles and responsibilities (1 day participative workshop)
Student, Parent/Carer Briefing to share planned outcomes for students and employees; psychometric (90 mins twilight).
Meet the Managers to familiarise, agree team protocols, and agree personalised development priorities. (90 mins twilight).

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Welcome	**Client Brief**	**Team Meeting**	**Team Meeting**	**Preparation**
Introductory meetings – young consultants & managers	Young consultants' research brief from L&G client	Preparation to conduct interviews with key L&G staff	Preparation to build team business presentations	Preparation to build team business presentations
Finance Game	**Research Carousel**	**Interview Carousel**	**Presentation Prep**	**Presentations**
Managers observe consultant teams as they play a game explaining the key purpose of the finance sector	Young consultants' primary research	Young consultants interview senior staff	Teams confirm 5 business recommendations for the L&G client and build their presentations.	Teams deliver their final presentations to the L&G client in front of managers, parents / carers / teachers
	Research Questions	**Data Analysis**		
	Young consultants analyse research	Young consultants analyse research		
Team Presentations to Managers	**Teams' Interview Preparation**	**Teams' Business Ideas Creation**	**Teams Create Business Presentations**	
1:1	**1:1**	**1:1**	**1:1**	**1:1**
Young consultants individually coached by managers	Young consultants individually coached by managers	Young consultants individually coached by managers	Young consultants individually coached by managers	Young consultants individually review their performance with managers
Manager Coaching	**Manager Coaching**	**Manager Coaching**	**Manager Coaching**	**Manager Coaching**
Managers engage in group coaching reflection and planning session	Managers engage in group coaching reflection and planning session	Managers engage in group coaching reflection and planning session	Managers engage in group coaching reflection and planning session	Managers engage in group coaching performance review session

Post-SU4S Week
Handover Event for team presentations to summarise collective and individual learning; young consultant, manager and tutor triads (90 mins).
Employee Coaching Conversations (1:1) to review learning and set objectives for learning transfer; completion of professional development plans (PDP) - 1 hour per call plus subsequent PDP write-up time.

Key:

– – Informal and reactive intervention to aid reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

······· Formally structured space for reflection and abstract conceptualisation.

The accent on personalisation meant that student objectives were varied. One student's psychometric scores (identified as Lucas) indicated that Engaging and Connecting was an area requiring significant development for him. This was confirmed by his concrete experiences of day one, after which, in his 1:1 he reflected and recorded in his Learning Journal that, 'I have learned that I need to get involved more in activities.' Abstract conceptualisation led him to reflect on his behaviour in relation to a taxonomy, which the young consultants had worked with earlier in the day. Lucas concluded that, 'I'm a Balancer… As an employee most of the time… I would mostly keep it safe.' His planning for active experimentation saw him commit to 'Involve myself more; speak up more. Throw out ideas; righting (sic) notes/bit of a push to speak up more.' On day two, he was observed by his managers doing this by making a phone call to an unfamiliar L&G employee to arrange a subsequent research interview for his work team. In his 1:1 at the end of day three, he was engaging in the following active experimentation: 'Listen thoroughly; checking understanding; commit to the task/focus on it./ Explain tasks more; reapete (sic) tasks when asked.' By day four, Lucas was demonstrating high levels of engagement and satisfaction with his ability to connect, and was able to reflect, 'I learnt how to speak loud and clear so everybody will here (sic) me,' an observation confirmed by his subsequent proficient presentation on day five to an audience of over 100 adults and young people.

Another student's key development point (identified as Claire) arising from her concrete experiences of days one and two was to get her points across more persuasively. On day three, she actively experimented with this and was formally observed leading an interview with an unfamiliar senior manager. During her day three 1:1, she reflected that before the interview, 'I felt nervous in case I messed up my words,' but that she was, 'Relieved it was done, it went better than I thought.' Abstract conceptualisation came in the form of guidance and discussion about techniques for improved persuasiveness from the manager. Plans for active experimentation for day four included additional, 'Work on presenting and persuading/Support in persuasion and presenting techniques.' This active experimentation was enacted and observed in the context of preparation for her formal presentation on day five.

The week concluded with a manager-led team coaching session for the Young Consultants and a ML led team-coaching for the managers. Students saw their managers for one last time in the following week when, at an in-school handover event, their managers had triad meetings with each Young Consultant and their tutor to share learning and agree learning transfer objectives for the coming year. The managers each participated in a follow-up 1:1 coaching session and agreed a professional development plan to cement learning in their workplace roles.

The final sections of this article cover student feedback and impact of the SU4S programme. We explored:

- What impact did the SU4S programme have for the young people who took part in it?
- How and what did the young people feel they learnt?

Three young people, a 10% sample from one of the cohorts, were interviewed in depth three months after the programme. They were asked about how they felt they had learnt whilst on SU4S, particularly what had been significant at the time and what had happened in the intervening months. The interview transcripts were then analysed.

In summary, the findings were as follows:

- Different primary learning methods had been employed by each individual
- All the young people indicated that relationships they had built, and work they had done with others, had been significant
- The young people all identified changes over a time period
- For each individual, there had been something that caused them a difficulty or made them uncomfortable during SU4S which, following the programme, appeared to be less of a problem.

The students were very clear about which primary learning methods had worked for them during the programme. As these were different in all three cases, it was not felt that these in particular accounted for the collective experiences they articulated at the time of the programme completion or that they had gone on to have in the intervening months. In order, therefore, to understand the significance of the

Table 2

1.	2. Before	3. Issue	4. After SU4S
Sophie	Is very concerned about what people think about her and her ideas.	She doesn't engage in conversations readily and won't put herself in situations where she is likely to have to make the first move, e.g. college open events.	Has discovered through trying it elsewhere that she gets lots out of talking to people and engaging in conversation.
Andrew	Thinks that you can't take responsibility or be in a position of responsibility and have fun as well.	He doesn't listen to instructions in his position of responsibility and therefore can't perform well. He gets frustrated when he gets into trouble and this reaffirms his belief that being responsible is no fun.	Has found taking responsibility more fun and stimulating than he realised. Actively looking for other opportunities now.
Ralph	Is stubborn and won't listen to constructive criticism as he deems it to be interference.	Finds quite a lot of things difficult but is wary of being around adults so no one ever notices that he needs help.	Has felt good at achieving things he found difficult and recognising that putting himself in a position to accept help was part of the key for him.

(Walling, 2013)

learning, the common aspects were explored in more detail as it was felt that these in particular had the potential to shed light on the wider interest in the development of career management skills.

One measure used for determining whether taking part in SU4S helped the individuals develop appropriate career management skills was to look at the three month time period between the programme and the research interviews. The findings are illustrated in Table 2.

The table illustrates each individual's macro journey through the Kolb learning cycle as illuminated through the interview process. It is described as macro because there was also evidence of a journey at a micro level as each individual improved their performance of the technical tasks they were undertaking, such as giving presentations and making phone calls throughout the week. The macro journey charts the process over a longer time frame. The concrete experience was SU4S itself and Column 3 is the abstract conceptualisation that they have been able to articulate through observing and reflecting (Column 2) on their experiences before and during SU4S. In Column 4, their experiences during the whole of the SU4S week are taken together as active experimentation showing that they approach their next learning experience more self-aware and are therefore more likely to benefit positively from it.

By getting closer to Sophie's experiences after SU4S it is possible to see this in practice as she moves into other situations. After SU4S finished, whilst on a family holiday, Sophie took the opportunity to practise talking to new people. She was surprised to find she enjoyed the experience and made more friends than she would normally. Here, Sophie is actively experimenting in a different setting and finding that she can still achieve things outside the very supportive environment of SU4S. This increases her confidence to apply her new learning to the school environment and she reports that she is putting up her hand more in lessons. Through doing this, Sophie experiences another new learning cycle as she finds the results of putting up her hand are more rewarding than previously as she

realises that she learns something through doing that even if the answer is wrong at first.

So what did Sophie do next? The pattern of active experimentation continued, for example, at a careers fair she was more prepared than previously to engage with college representatives. Reflecting on this, she was surprised to find the conversations had been rewarding. Again, understanding this in abstract terms appeared to allow her to transfer the experience to yet another situation at her college interview where the outcome of course choice was more positive and appropriate than might otherwise have been.

The journey of Sophie, Andrew and Ralph through SU4S and onwards was not a journey that they were undertaking alone. What was significant from all their stories is the importance of collaborating with others on the programme, both adults and peers. This cooperative learning and particularly the significance of 'mutual self help' (Wilkins, 2011: 9) is illustrated when Sophie is not only praised by one of the managers about a piece of her work but asked if it could be used for future staff development within the company. Back at school, Sophie reports that she feels that she gains more from relationships with teachers as she begins to work more collaboratively with them.

