

**NICEC**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

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DEVELOPMENT  
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**Promoting research and reflective practice in career development**

## 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.

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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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## CO-EDITORS OF THE JOURNAL

### April 2018 issue:

Lyn Barham  
lynbarham@gmail.com

Michelle Stewart  
michelle.stewart@canterbury.ac.uk

### October 2018 issue:

Phil McCash  
p.t.mccash@warwick.ac.uk

### April 2019 issue:

Pete Robertson  
p.robertson@napier.ac.uk

Lyn Barham  
lynbarham@gmail.com

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Lyn Barham, Anthony Barnes, Alison Dixon, Charles Jackson, Phil McCash, Claire Nix, Hazel Reid, Peter Robertson, and Michelle Stewart.

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The NICEC journal publishes articles on the broad theme of career development in any context including:

- 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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Membership of NICEC is also available (£75 pa or £50 pa for full-time students). Members receive the journal, free attendance at NICEC events and other benefits.

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### **EDITORIAL**

- 2 Overview of this issue  
**Lyn Barham and Michelle Stewart**

### **ARTICLES**

- 4 Career choice and counselling in rural northern Norway  
**Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke**
- 11 Seeking the good life - higher education careers services and moral philosophy  
**Donald Lush**
- 17 Do parents of intending 'first generation' students in higher education differ in their need for school support to help their child's career development?  
**Annemarie Oomen**
- 25 Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision making?  
**Kathleen Houston and Eileen Cunningham**
- 33 Career services for international students: comparison of case studies of higher education institutions in Europe  
**Erik Zeltner**
- 40 'It all kind of symbolises something doesn't it?' How students present their career image online  
**Tristram Hooley and Beth Cutts**
- 47 A critical response to Hooley's Seven Cs of digital literacy  
**Tom Staunton**
- 54 The Robots are Coming! The response of careers professionals to the future of the graduate job  
**Nalayini Thambar**

### **NEWS**

- 62 Recent publications | Call for papers | Forthcoming events

# Overview of this issue

Welcome to this issue of the Journal of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling. In contrast with issue 39, which rightly focused on the work of the late, and greatly missed, Bill Law, this issue adopts a more eclectic approach. This enables us to draw together a wide range of articles reflecting the diversity of expertise among our authors and of interests among our readership. The content for this issue is therefore perhaps best described as a miscellaneous mix of topical issues that includes something for everyone.

In keeping with this cold and wintry season the first article is from the north: Career choice and counselling in rural northern Norway. **Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke** explores the experience in making career choices of teenagers from a small rural community in northern Norway. Ingrid's work involved in-depth interviews with seven 10th graders in the process of making their first manifest career choice – choosing upper secondary – and one counsellor. Analysing the data using thematic analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the article explores the tensions between the individualistic and collectivistic perspectives experienced by the young people, and how these influence their decision-making. It has particular relevance for any involved in careers work in small rural communities, especially where the transition to secondary education involves moving away from home at 16 or travelling great distances to attend their preferred program.

In the second article **Donald Lush** reviews the three main theories of 'good' in moral philosophy and examines careers practice from their perspective. It asks whether, as practitioners, we have ways of apprehending our intentions for doing good. And if we do, whether they provide us with a central anchor from which to support and extend our work, and help us to respond to the demands of our ever-changing environment. Drawing on

the work of Aristotle among others to address these intriguing questions, the article offers a rare opportunity to revisit the philosophical basis of careers work, as well as the wider assumptions of what career guidance seeks to do.

The third article by **Annemarie Oomen** reports on the outcomes of a research project which explores the impacts of a school-initiated career intervention for parents, both those with and without HE qualifications. The research, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education, adopts a mixed methods approach, issuing questionnaires before and after participation in a bespoke career learning programme for pupils and their parents/carers and conducting semi-structured interviews. The career intervention programme aimed to increase support for the children's career building by enabling parents to be (a) up-to-date and well-informed about educational possibilities and their financial consequences, the labour market and the use of information resources; and (b) able to make considered career decisions with their child. The findings reveal some interesting insights into the influence of parental educational attainment and the importance of early career intervention work with families where the experience of higher education is limited.