All three young people interviewed talked about their SU4S learning experience in terms of life-changing moments for them. This was strongly linked to their feeling of commitment towards their team whilst on SU4S and how this supported their desire to succeed at things they found difficult. All 30 young people involved felt a sense of shared history which they took back into school and which enabled them to know and feel comfortable around a wider number of individuals. It had broadened their network.

In reviewing the impact of the programme the young people were questioned about their behaviour and attitudes to learning before and after the programme. All students reported feeling more confident at particular task related outcomes (micro outcomes). However, not all students identified significant changes in their learning behaviour or undertaking new activities as a result of their experiences (macro outcomes) in the way that Sophie, Andrew and Ralph reported.

There could be many reasons why the young people might report different levels of behaviour in this context. It might relate to individual comfort levels going back into the school situation or differing maturity levels in terms of ability to move from a micro to a macro level of application. It may also have been influenced by the levels of access to further opportunities that the individual young people had been exposed to between completing SU4S and the time of the questionnaire. Whether there will eventually be some evidence of macro application for all individuals through taking part in SU4S is unclear and only a longitudinal study would illuminate this further.

Conclusion

It is perhaps this macro application of learning developed through SU4S that is of most interest to the overall question of the acquisition of career management skills useful for the 21st century. The story does not end there, though, as work is still ongoing to improve evaluative techniques in relation to understanding educational outcomes from the programme. There are likely to be other employers interested in this approach and other situations where such learning is happening or is possible and it is hoped that the experience of SU4S will further stimulate debate and research in this area.

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Career development learning in higher education: how authentic work experiences and opportunities for career exploration can increase self-efficacy and inform career identity

Paula Benton

A recent study suggests that enhancing career development is a key motivator for students entering university (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). This article discusses the place of career development learning within the 'employability' agenda. It draws upon social learning and constructivist theories of career development in a qualitative case study exploring undergraduate students' experiences of placements in relation to their career development learning and employability. Findings suggest significant value in providing authentic work experiences and opportunities for career exploration (to 'broaden their horizons' rather than narrowing down choices) to inform career identities and increase self-efficacy and motivation.

Introduction

In the context of a more challenging, uncertain graduate labour market and considerable changes in higher education funding, employment related motivations for undergraduate study appear to be strengthened. A recent study of 150 students by Kings Learning Institute/Quality Assurance Agency suggests that improving career prospects and enhancing career development is the primary focus for students entering higher education (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013).

The higher education sector has placed graduate employment 'centre stage' (Pegg, Waldcock, Hendy-Isaac and Lawton, 2012: 4) and the term 'employability' has become increasingly dominant as a key contributor to career success (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe and Hall, 2007). Indeed, the Higher Education Funding Council for England's strategy statement asserts that 'embedding employability into the core of higher education will continue to be a key priority of Government, universities and colleges, and employers' (HEFCE, 2011: 6).

There has been significant interest in the pedagogy of employability over the last few years including a number of initiatives and publications to support universities to develop and integrate employability into the curriculum, however the focus on 'career development' is less apparent. This paper seeks to explore the place of 'career development learning' within the employability agenda, and, drawing upon social learning and constructivist theories of career development, consider implications for practice. A small scale qualitative case study exploring undergraduate students' experiences of a placement module, which aimed to enhance career development learning and employability, will be used to highlight issues for consideration.

Employability

Employability is a much debated concept. There has been some departure from the discourse of employability as primarily a matter of an individual's skills, measured by the potential of graduates to obtain

a 'graduate job' to a more holistic interpretation which includes skills and attributes but also encompasses values, engagement and critical reasoning (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; Reddy, Lantz and Hulme, 2013). Indeed, the emotional and affective aspects of employability appear to be recognised more fully in the literature, as Pegg et al. state, 'the ability to articulate learning and raising confidence, self-esteem and aspirations seem to be more significant in developing graduates than a narrow focus on skills and competences' (2012: 9). Several valuable models have emerged which place a greater focus on career development and career management. Dacre Pool and Sewell's CareerEDGE model (2007) emphasises the central role of self-efficacy (incorporating self -esteem and self-confidence), the importance of reflection and evaluation and the role of 'work and life experience' and 'career development learning'.

Career development learning as a central component of employability

The term 'career development learning' is fairly new term within higher education and marks a move away from the aforementioned limited 'skills' focus of employability (Watts, 2006: 9). For some, it is seen as a key component of employability (Watts, 2006; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) and can incorporate self-awareness, occupational exploration, decision making and career management (e.g. using social networks, adapting to change, taking risks). Bridgestock (2009: 34) suggests that career management is *central* to employability and offers a slightly different conceptual model, emphasising the importance of equipping graduates to 'proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process'. She argues that 'for universities to effectively engage with the graduate employability agenda, they must recognise the importance of a wider skill set… and move into the realm of lifelong career development' (Bridgestock, 2009: 40). Interventions that are concerned with helping students to explore possible future career directions help them to see the relevance of employability and the benefits it may offer them (Watts & Hawthorn, 1992 cited in Watts, 2006: 16). In short, career development learning can offer a focus for students in developing their own employability.

Career development theory

In seeking how best to support students in relation to employability and career development learning, it seems pertinent to draw upon career development theory to review and inform practice, something which appears to be overlooked within the employability agenda. Career development theory has moved away from the positivist, rational view of career choice (as adopted in 'trait and factor' approaches in which individuals are matched to their 'perfect' job) to social learning and constructivist theories which acknowledge the impact of learning experiences upon occupational choice and the social and psychological constructs that inform the active process of constructing ones career (Bassot, 2012).

Social learning theory and self-efficacy

Lent, Brown and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994) builds on the work of Bandura (1977) in emphasising the importance of learning experiences, contextual and interactional factors in guiding career development, emphasising self-efficacy as a major mediator of career choice and development, more powerful than interests, values and skills (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994: 85). Self-efficacy refers to 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments' (Bandura, 1997: 3) and is considered a key component of career identity, facilitating the identification and realization of career opportunities (Savickas, 2002; Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth, 2004). Career self-efficacy is developed through four main sources; 'mastery experiences' (experiencing and doing well at the task in hand); vicarious learning or modelling (seeing others succeed at tasks); social persuasion (encouragement and support from others); and psychological states and reactions (less anxiety in connection with the task) (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994; Betz, 2004).

Also drawing upon the work of Bandura, Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones' Social Learning Theory of Career Selection (1976) and Mitchell and Krumboltz's Learning Theory of Career Choice and Counselling (1996) claim that instrumental and associative learning experiences result in occupational choice and focus

on 'career exploration' as an important part of career development learning. Indeed, Krumboltz then developed his initial ideas in Happenstance Learning Theory (2009) which moves away from the focus on the process of occupational choice and decision making to the importance of being flexible and open minded about career opportunities due to the prevalence of unplanned events and uncertain labour markets.

The importance of proving students with work related experiences, which give opportunities for career exploration, increase self-efficacy and guide career choice and development is an important part of career development learning and employability. Such 'mastery experiences' are a key concept throughout this study and constructivist theories can help us to understand how students make sense of these to inform their career identities.

Constructivist theories and career identity

Central to the Theory of Career Construction (Savickas, 2002) is the role of the individual in constructing their careers by imposing meaning on their work experiences. 'Careers do not unfold; they are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of work roles' (Savickas, 2005: 43). In the constructivist view, meaning is constructed by creating a story from information through a dialogue with one self and others about real-life experiences (Kuijpers, Meijers and Grundy, 2011).

Career identity (often articulated in the form of narratives and closely related to Savickas' 'vocational personality') represents the way individuals define themselves in the career context and can be defined as the commitment a person has to a specific career or career area (McArdle et al., 2007; Meijers, Kuijpers and Grundy, 2013). Career identity incorporates one's broad career interests, motivations, personality traits, values and beliefs (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007). It is a dynamic construct which changes over time (Savickas, 2005; McArdle et al., 2007; La Pointe, 2010; Meijers & Reinekke, 2012) and 'might alert us to possibilities rather than predict the future' (Savickas, 2005: 47).

The following case study draws upon social learning and constructivist perspectives in seeking to explore how providing authentic experiences of work (through a placement) could facilitate career development learning and employability.

Case study: placement opportunities for undergraduate students

The placements were offered as part of a module within a large undergraduate joint honours degree programme in which students choose two subjects (from Early Years, Childhood Studies, Disability Studies, Guidance and Counselling and Health in Contemporary Society). The degree is primarily an academic programme without compulsory placements and this presents challenges in relation to the employability of students. Students do not have one defined career path but enter a range of professions after graduation within education, health, social care and the voluntary sector.

Within the degree, students are actively encouraged to explore a range of careers and are supported to reflect upon how career development theories and approaches (e.g. matching models, developmental models and Krumboltz's 'planned happenstance') relate to their own career journey. In addition to this, a number of teaching and learning strategies to enhance the employability of students have been developed, one of which was an optional module which included a placement within a health, education or community setting. The aim of the module was to provide students with the opportunity to contextualise their learning and to provide direct experiences of work. The nature of the placement aimed to reflect individual study interests, career aspirations and experiences but unlike similar placement modules, students were not assessed on their competence in the workplace but were required to identify and reflect upon their own professional development targets and make sense of their experience in relation to key concepts within their degree subjects. Students attended a series of lectures and undertook 50 hours of placement over a sixth month period. They reflected on their placement experience through seminars, group and individual tutorials. Assessment was in the form of a completed

placement diary, written reflective summary and interview.

Initial evaluation of the module suggested significant learning experiences which include reference to facing personal challenges, increased confidence and career aspirations. One student commented 'this has significantly improved my aspirations in the future'. Another stated that 'the confidence, experience and professional knowledge has enhanced my life skills and broadened my career aspirations'. Feedback from students and from academic staff suggests that the placement experience had a significant impact on students' cognitive and affective learning. Students reported increased confidence in 'building professional relationships' and 'working with challenging clients' and one student claimed it 'changed my own way of thinking'. It appeared to go further than developing employability skills; for many it had an impact upon their career development learning and served to either confirm their current career aspirations ('I learnt that a career working with young people is definitely what I want') or develop new areas of interest ('it guided me in what I want to do as a career'). This seemed to impact upon their self confidence and motivation and academic tutors reported improved attendance and motivation across other modules. One student commented 'this module changed my perspective on the overall course'.

The research

A small scale qualitative research project sought to build on the initial evaluation of the module and, through a qualitative case study, further explore students' experiences of the placement module in relation to employability and career development learning, in order to gain a deeper understanding and to inform and develop academic practice. The research was concerned with students' subjective understandings; how students interpret the social interactions associated with the placement experience and how this informs their understanding of themselves (in relation to career identity and self-efficacy) and the world around them (their place as graduates within the graduate labour market, for example).

Data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews and documented 'reflective summaries' from five participants (from a cohort of 25 students) who had undertaken the placement module in the second year of their degree. Due to the reflective nature of the module, and the fact that assessment takes the form of an interview, only students who had completed the module were invited to take part so as not to influence the assessment process. Involvement in the study was on an 'opt in' basis and entirely voluntary. An email was initially sent to all 25 students who had completed the module inviting them to take part. Initially two students came forward and so a follow up email was sent, resulting in a further four responses. This allowed for a pilot interview in addition to the five interviews for the study itself. Fortunately the participants that came forward were from a range of placement settings and at different stages in their career development (for example those who were undecided about their future career aims and those who had more developed career ideas), as intended. It was therefore not necessary to exclude any participants.

The interviews ranged from 14 minutes to 27 minutes long. Each was recorded using a dictaphone to ensure an accurate record of the discussion and then transcribed onto a Word document. Reflective summaries, completed as part of the module assessment, were used to inform the interviews and also provide data for the study. It must be noted that, as an assessed piece of work, aimed to meet learning outcomes of the module, the content of the reflective summary must be treated with some caution. It was considered, however, that this additional data provided some level of methodological triangulation.

As a multiple case study, each case was initially treated as a single case, the findings of which contributed to the whole study. Individual cases were analysed initially before themes were identified and examined across and between cases. Constant comparative analysis took place once the data was gathered which led to 'open coding', identifying discrete concepts. Once the concepts had been identified for each participant, cross case analysis began and the concepts were then grouped into categories. In an attempt to ensure the confirmability and dependability of the data, the emerging themes from the analysis were fed back to participants for comment and adjusted accordingly.

Findings

Self-efficacy

The placement, as a 'mastery experience' appears to have been significant in developing participants' self-efficacy. One student reflected that 'I had never had the self-belief to take on leadership responsibilities' prior to the placement but that her 'confidence developed by undertaking tasks that I would previously have considered not to be within my abilities'. Another explained that the placement 'boosted my confidence' in speaking to different people and trying out different tasks, 'I would never have been able to do that [before the placement]'. In support of existing literature, one of the factors influencing self-efficacy was the opportunity for participants to gain authentic experience of a work setting and, in particular, be included in activities rather than taking an observational role. In doing this, it was important for participants to try new experiences and 'step out of their comfort zone'.

Another significant factor in the development of self-efficacy was feeling part of the setting and being valued by professionals. Students appeared surprised, at times, that colleagues treated them as equals and valued their contributions. This appeared to be quite significant in their assessment of their own abilities, and appears to suggest that the power of 'social persuasion' in the context of 'mastery experiences' were significant sources of self-efficacy.

Career identity

Career exploration was both a motivator and outcome of the placement experience and a key part of the participants' evolving career identities. For some students, the career exploration process involved testing out current career ideas in a work setting, for others, it involved exploring a range of opportunities. All were keen to gain relevant 'real world' experience to support them in this and it seems apparent that the placement allowed 'actualization' in which they tested out ideas about occupations into reality (Savickas, 2002: 175).

The placement experience appeared to facilitate the process of career exploration and inform participants' career identities. The students clearly state that the experience broadened their career ideas, alerting them to opportunities which they had previously no knowledge of or had not previously considered. One states that it 'opened me up to different ideas' and 'completely changed everything that I wanted to do'; another student also stated; 'I think I had a bit of a closed mind because I always wanted to do teaching and then doing this opened up different things'.

For the participants in the study, career identity certainly appeared to be a dynamic process which changed over time, 'alerting them to possibilities rather than predicting the future' (Savickas, 2005: 47). Interestingly, two students' initial career goals changed and, in a sense, became less defined (from 'teacher' or 'social worker' to 'some sort of family support work in a community setting'). However, their motivation and self-efficacy had increased considerably (they talk about 'passion', 'excitement', 'getting a real buzz' and feeling more confident to enter the graduate labour market).

This supports the work of McArdle et al. (2007) who suggest that career identity needs to be decoupled from a specific job or organisation, instead representing an individual's personal values, motivations and broader career interests. Krumboltz's Happenstance Learning Theory seems particularly pertinent to the experiences of participants in the study as he argues that career development is often the result of unplanned events and that, in a rapidly changing economy, individuals should be encouraged to be open minded about careers, rather than narrowing down choices, (Krumboltz, 2009). Indeed, social learning and constructivist theories focus on the importance of 'career exploration' as an important part of career choice and development and suggest individuals should be supported to explore new learning experiences rather than routinely directing them on the basis of measured interests (Zunker, 2012).

Conclusion

Improving career prospects and enhancing career development remains a key focus for students entering higher education and universities face the challenge of how best to support students in this. Social learning and constructivist theories are useful in helping to understand how we might support students in their overall career development learning and hence provide a focus for the development of employability skills and attributes. Findings from the case study suggest that placements ('mastery experiences') significantly enhance self-efficacy, which, as social learning theorists assert, is a major mediator in career choice and development. An important factor in addition to the mastery experience was social persuasion, suggesting value in providing supportive placement opportunities where students receive constructive feedback, gain 'hands on' experience and are encouraged to try new things.

Also apparent was the value of the placement experience in the process of career exploration (widening their horizons) to inform evolving career identities. In the instances where career identities became less defined, self–efficacy was still significantly enhanced. The findings support McArdle et al.'s views (2007) that career identity should be decoupled from a specific job title or organisation and Krumboltz's Happenstance Learning Theory (2009) which asserts that individuals should be encouraged to be open minded about career choices. This raises the question for academics as to how we can work with employers to offer authentic experiences of work which allow students the freedom to actively explore and test out a range of careers (by 'opening doors' and safely 'stepping out of their comfort zone') rather than narrowing down choices based on measured interests, skills and abilities.