Returning to the UK, in the next article **Kathleen Houston and Eileen Cunningham** share their investigations into an intriguing yet unspoken wish in career conversations with students and graduates: the desire for a career epiphany, a sudden realisation of a future career. This methodologically robust research adopts a broadly phenomenological approach, to illuminate and understand the lived experience of undergraduate and postgraduate students seeking career guidance. The investigation found that although the notion of a career epiphany was appealing as a concept, it would seem that waiting for this defining moment can

delay career decisions. Not wishing to leave this issue of deferment unresolved, Kathleen and Eileen bring together a range of recommendations from participating students and careers advisers that will be of interest to career workers in developing their professional practice.

The fifth article by **Erik Zeltner** provides a contrasting analysis on careers service provision based on case studies generated from three European HEIs. Important strategic and service issues result from the rising number of international students and an increasing focus on their successful transition from higher education into the graduate labour market. At a time of uncertainty over the free movement of workers and future visa regulations, it usefully explores the challenges for careers services which rest both in managing expectations effectively by explaining to students what they can deliver and what is not included in the services, and in raising international students' awareness of global careers and opportunities for a successful re-integration into their home country.

In the next article **Tristram Hooley and Beth Cutts** explore issues around students' on-line presence in the form of photographic images and the way that employers may use this information as part of selection decisions. During interviews with nine students attending university in the Midlands, on-line photographs were accessed to stimulate discussion, thereby combining language and image to culminate a clearer understanding of each participant's ideas. From the analysis an interesting tension emerges between the visual representation of professional and personal identities. This dichotomy exposes an ethical challenge as to how far career advisers want to propose to students that they curb their online identities in order to ensure their employability.

This leads nicely into the penultimate article in which **Tom Staunton** provides a critical analysis of Tristram Hooley's Seven Cs of digital literacy, opening up avenues for discussing how we understand digital careers enactment and how

careers practice equips individuals to respond to the internet. In particular, Tom reflects on the danger of seeing digital literacy as being delivered 'autonomously' with wider social contexts being an afterthought, thereby obscuring wider structures that impact an individual's activity. To avert this danger he asks us to consider the importance of locating digital literacy education inside each individual's context; to bring people together to create collective solutions and move away from practice which sees the internet as a resource for individuals to make use of for their own ends.

Finally, in a world where emerging technology is transforming the future of work **Nalayini Thambar** explores how we equip students for their future, not the world we know now. Drawing upon current perspectives on the future of work, Nalayini identifies key challenges for careers professionals in higher education concerning the relevance of their knowledge and practice, suggesting that this futuristic landscape also provides opportunity to challenge the persistent binary divide between 'being academic' and 'being employable'.

The authors in this issue open up a range of important issues reflecting the complexity of 'career' and the need for informed critique and a creative response to provide a service relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

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Lyn Barham and Michelle Stewart,  
Editors

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# Career choice and counselling in rural northern Norway

Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke

*‘...I’ve been talking about this all the time: if you get the chance, come home! I’ll be old someday, and then I’d like someone to be here and take care of me.’*

*- The counsellor.*

**Rurality** and career choices. This article explores how teenagers from a small rural community in northern Norway experience making career choices, in the intersection between individual needs and community values. Interviews with 10th graders in the process of making their first manifest career choice – choosing upper secondary – shows that whether or not the teenagers identify with the community and see a future there or not, is of major importance. The consequential preference for education and acquisition of competence, either strengthen or weaken the ties with the community, becoming a determinant of who leaves, and who stays.



## Introduction

It is a two-hour drive into the country from the nearest city to get there, on roads following winding fjords and valleys, through smaller settlements, villages and lush scenery. Travellers have to pass over heathery mountain passes where the harsh winter weather can close the road for days at a time. Unsurprisingly career opportunities within this community are restricted, being mainly based on agriculture, small craft industries and jobs in the municipality.