Implications / moving forward

This was a highly contextualised, small scale study based on students' own interpretations at a single point in time and therefore cannot claim to be representative. It does, however, provide insight into students' experiences and raise some issues relevant to the higher education sector. It might also be of interest to the school and college sectors, particularly in the light of the removal of the statutory obligation to offer a programme of careers education in years 7-11 and work related learning and enterprise at key stage 4. Suggestions for moving forward include:

1. In addition to the development of employability skills and attributes, attention should be paid to students' career development learning in which they are supported to access new work experiences to broaden horizons, engage in career exploration and in 'test out' career ideas.

2. Further opportunities to develop self-efficacy through mastery experiences, such as placements, where students are supported to 'step out of their comfort zone' and reflect on their experiences should be offered.

3. Recognising the resource (and other) implications of providing placements to large cohorts of students, further research into how students can be supported to develop employability and career development learning through a range of mastery experiences could be explored (e.g. fieldwork, project work or volunteering).

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The changing nature of the youth employment market and its impact upon the lives of young people on the economic margins of society

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This article seeks to explore how the transitions of young people from formal education into employment have changed since the 1970s and to consider the impact these changes have had upon the lives of some of the most vulnerable young people in society. This discussion concludes that the consistent focus on education, training and addressing the perceived personal flaws of individuals, without an equally rigorous examination of the flaws within the structure and functioning of the youth employment market, means that as a society the UK is still consistently failing to address the needs of a tenth of its youth population as they approach adulthood.

Introduction

Young people deemed to be living on the economic margins of society have been a source of public concern and political grandstanding since the 1990s. Successive governments have sought to address the perceived issue of the lack of engagement of sections of the youth population with a plethora of policies and initiatives, with the key aim of addressing social exclusion and engaging young people in education and training; instituting 'an ambitious, and radical modernisation of how we support teenagers' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1997). Career guidance has been at the heart of many government initiatives, the Careers Service of the 1990s morphing into the Connexions Service in the 2000s as a direct result of a perceived need to address the many and various problems attributed to approximately '10%' of 16 and 17 year old young people. In 1997, 9% were 'missing' from any official educational, employment or benefit records (Social Exclusion Unit, 1997); government statistics for the first quarter of 2013 show 10.4% of 16-17 year olds not engaged in 'Employment, Education or Training' (D of E, 2013). The people are different and the terminology changed but the statistics would suggest that as a society the UK is still consistently failing to address the needs of a tenth of its youth population as they approach adulthood.

This article draws on a range of academic literature to explore how the transitions of young people from formal education into employment have changed since the 1970s. 'Most young people in the UK make relatively 'successful', unproblematic transitions from school to work and adulthood' (McDonald, 2008, no page number) but some do not and this discussion aims to consider the impact change has had upon some of the most vulnerable young people in society and to question if the many 'issues' attributed to some young people's lack of motivation, 'job readiness', or their perceived 'poverty of aspiration' (Roberts, 2008: 63) should be more justifiably linked to the transformation of the youth labour market; a transformation which has progressively excluded some young people from anything but the very lowest and least stable sections of the job market.

Identifying lack of aspiration, motivation or insufficient skill as the source of the 'problem' of youth unemployment, places the solution in the hands of the individual; as Roberts' notes this has been a consistent theme of youth policy since the late 1990s. Young

people have been exhorted to take responsibility for their own lives with the help of Connexions and the financial support of such initiatives as Youth Credits and Education Maintenance Allowance and any 'remaining problems in the eyes of the government… are due to young people, specifically those from deprived backgrounds, suffering from a poverty of aspiration' (2008: 363). This discussion will suggest, in contrast, that for some young people, the routes from education to employment have become seriously flawed, and that the resultant presenting problems in the life chances of some, are, in the main, 'issues' of public concern and not personal failure.

C Wright Mills argues that when one person is unemployed the problem may well be their own; however when a large number are without work the issue becomes a public one (1959). The significant numbers of young people not engaged in education, employment or training since the 1980s would seem to suggest the latter case to be true, 'the persistently high level of unemployment of young adults in Western Democracies is not a private trouble but a public issue' (Wilkinson 1995: v). Recognition, however, of the demise of the youth employment market as a 'public' issue sits uncomfortably with the prevailing economic and political ethos that has predominated British government since the late 1970s. Successive governments, both left and right, have adhered to Neo-liberal orthodoxies since Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979. Such adherence makes recognising, let alone addressing, the issue of youth employment with direct action on the part of government an option that is at odds with Neo-Liberal economic philosophies. Such philosophies have become central in British politics, exhorting government not to interfere with economic structures and the individual to take responsibility for their own lives (Harvey, 2005; Keep, 2006; Sutcliffe Braithwaite 2012).

The changing economic landscape of young people's lives

Through the decades of the 1950s and 60s the majority of young men and women were accustomed to moving directly from education to employment. The tradition of 'on the job training' and apprenticeships characterised the post war employment market. Though it has been argued that the interpretation of this era as a 'Golden Age' for youth employment is an over simplification of many varied and complex transitions (Vickerstaff, 2003), it cannot be denied that during this period a thriving youth employment market existed, offering a range of opportunities to those young people, over the age of 15, who did not wish to remain in school. In the 1970s, this was still to a degree the case, with only 1 in 5 16 year olds staying on in full time education. However, by the 1990s, many of the industries which had offered employment and training to school leavers no longer existed (Wilkinson, 1995) and staying on rates within post 16 education had begun to rise significantly. 'Manufacturing, distribution, transport and communication- together accounting for 60% of first time entrants- are exactly those industries which have experienced the greatest number of net job losses in the past decade' (Rees and Atkinson, 1982: 3).

Lack of capital investment in new technologies in the UK and increased foreign competition particularly from countries with far cheaper labour costs, led from the 1970s onwards to UK heavy industry; coal, iron and steel and shipbuilding, failing to compete in world markets. As a result many employers who had traditionally recruited 16 year olds were now no longer in a position to do so. Between 1983 and 1990 numbers of apprenticeships fell nationally, from 102,000 to 53,600 (Cregan, 2001). In addition, from the 1980s onwards recruitment declined within the public sector and elements of the private sector such as large financial institutions. Such employers had, until then, served as 'direct ports of entry' (Cregan, 2001: 17) for school leavers. Advances, such as the growing use of information technology contributed to a drop in the number of direct entrants to such organisations, as did a change in the structure of the working population. Women with children under 5, had traditionally cared for their children in the home, but between 1985 and 1989 the number returning to work after maternity leave rose from 39% to 52% and has continued to rise. Often willing to work for lower pay and frequently seeking flexible part time hours, women were viewed as 'mature and reliable' and 'skilled', in comparison to young people who were deemed 'unskilled' (Cregan, 2001: 131).

Of equal significance for post 16 employment opportunities, was Margaret Thatcher's drive to dismantle the power of local authorities. The sale of public housing and the competitive tendering for and outsourcing of many services from the 1980s onwards, impacted upon the youth employment market. Local authorities had offered young people well respected apprenticeships, particularly in skilled trades, however the privatisation and out sourcing of services led to 'the public sector's effective abdication of its responsibility for training lower skilled workers as services are increasingly contracted out' (Furlong and Carmel, 2004: 5). As a result of this combination of major economic and political shifts, Payne and Payne note by the early 1990s, 'the youth employment market is in the process of disappearing' (1994: 94).

The introduction of a 'guaranteed' training place for all young people not staying in full time education was part of the package of measures to address youth unemployment by the Conservative government, which accompanied the withdrawal of social security benefits for 16 and 17 year olds in 1988 and was in part the justification for their removal. This legislative change is significant to this discussion because it was accompanied by the introduction of sanctions to encourage young people into youth training, and is cited by a number of authors as of major significance to subsequent rises in the number of young people moving to the margins of society (Harris, 1988; Bloxom, 1997; Furlong, 2006; Wilkinson 1995; Muncie 1999). Critics of the policy questioned whether there would be sufficient places available and significantly, raised concerns regarding the impact on the motivation and commitment of trainees of the introduction of the element of compulsion (Sime, 1991). Implicit within the latter notion, is the belief that some young people lack motivation and will only participate if pressed to do so. All young people were guaranteed a training place, however there was no further guarantee that the training would be in anyway related to their skills, aptitudes or aspirations or held to be valued by employers.