It is a small community. The number of people has decreased by a third in one generation, from 1542 in 1987 to 1043 in 2017 (Statistics\_Norway, 2017). There are numerous reasons for the depopulation of this community, but it reflects the unresolved issues with balancing centralization and decentralization. Since the

1960s, the population in rural areas has been in steady decline, especially in the northern areas (Båtevik, 2013, Lysgård, 2013).

The need to secure the community’s future is a considerable theme within the community, and the career counsellor – as the one guiding the community’s teenagers towards their future – feels a responsibility to give them reasons to stay, while at the same time encouraging them to express their individuality. The teenagers feel the implicit tension when they make their choices for the future, and in this article, I explore how they experience and address this tension and suggest some implications for career guidance.

## The Norwegian education system

Education has a high priority in Norway. The government has stated that the completion of upper secondary education is the foundation for a beneficial and lasting connection to working life (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2002). One of the main tasks of the education system is to ensure that young people have the best prospects of becoming self-sufficient and well-adapted adults. However, the reality of geography can often frustrate the ambition to follow education trajectories for young people in rural areas.

The Norwegian school system is based on three levels of local, regional and national/state governance. All municipalities in Norway offer compulsory school from year 6 to 16 and counties are responsible for the three-year academic or four-year vocational upper

secondary phase. However, the upper secondary provision requires a community to have a sufficient population to sustain diverse educational programs (Mathiesen, Mordal and Buland, 2014). This means that while some places can offer young people a wide range of upper secondary choices, others offer more limited choices and in communities like the one in this case study there are no upper secondary choices available. For students from small communities without upper secondary provision, continuing with education means moving away from home at 16 or travelling great distances to attend their preferred program. This system is part of the reason for migration in Norway, perpetuated by the fact that higher education institutions and employment opportunities are more likely to be found in central, urban areas. As Lysgård (2013) sums up, the two main forces behind the urbanization process in Norway are employment and education, so 'the rural-urban migration is not caused by a widespread wish to live in urban areas' (p. 283).

## Individualism and the urban/rural divide

The counsellor based at the local school supports the teenagers in their choice of, and transition to, upper secondary provision. His job is to help them to become aware of their own interests, abilities and values, and gain knowledge, self-knowledge and the ability to themselves make vocational and educational choices (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). In research on cultural differences, Norway is considered an individualistic society (Hofstede, 2001), so it is unsurprising that career counselling within the country is typically informed by a focus on the individual.

Individualism is associated with a situation where possibilities and resources are plentiful, and where individual action and independent choices do not affect others that much. Conversely, interdependence and the inclination to consider the interests of the group before your own are values central to collectivism. This value-set often characterises settings where possibilities and resources are not plentiful, and relying on others is key (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, Lucca, Sarason, 1988). This is one of the reasons why collectivism and rurality are often associated,

and consequently, an assumption may well be that there are cultural differences between urban and rural Norway. As Lysgård (2013) also points out, the urban-rural discourse in Norway has been marked by conflict, denoting such a difference.

Although there is a perceived 'divide' between urban and rural Norway, Norwegian researchers (i.e. Villa, 2000, Berg, 2007) argue that thinking heterogeneously or dichotomously about urban and rural life in Norway disguises the structural and cultural similarities between urban and rural life. These similarities are brought on by societal developments based on policies emphasizing equity and egalitarian values, like welfare and education for all. However, international research has shown that a rural background can have profound implications for career choice and development. Corbett (2007) showed that for young people in rural areas, making choices about education is in effect about choosing to stay or leave their home community. In the community he studied, the academic skills acquired from schooling had little relevance where practical, physical labour was the common denominator in the jobs available. Building on Corbett, Alexander and Hooley (2018) argue that geography and attachment to place are important in the career decision-making process. Specifically, the feeling of belonging to a place or community means that the choice to leave to pursue education elsewhere is laden with feelings of loss of identity. Alexander (2016) has pointed out, that the pull of 'home' remains strong for some people with a rural background and that many choose to return to their home communities after having been away to get educated, even though this is likely to limit their salaries and employment choices.