It is important to note that the 'carrot' and 'stick' approach to dealing with youth unemployment (Watts, 2001), initiated by the Conservative government continued under New Labour following their victory in the 1997 election and remains so under the coalition. Though the terminology has changed ('Not in Education, Employment or training' or 'NEET' now being the label of choice), the emphasis remains on the need to coerce often poorer, less qualified members of the youth population into activity and of reducing their many perceived deficits. A similar exploration of the deficits of the employment market has been consistently lacking. In Watts's opinion, this coercive approach was a key factor in the establishment and maintenance of the missing 10% in the 1990s. Young people, unwilling to participate in training which they felt had no intrinsic value to them, dropped out of the mainstream and disappeared from government statistics (Watts, 2001; Muncie 1999). As Muncie notes, 'The problem of course remains that no amount of training will improve employment chances when the labour market is contracting or non-existent and when such training is perceived as 'dead-end' (1999: 165).

Young people who are not in employment, education or training

The term 'not in education, employment or training' ('NEET'), later used to measure the activities that young people are or are not engaged in, was first coined to a wider audience in the New Labour publication 'Bridging the Gap' in 1999 (Social Exclusion Unit). The NEET classification does serve as a valuable means of bringing back into focus those young inactive people who had been 'missing' from statistics, since the Social Security Act gained royal assent in 1988, but it is also a 'deficit' model, which highlights what young people are *not* doing. It is clear from the outset that New Labour's solutions to social exclusion were seen to be firmly in the hands of young people themselves. Young people must raise their levels of employability by education and the development of skills, because paid work will ensure inclusion, 'The policy prescriptions that emanate from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and other branches of government… proclaim a fundamental belief in the role that paid work has in forging social inclusion' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2001: 387). Research throughout the 2000s exploring the lives of young people who were NEET serves to question the validity of the NEET classification itself, because of its inability to accurately depict youth unemployment (Furlong, 2006) and

challenge the SEUs assertions with regard to the remedial properties of paid work.

By focusing on the number of young people engaged or not, in a specific activity at any one time, without acknowledging that who those people are is constantly changing, means the NEET figures fail to recognise that many young people were and are still locked into a cyclical process which lacks any element of progression. 'The majority of respondents' occupied precarious positions and their labour market histories were largely characterised by periodic unemployment and short-term insecure work' (Furlong and Carmel, 2004: 1). Young people were moving from insecure employment to unemployment then into training, the latter often remaining incomplete, because if the opportunity for paid work became available it was deemed of more value than the training on offer, despite the insecure nature of many of the jobs. The significance of this factor in an economy espousing the value of 'lifelong learning' to raise the skill levels of the workforce to meet the demands of the global economy is telling (Aspin, 2001). McDonald refers to such insecure employment as 'Poor work' (2008). Agency work, temporary and (more recently) zero hour contracts all serve as examples to illustrate these casualised sections of the employment market. In 2004, Furlong and Carmel found that at any one time 30% of the population was working in 'insecure sectors of the labour market' (Furlong and Carmel, 2004: 4). These findings serve to challenge the notion that young people lack motivation,

> In the main the young men whose lives we describe were neither work shy or unemployable but many were effectively locked out of segments of the labour market that offer opportunities for secure employment, career development and a decent quality of life
>
> (Furlong and Carmel, 2004: 1).

Research carried out on Teesside serves to further challenge the notion that paid work is synonymous with inclusion. Their findings identified many young people similarly moving through a 'cycle' between marginal jobs, training schemes and unemployment. Most significantly, 'entry to employment did not provide the first step on an upward path away from joblessness, poverty and benefit dependence.' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2001: 387). It would appear that not only does the NEET categorisation fail to provide an accurate picture of youth engagement, but the principle underpinning its inception, that engagement in employment, education or training leads to societal inclusion, is highly questionable.

The Education and Skills Act and young people not in employment education and training

The central role that education and training play in government policy seeking to address the problems of social exclusion is well illustrated by the Education and Skills Act, passed in 2008 by New Labour. In contrast to the free market principles applied to the economy and the labour market, education and training has seen 'since the early 1980s…the increasing power of the state—in the shape of central government—to design, control and implement policy' (Keep, 2006: 48). The act has raised the age at which young people can leave education or training to 18. The Coalition government has overseen its implementation and 2015 will be the first year in which the act is fully in place. For the 89% of young people who already remain within education to the age of 18, this will have only limited effect; an increased focus on the development of high quality apprenticeships as a result of this change, may mean this move is highly advantageous for the majority of young people, giving them a greater range of choices as to where to study or train post 16. For the remaining 11% the future is less clear.

The Act does not require young people to stay on at school but they must remain engaged, until they are 18, in some form of education or training (Simmons, 2008). This does not preclude young people from gaining a job, but the job must include an element of training (DCSF 2007). There is little doubt that a key element of the rationale for the Education and Skills Act is to tackle the issue of 16 and 17 year old young people 'Not in Employment, Education or Training'. Such a status will no longer be legally permissible, because 'non participation is no longer an officially sanctioned option' (Russell, Simmons and Thompson, 2011: 478). Such young people will very shortly be

breaking the law if they choose not to engage and potentially be criminalised for what was the norm only 40 years ago. This change in status and the continued focus on the achievement of qualifications as the route to societal inclusion, serves as a valuable illustration of the continued adherence to an unproven approach to the issue of youth unemployment and a demonstration of how much has changed in the lived experience of young people in the period under discussion.

For the majority of young people leaving school in the post war era of the 50s and 60s, a lack of qualifications was a common characteristic, but as Roberts (2009) significantly notes, those young people were not deemed failures. But today:

> …parents and young people who are still content to quit full time education at age 16 with modest qualifications (if any) then seek proper jobs and who reject further education and pre-career training have become a stigmatised rump
>
> (Roberts 2009: 358).

Writing in 2008, as the Education and Skills Bill was being debated before passing into law, Simmons questions the rhetoric surrounding the need for the UK to upskill its young people to meet the demands of a highly competitive global economy. In contrast he suggests that the aim of the Bill was to engage young people who are NEET, not in high level skill training, but as preparation 'for a life of social and economic risk and uncertainty' (Simmons, 2008: 434). Employment opportunities for these young people are likely to require limited skills, 'training emptied of any depth of knowledge content…for those expected to fill the insecure and low status jobs that are the reality for many in the knowledge economy' (Mizen 2004: 63).

Young people have become marginalised simply by their position in relation to the majority (Russell, Simmons and Thompson, 2011). In addition, they have been problematized for their lack of participation, regardless of the nature, relevance and perceived value of the qualifications on offer or without regard to the opportunities available for the coerced 11% when education or training is finally completed.

Conclusion

Placing the onus on the individual and extolling the virtues of economic activity may be profitable when real opportunities to engage exist, but to do so when the chances of gaining secure, long term employment which includes the prospect of training, personal development and progression are so limited, seems an abdication of responsibility by society to its young. Connexions was charged with the role of re-engaging young people in employment, education or training, in the belief that such a process would place young people on an upward trajectory, but such well-intentioned support has done little to address the overall issue. For a small but significant section of the youth population, employment does not serve as a first step towards economic independence, because many of the jobs on offer are low skilled, poorly paid and insecure with limited training. The remodelling of the individual to be more employable will not serve when what is required is the addressing of the impact a declining youth employment market in a post-industrial UK, has had upon the lives of the most marginalised of young people. 'Young people today are excessively ambitious relative to the jobs that the economy offers. There is a wealth of talent and a wealth of ambition and an overall shortage of jobs, not least good jobs' (Roberts 2009: 365).

For decades successive governments have fallen shy of actively engaging in the functioning of the economy. Adherence to the Neo-liberal inspired notion of the merits of the free market mean 'it is deemed unacceptable for governments to try to intervene in labour and product markets or attempt to actively manage the economy' (Simmons, 2008: 429). Bailing out the banking sector however demonstrates a costly exception to this strategy. The banking crisis serves as a telling example to challenge a key tenet of Neo-Liberal economic theory, that if left unfettered by government intervention, capitalist economies will function effectively (Harvey, 2005). In 2008, the scale of the problem demanded immediate government action. The issues facing approximately 10% of young people struggling to make successful transitions beyond formal education may not garner such immediate or generously funded interventions, but such interventions are needed. The free functioning of the economic market failed to prevent a global

economic crisis, in the same way that an uncontrolled youth labour market has failed to meet the needs of a significant percentage of young people not in employment, education or training. 'The English state's long-standing commitment to free-market neo-liberalism and relative deregulationist tenets renders unavailable a host of potential policy interventions' (Keep, 2006: 58).

Whether trapped in a 'low skill equilibrium' (Simmons, 2008: 436) or undermined by being 'the underbelly of the UK's upgraded occupational structure' (Roberts, 2009: 361), young people who are NEET, are attempting to navigate an employer led, demand-side economic landscape. This process is a challenge in itself, but when coupled with a pervading atmosphere of negativity, where a young person's very status draws stigma, it is no surprise that many young people struggle to achieve their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Policies which place the needs of young people on an equal footing with the demands of business are required if the recurring figure of 10% who are 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' is ever to be reduced.

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Research update

Ruth Mieschbuehler and Rob Vickers

In this article we provide a brief update on some of the research papers and reports published in 2014 on career development, examining in particular some issues related to equality and employment, career adaptability and self-efficacy in career decision making. The research findings are presented and discussed with careers practitioners in mind. We also consider the validity of the findings and their relevance to careers practitioners.

Introduction

A search of the best known career development journals and websites returned over 200 papers published last year on career development. Many of the publications relate to other countries including Germany, Italy, France, Lithuania and China. Popular topics in papers published with reference to the UK context examined the rise in self-employment, career counselling for transitioning military veterans and career counselling in the aftermath of the recession (O'Leary, 2014; Rausch, 2014; Greenleaf, 2014). Other papers assessed measures of career success and subjective interpretations of what 'career progression' may mean on a personal level (Thomas and Feldman, 2014; Stumpf, 2014). The selection of papers we discuss here has been chosen because it challenges some popular views about career development.

Ethnicity and employment

The labour market statistics for 2014 showed that unemployment among British minority ethnic groups is consistently higher than those for the UK as a whole (DWP, 2014). It is a thorny issue as differences in employment outcomes are often discussed in terms of negative stereotyping, racial prejudice and discrimination. A new study published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and conducted by Metcalf, Lalani, Tufekci, Corley, Rolfe and George (2014) compared the employment outcomes of people from African Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani heritage backgrounds in Glasgow, Leicester and Luton. One interesting finding was that, despite overall unemployment being similar in Leicester and Luton, people from African, Caribbean and Indian backgrounds were less likely to be unemployed in Luton than those in Leicester, while people from a Pakistani background were less likely to be unemployed in Leicester than in Luton. What appeared to be a factor in the perceived differences in employment outcomes were variations in job seekers' knowledge of British education and labour market systems.

The Metcalf *et al.* study indicated that it can be geographical place rather than ethnicity that influences employment outcomes. This finding supports that of the Sutton Trust report on *Advancing Ambitions* (2014). In this report, career advice was shown to be a 'postcode lottery' in that people who have less well developed networks and fewer family contacts can be at a disadvantage in areas where career guidance is poor. First generation immigrants who are in the process of building new networks can be particularly susceptible to regional variations in standards of career guidance. A recommendation made in the Sutton Trust report is that the National Career Service must ideally ensure that all schools have free access to professionally qualified careers advisers.

As a consequence of these studies, if we want employment outcomes to be spread more equally among the population, our view is that careers practitioners must recognise and work towards reducing regional variations in knowledge about education and labour market systems.

'Male career crisis'

A notion that received some attention in the literature is the 'male career crisis'. It is a term that tends to be used to describe working class men as 'passive victims' of adverse circumstances caused by deindustrialisation (Ackers, 2014). Ackers researched how some working class men experienced transition periods and found that, contrary to a widespread belief, the working class men in his study carefully adapted to and managed periods of transition in employment.

Far from being 'passive victims' the men showed agency and knew that work was not static and that being able to adapt to industrial change was part of a working life. Referring to working class men, whether wittingly or unwittingly, as 'passive victims', might create additional barriers to employment by reinforcing unsubstantiated negative conceptions. Ackers' study invites careers practitioners to question new research 'insights' and to query and examine the concepts and terms used.

Career adaptability

The notion of 'adaptability' discussed in Ackers' study refers to people's willingness and capability to manage career changes that may results from industrial, economic or personal developments. Other research examined the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS). This scale is said to be useful for measuring the capacity to manage career transition (Zacher, 2014; Öncel, 2014; Tolentino, Sedoglavich, Lu, Garcia and Restubog, 2014). CAAS was generally considered to be a reliable career adaptability measure and was thought to have potential for being used in international career development research after having been tested in various countries (Zacher, 2014; Öncel, 2014).

Practitioners and career researchers, who used CAAS, thought it was a useful tool to measure adaptability (Tolentino *et al*, 2014). But it is questionable how valuable such a measure is, because 'career adaptability' is not a stable concept. Attempts to measure 'career adaptability' and psycho-social competences in managing career changes suggest that the problem lies with the person. But effectively blaming people and suggesting training interventions means unemployment is understood to be a personal or psychological matter rather than a problem with advice offered by careers practitioners or with the labour market.

High levels of career adaptability are associated in various studies with a range of employment-related benefits which explains the efforts that are being invested into measuring the concept. Adaptability is seen as a predictor, for example, of job search success, employment prospects and entrepreneurial intentions (Guan, Guo, Bond, Cai, Zhou, Xu, Zhu, Wang, Fu, Liu, Wang, Hu, and Ye, 2014; Santilli, Nota, Ginevra and Soresi, 2014; Tolentino *et al*, 2014). Being able to predict employment behaviour in this manner is thought to give an indication of the career decision making process a person navigates. However, at the present time the usefulness of being able to measure career adaptability are unclear.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy in career decision making, or the ability to make an informed decision about a career path to pursue in the process of securing meaningful employment, is thought to be influenced by the support a person receives and the career barriers a person faces (Wright, Perrone-McGovern, Boo, White, 2014). Careers practitioners, who take these and other influences into account when giving careers advice, may be able to help bolster self-efficacy in career decision making (Wright *et al*, 2014). Hsieh and Huang (2014) argue that careers practitioners can facilitate self-efficacy in career decision making. In their study they found a positive association between proactive personalities and self-efficacy in career decision making.

Interventions in the form of training designed to modify behaviour and attitudes are increasingly popular, because they are assumed to bring about meaningful changes in any desired direction. A study conducted by Bullock-Yowell, Leavell, McConnel, Rushing, Andrews, Campbell and Osborne (2014) showed, however, that interventions do not necessarily bring about the intended change. Bullock-Yowell *et al*. assessed the outcomes of a career decision making workshop they judged to be theoretically sound, relevant to the course participants and provided good information. The outcome was that people who attended the workshop seemed to have a few more

career decision-making difficulties than people in the control group who had not attended the workshop. It could be that the intervention had a negative result as a consequence of an increased awareness of the various factors involved in making effective career decisions.

Conclusion

Career development research has got a lot to offer. It brings the practitioner up to speed with the latest developments, raises controversial issues for discussion and can advance knowledge and understanding about career development. Some of the more informative research papers and reports that we reviewed here, threw into question some popular views about career development. One was 'ethnicity' which is commonly thought to be a major influence on employment outcomes while it may be the geographical place where a person lives that is the decisive factor. Another popular view concerns the 'male career crisis' that is described in some literature as resulting from 'deindustrialisation'. The uncritical use of the concept can have negative consequences because it may mask agency and pathologises working class men.

Finally, we argue that careers practitioners and researchers need to be aware that new concepts can quickly become empty buzzwords. 'Career adaptability' appears to be one such potential buzzword that needs watching. It has become popular because it appears to be easier to psychologise unemployment and suggest training interventions than to look self-critically at current careers advice and labour market issues. Although some attempts have been made to measure the concept through the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale, we think, its practical purpose is unclear at present.

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Book reviews

CAREER ERRORS – STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT THE STEPS AND MISSTEPS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Author: Frank Burtnett
Rowman & Littlefield
2014
240pp.

Reviewed by David Winter, Head of Corporate Consultancy, The Careers Group, University of London

This is an ambitious book. It seeks to address common issues, mistakes and misconceptions that cause people problems throughout their careers, from the first job through to retirement. As such, it appears to be aimed at the widest possible audience. However, the advice is often too tailored to the North American education and labour system to be useful to anyone outside the US.

Career Errors consists of four main sections.

Section one is on 'Entering, Reentering and Moving about the World of Work' and contains subsections on poor career decision making, inadequate occupational research, inappropriate qualifications and ineffective timing.

Section two deals with 'Finding, Aquiring and Moving into the First or Any Job' and has information on traditional job search topics such as applications and interviews, but also contains advice on coping with common new job anxieties.

Section three is entitled 'Achieving Career Satisfaction and Dealing with the Occasional Crisis'. This contains chapters on maintaining career growth in a transforming career landscape, issues of career satisfaction and 'life-work balace', and how to respond to some common career difficulties.

The final section addresses 'Winding Down and Exiting Career'. It looks at positioning for retirement and dealing with change.