## Collective individualism

Places are complex. They are not simply geographical but are also social. While many people with rural backgrounds miss the physical spaces, they also miss the people who live there, the interconnectedness, the shared past and the common future. These issues of place and social connection call into question an exclusive focus on individuals' career and life trajectories in career guidance. However, the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism is not always straightforward. While careers work

typically emphasizes self-actualization (Maslow, 1971) it is also possible to understand this concept in relation to *others*. To self-actualise can be about emphasising and realising relationships with others, rather than accentuating individuality.

Some researchers argue that while Norwegian culture is individualistic it is also collectivistic. The term *collectivistic individualism* coined by Hernes and Hippe (2007) tries to explain how it is possible to develop structures and systems that combine meeting individual needs while at the same time protecting and developing community values and the common good. Even though it is expensive, making contributions to a common system that regulates sick pay, maternity leave and other welfare elements, expands individual possibilities. It is possible to argue that collectivistic individualism is learned, first indirectly through education and social storytelling, and later through directly experiencing the dynamic between obligation and privilege, acquiring taxable income and thus being able to benefit from the system.

While contributing to the system can be seen as an act of collectivism, the choice of *how to become* a contributor to that system through your career and *what kind* of contribution that should be (what educational and career route you should choose), is typically seen as an individual one. Norwegians are thus experienced in resolving the tensions between individualistic and collectivistic perspectives. Yet, this can also be experienced as a tension and a pressure. Career choice is a process of identity formation for the individual, but the choice of education and vocation is a matter of interest for the community. For example, the question the teenagers in this study constantly get from their co-dwellers is this: *will you come back and provide some continuity in this community, once you are educated?*

The main question in this article is how do the teenagers in this case study experience this tension, and on what basis do they make their decision to stay – or leave?

## About the study

This article is based on interviews with seven students and one counsellor about the process

of making career choices in a rural community in northern Norway. This case was chosen because these interviews can contribute to the understanding of how context has an impact on social processes (Hartley, 2004).

The interviews were semi-structured conversations, in one group interview with seven of eight students in the only 10th grade class in this community, and in subsequent individual interviews with two of the students and the school counsellor/teacher. The main topic of the conversations was the experience of making upper secondary choices and what they thought was challenging about making career choices in their community.

In the first step of the analysis, I coded the interviews using codes generated from the material and made them as generic and open as possible. The interviews were further analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). I employed a strategy from IPA where I read the content of every node, interpreting and synthesizing the content to clarify common meanings in the statements and suggest psychological and theoretical concepts related to them. The next step of the thematic analysis was finding overall themes. I tried several different groupings, and found that separating the nodes into two overall groups, 'Context' and 'Competence' with subgroups fitted the material best.

## Findings and discussion

### Layered decision making

The decision making of the young people in the study can be described as complex and layered. The metaphor of 'layers' is useful as it shows how different factors are of different importance when decisions about the future are to be made. Their relative importance is an effect of the proximity to the young person's core – that deep place where individuality has its origin, and where true decisions are made. When asked about whether they feel that what goes on in their community is important in their decision-making, a girl in the group states: 'It concerns me, but it doesn't influence me', implying that what goes on around her is important, but not relevant for her decision.



For the teenagers, the influences that are closest to their core, such as responsibilities, the family, peers, the closest relations and the farm or small town-identity, are the most important factors in the decision-making process:

...I think those growing up, who has got allodial rights<sup>1</sup>, yeah you see, they like inherit the farm, I think it's more pressure for them to come back, not pressure like coming back to the community, but pressure to come back and run the farm, because it is, if it is to continue within the family.

This girl goes on to say: '... my big brother, he has not thought at all about running any farm, so I guess we'll sell it, and that's not what I want'. Therefore, she is planning to take it over, and become a teacher on the side, as it is necessary to plan for an additional income when becoming a farmer.

The context, both proximal and distant, has push and pull effects which influence the teenagers' decision-making process by reinforcing their choice. For instance, for the teenagers who choose not to come back, the negative sides of the small community work as a push factor. Limited possibilities for employment, conflicts and a general disappointment with the adults in the community make it even less likely that the teenagers will choose to come home:

I want to come back, a little, because I like it here, but it's this thing with getting a job, in addition to me feeling a bit in a phase of opposition now, against the politicians and all of the.... I think the people here, with these [conflicts and debates]... they do it in a way that doesn't make me want to come back.