Despite this range of topics, the book is only 240 pages long, with almost 170 of those pages dedicated to the first two sections. This brevity frequently means that the advice given is very superficial and often amounts to little more than imperatives that sound like hollow truisms, especially for some of the more complex mid-career issues. For example, part of the advice in response to job loss is 'Be positive and do everything from a position of strength.' There is no argument that it is better to maintain a positive attitude to job hunting in the face of job loss, but the more difficult question is how exactly you do that when your confidence and sense of identity may have taken a major hit. This book makes no attempt to answer that more fundamental question. *Career Errors* is full of similar high-minded (possibly high-handed) instructions about what you should do but not nearly enough about how to do it in the real world. On the few occasions when Burtnett provides more detailed practical advice, such as how to evaluate conflicting job offers, there are some useful tips, but this does not happen frequently enough to make the book particularly useful to that very wide intended audience.

Another disappointment of this book relates to its theoretical underpinnings. Burtnett occasionally talks about the rapidly changing and unpredictable nature of the modern job market, driven by technological development and increasing globalisation. However, his advice appears to be firmly based on a very traditional matching plus developmental perspective, with all the underlying assumptions of predictable career paths defined by progression and promotion. Based on this, the career management advice follows an equally traditional Research-Decide-Plan-Do pattern. It is like stepping back into a universe where Protean Career, Boundaryless Career, Planned Happenstance, Chaos Theory of Careers and all the other developments in career theory from the last twenty years have never happened. Similarly, the book takes a very Western positivist individualistic approach with no reference to the social nature of decision making and career identity formation. There is woefully little on managing professional networks both online and in person, developing adaptability and resilience, managing your personal career brand in a social media environment,

dealing with chance events and unplanned learning, and a whole host of topics that are vitally important for career success in a complex and ever-changing modern world.

Here is my 'straight talk' about this book. I cannot think of anyone who might buy this book who would not be better off picking something else from the shelves that is more focused to their immediate and specific career needs and more contains more up-to-date thinking.

UNDERSTANDING CAREERS (2ND EDITION)
Authors: K. Inkson, N. Dries and J. Arnold
Sage
2015
406pp.

Reviewed by Phil McCash, Career Studies Unit, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Warwick

This book is designed as an introduction to understanding career development and is a follow up to a successful first edition. The authors are well-known in the field and have many publications to their names. Kerr Inkson is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Auckland Business School in New Zealand, Nicky Dries is a Research Professor at the KU Leuven, Faculty of Business and Economics in Belgium, and John Arnold is Professor of Organisational Behaviour at the School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University in the UK. This gives the book an international feel which is mirrored in the content and examples.

The authors use metaphor as a key organising concept throughout. This leads to nine chapters focused respectively on: inheritances, cycles, action, fit, journeys, roles, relationships, resources and stories. These are followed by chapters on career self-management, career helping and organisational career management. Through these means, they are able to recognise, and make explicit, the transdisciplinary nature of career studies.

A key aspect is that *Understanding Careers* is designed as a *textbook*. As such, it contains a range of features appropriate to the genre. Each chapter starts with bulleted lists of objectives designed to focus learning and these are followed by key points and general questions. Throughout, key career development concepts are used to illuminate over 50 career case studies drawn from contemporary contexts. Balloon sections entitled 'Stop and Consider' are used within chapters to reflect and apply ideas. Further reading and resources are highlighted. A companion website featuring student and instructor resources is promised although this was still under construction at the time of writing.

It is clear that considerable thought has gone into the redesign. For example, in the first edition, each chapter was immediately followed by a long list of references. These are now carried at the end of the volume. This makes the text more accessible without compromising the impressive range of sources. Generally, the layout is now clearer and the language employed addresses the reader in a friendly and approachable way.

The key distinguishing feature of this book is that it is the only contemporary textbook on career studies designed for the general reader as opposed to, say, career development professionals or organisational studies researchers. It has therefore found its way onto many reading lists for career management and employability modules in the university sector. Some tutors even using it as a core text to organise their module around, e.g. the *Understanding Employability: Preparing for Your Future* module at the University of Essex. The clear and accessible quality of writing and presentation means it may also be suitable for this purpose in school, college and the workplace contexts.

There are relatively few people in the world capable of distilling such a vast range of scholarship from across so many disciplines. As such, this book will also provide a useful overview for career development professionals whether experienced or inexperienced. Previous texts have struggled to connect career development theories and careers work and this book credibly addresses this for career education and employability activities. A further level of detail would be needed for one-to-one work but this feels beyond the scope of a textbook for the general reader.

The second edition contains more images than the first and this brightens the feel. Nevertheless, more extensive use of images would be appropriate to the metaphor theme and underline the role of career in

popular culture. This is perhaps something that can be incorporated in a third edition. In Chapter 11, entitled *Careers as Stories*, the authors link stories to constructionist trends in social science. Their abiding interest in metaphor and multiple realities is perhaps closest to these developments; however, there remains some ambiguity about this and it would have been helpful to hear more about the authors' underpinning epistemological stance. Admittedly, many similar textbooks do not venture into this terrain but it can serve as a guide and navigational aid to the student. In Chapter 12, there are useful sections devoted to helping the reader critically evaluate the popular career management self-help literature and more formal models e.g. the Greenhaus Career Management Model. This could have been strengthened by more detailed discussion of alternative career management models in this heavily contested field.

Overall, *Understanding Careers* is the essential career and employability studies textbook for general college and university-level courses. I have used this excellent book for several years in my own work and was part of a team that invited Kerr Inkson to speak at a conference in the UK in 2009 where he introduced a new generation of teachers and researchers to his ideas (see NICEC Journal, Issue 23, 2010). The career education field has been revolutionised in recent years and this book has proved an invaluable tool in helping us fundamentally re-think the design and content of programmes in schools, colleges, university and the workplace.

HANDBOOK OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Editors: G. Arulmani, A.J. Bakshi, F.T.L. Leong & A.G. Watts
Springer SBM
2014
771 pp.

Reviewed by Dr Lyn Barham, Fellow of NICEC and independent researcher

This Handbook was compiled largely from the papers presented at an international conference in 2010, but it is far more than 'conference proceedings'. The conference itself – co-organised by The Promise Foundation in Bangalore, India and the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) – set out to address the much-criticised hegemony of Western thought in career guidance theory. Subsequent to the conference, the editorial team worked with presenters to further develop their papers to include non-Western perspectives, and to articulate universal concerns and principles. Additional papers were invited, to develop themes not otherwise covered in the conference papers.

This scheme for the Handbook encourages the contributors to address some fundamental questions. Bakshi, in Chapter 8, posits that the common concern for all career service professionals is the *person* whose career development they are supporting. This serves as a springboard for her exploration of different beliefs about the *person* both within and between Eastern and Western traditions. Common questions emerge: Are people mutable and malleable? To what extent can people exercise agency in making choice within social circumscription (or privilege)? Can people hold themselves apart from the assumptions learned in place and over time in order to be fully open to new learning and new possibilities?

Bakshi's questions are echoed by Sultana in Chapter 18: 'what view of human nature do we have?'. Sultana's argument for career practitioners having a necessary engagement with social justice follows Plant's (Chapter 17) assertion that individual career choices have environmental impact. In both cases, they raise questions about what it means to have a world worth living in, as well as a fulfilling individual role within it.

These themes reverberate with those of Arulmani in Chapter 6. Arulmani has elsewhere (e.g. Arulmani, 2007) raised with Western audiences the absence of a word – and concept – of 'career' in the Eastern tradition. Here (Chapter 6) he goes deeper, questioning constructions of work, and exploring the *enculturation* of individuals into their society of origin, and the processes of *acculturation* which occur when the individual – through processes of globalisation or migration – is forced to engage with other social and economic processes.

These themes reflect the editors' stated intention to reflect the interdisciplinary position of career guidance and counselling. Exploration of the self through

the lens of psychology and human development is integrated with exploration of the social and economic context of individuals and their work situations, and further situated within the ecology of our planet. Both the individual client and the career practitioner are scrutinised through these multiple lenses.

The Handbook is arranged in eight sections, with reviews of career theory (section 1) followed by explorations of views of 'the person' across the life span (section 2). This provides a context within which following sections explore volatile labour markets (section 3), and the social and environmental contexts for our work, with profound questioning of the role of the career practitioner in supporting social and ecological justice (section 4). Sections 5 and 6 explore career service practice and careers services for special groups respectively, including attention to migrant and ex-patriot workers and students. Section 7 addresses career assessment, challenging constructs that underpin much Western assessment of individuals, as well as the thorny questions of assessment of career services. Finally, section 8 turns to the lynchpin in career development work, the career practitioners: what training, competencies and standards are required to meet the challenges investigated in the preceding sections?

Whilst robustly theoretical, this handbook does not neglect practical applications of the ideas it contains. Most chapters address some aspect of the 'concrete, practical dilemmas that the career guidance professional community has to deal with' (Chapter 18). It is however a weighty tome (in physical and intellectual senses) and will not reach the bookshelves of many busy careers centres. Its greatest value – beyond the considerable contribution to the theoretical field – is to the growing international community of those who offer training and development to career practitioners. All practitioners work in multicultural settings, and there is much here to help practitioners and trainees to deepen their understandings of cultural processes which influence the individual and the work economy.

Too often in the past, 'international' has had the limited indication that both North American and European perspectives are included. This book is a sustained attempt to weigh the potential contributions of both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions to the field of career development and to the work of career practitioners. It goes far on its stated journey to 'consider both universal and specific principles for guidance and counselling that are socially and economically relevant to the contemporary situation'. For me, it has gone further still, in reflecting to me how little I know. I am left contemplating my ignorance of the beliefs about person in indigenous African cultures, in the Arab world, and in the Chinese and Japanese traditions. Limited reference is made to the seismic impact of the rebalancing of the global economy on regions such as the Middle East, and on North and sub-Saharan Africa (Chapter 13), and to structural change as Eastern European (and other) countries shift from command towards free-market economies (Chapter 11). I have been led to consider the *acculturation* that occurs when Western call centres and manufacturing plants appear in Asian countries. But what do I know of the impact of Chinese investment in the continent of Africa? What *acculturation* is happening as Chinese investment has increased 8-fold in the last decade, and will double again in the next five years? This Handbook has offered a profound experience in both gaining understanding and concurrently gaining awareness of my ignorance. I suspect it may offer the same experience for others, and will indicate extensive fields which remain as yet beyond the boundaries of career theory.

References

Arulmani, G. (2007) *Pride and Prejudice: How do They Matter to Career Development.* CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Leung, D. & Zhou, L. (2014) *Where Are Chinese Investments in Africa Headed?* World Resources Institute. Available at: http://www.wri.org/blog/2014/05/where-are-chinese-investments-africa-headed [Accessed 5 January 2015]

Call for papers | Forthcoming NICEC events

Call for papers:

Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

The next publication of the NICEC journal in October 2015 will be an 'open issue'. This is an opportunity to invite authors to submit articles that are not built around a specific issue theme. The timeline for submission is below and detailed guidelines for writing are available from the issue editor. Please use the guidelines to format all drafts and the final article. The editor will provide feedback and will make the final decision on inclusion.

Any drafts and final, revised version of articles should be sent by email to the issue editor: Hazel Reid
hazel.reid@canterbury.ac.uk

Timeline for October 2015 issue:

Abstract of no more than 100 words
by Tuesday 31st March 2015

1st draft	Thursday 30th April 2015
2nd draft	Monday 8th June 2015
Final article	Monday 20th July 2015
Proofs to check	September 2015

Forthcoming NICEC events:

Time	Event	Topic	Venue
Thursday, 19th March			
11am-1pm	Fellows meeting		South Bank University
2pm-5pm	Network meeting	How do we engage employers with career development?	
Monday, 11th May			
11am-1pm	Board meeting		Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London
1.30pm-4.30pm	Fellows meeting		
5pm-6.30pm	Seminar	Careers and employability MOOC	
Tuesday, 23rd June			
11am-1pm	Board meeting		Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London
1.30pm-4.30pm	Fellows meeting		
5pm-6.30pm	Seminar	*Title TBC*	
Wednesday, 30th September			
11am-1pm	Fellows meeting		*Venue TBC*
2pm-5pm	Network meeting	How to become a more reflective practitioner	
Thursday, 26th November			
11am-1pm	Board meeting		Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London
1.30pm-4.30pm	Fellows meeting		
5pm-6.30pm	Seminar	*Title TBC* (Professor Ewart Keep, Department of Education, University of Oxford)	

Costs: included in membership fees for NICEC Fellows and members. Seminars are charged at £20 and network meetings at £40 for non-members.

CDI Training & Events Programme 2015

If you are going to maximise your potential for lifetime employability, it is essential that you maintain high levels of professional competence by continually upgrading your skills and knowledge.

We recognise that we have a critical role to play in retaining public confidence in careers practitioners and further raising standards of delivery of advice and guidance linked to learning and work. With these aims in mind we provide a well-developed annual programme of training and CPD opportunities that are open to members and non-members.

- **Traditional one-day themed conferences** – eg HE Advisers Conference; Student Conference; Careers Educators Conference
- **Skills workshops and training days** – eg Career Coaching Essentials; An Introduction to Careers Work in Schools & Colleges, etc
- **On-line webinars** – eg The Importance of the Register and Recording your CPD; NLP; Understanding Oxbridge
- **Annual CDI Conference and Exhibition** – covered in a separate paper
- **National conferences with partners -** eg National Career Guidance Show; Total Professions Conference

Everyone who attends a CDI training event will receive a CPD Certificate.

National Conferences		
National Career Guidance Show North	Leeds	*Thursday 26 February*
National Career Guidance Show	London	*Wednesday 4 March*
National Career Guidance Show Central	Leicester	*Wednesday 11 March*
CDI Skills and Training Workshops		
Better Presenting & Public Speaking	London York Birmingham	*Tuesday 24 February* *Tuesday 28 April* *Thursday 10 September*
Embedding Social Media within Career Education	London	*Friday 6 March*
Career Coaching Essentials	Bristol Birmingham	*Tuesday 24 March* *Tuesday 29 September*
Supporting Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing	London	*Thursday 16 April*
Two Day Course for Careers Practitioners in Guidance, Theory and Practice, QCF Level 6	Exeter	*Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23 April*
An Introduction to Careers Work in Schools & Colleges	Sheffield Exeter London	*Thursday 30 April* *Tuesday 7 July* *Wednesday 14 October*
Motivating Clients – Inspirational and Creative Techniques	York Bristol	*Thursday 9th July* *Thursday 21st May*
CDI Day Conferences		
Student Conference & Exhibition	Coventry	*Tuesday 31 March*
Regional Conferences		
Half-day/evening meetings - Details on CDI website	UK-wide	*Throughout the year*
Webinars		
What Lies Ahead for School Leavers? Advising Students on 18+ Options	Online	*Monday 2 March*
Introduction to Neuro-Linguistic Programming	Online	*Monday 9 March*

All CDI events can be booked via the CDI website at: www.thecdi.net/Skills-Training-Events
Record your CPD online in the CDI Members Area at: www.cdiregister.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.

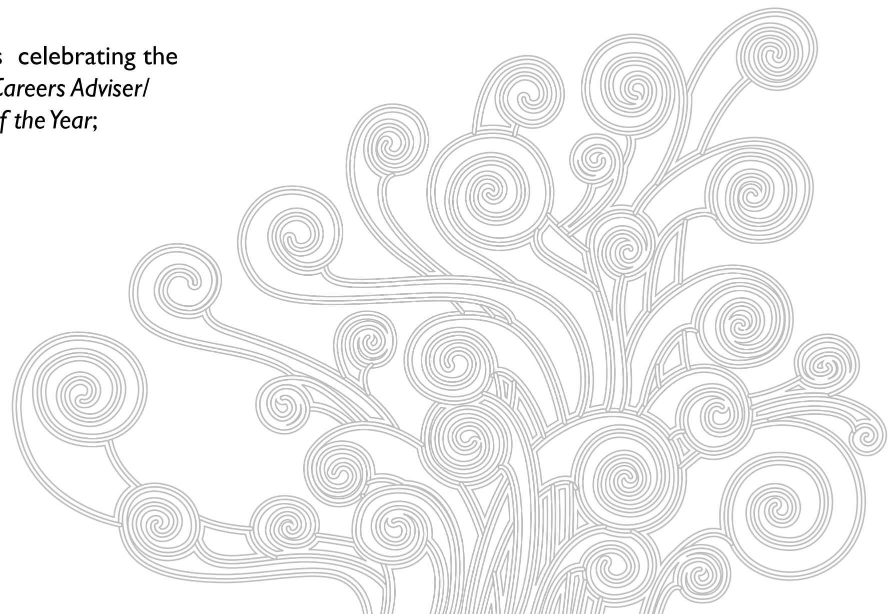
We have established:

- 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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