In addition, the teenagers feel the weight of their decision in the community.

Yes, it's a lot of pressure... We had a [career-day] where many people working in the municipality came and presented their vocation, and they all

<sup>1</sup> Odel in Norwegian. Allodial lands are the absolute property of their owner and not subject to any rent, service, or acknowledgement to a superior. Hence, allodial title is an alternative to feudal land tenure. Odel, like the word alodium as used in i.e. France, means land held by hereditary right. It is a retroactive right, in some cases still effective even after the farm has been sold.

finished saying: come home, we need you.

## Competence

Competence, the ability to do something successfully or efficiently, forms some of the layers in the decision making for these teenagers. The acquisition of competence is a personal process, which can shift a young person from one place to another both mentally and, through career choices and mobility, physically. Competence can be seen as a form of career capital, which can provide both security and possibilities, allowing you to move out of the community and perhaps back again. Thinking about competence – how to get it and what it should be and what needs it should address – is a future-oriented activity. Thinking about competence also means thinking about where you want to go and what you would like to achieve. Competence makes mobility possible:

...and there's a lot of things to see and experience out in the world. You can work abroad, for instance. Everything is possible, but like my brother, he's not a school-phenomenon, he hasn't finished upper secondary. So it's a real achievement for him to get permanent employment.

The brother is bound to place through the job he has because it will be difficult for him to get another one, as he has no formal qualifications. The boy goes on to say: 'I'll finish school, I will do that, regardless of doing it good or bad, I will finish school.'

Competence and skill is something that binds you and something that sets you free. Competence in the form of education can be abstract and formal, and competence development means following a trajectory in the education and employment system – out of the community. However, competence can also be practical, and when skills are transferred between generations, like farming, making traditional foods or handcraft, it tightens the connections between the teenagers and their community, because practical skills are what are needed and valued here.

...I mean the griddle cake-bakery, it's a little, you need to be able to make griddle cake and that's like something that grandmothers teach their daughters, and then their daughters, there are like

no sons involved.

The reason for this is that the sons are busy learning other things:

...many of our parents are pelementmakers<sup>2</sup>... they can do everything. We have a lot of them here, and of course, they don't do any women-stuff.

*Do they say that?*

No, but they are raised on farms so they are not used to it. ...they are raised on farms where they need to know a little bit about everything, carpentry, electronics, that kind of thing.

Academic knowledge and schooling are appropriate for a few of the vocations possible in this place, such as teacher, accountant, and municipal administrator. Holders of this kind of skillset or competence represent something different in the community. The counsellor explains:

That's just the problem, that there is no culture or tradition for [career]. I mean we do have some academics, but we certainly do not have many academics in this community, and the few we've got are living down in the [lower part of the community], in that area because they have their jobs in the technical and public administration. And from [the middle part] and up there are certainly not many people educated beyond upper secondary, that have a higher education, that lives up here. There are a few teachers and a few more, but not many.

When there is no practical reason to stay, no farm or firm to take over, but merely a limited range of possibilities and the danger of not being able to support yourself, then a major push factor is the fear that staying within the community might make it difficult to find a livelihood. In this sense, students absorb the broader Norwegian narrative about the importance of education to employment and act on this above the local community narrative. The

<sup>2</sup> *Pelementmaker* is a word often used in Northern dialects and denotes a person with a multitude of practical skills, a resourceful jack-of-all-trades worker who is highly valued in the community.

many possibilities outside the community and the prospect of 'making it' there, the variety, the freedom, all work as pull factors in a situation where the teenagers do not identify themselves and their future within the community, where limitations and limited opportunities, traditional values and specific mindsets are prominent factors.

### **Inside/outside**

When the teenagers decide that their future lies outside of the community, they focus on the multitude of choices and possibilities that exist in the external, peripheral world. At the same time, the limited range of opportunities in the community reinforces the choice to leave. This is also the case for the locally oriented teenager that would like to remain and build a future in the community, but who does not have a farm or a firm to inherit: 'I would like to come back, but I've got to come back to a job, I don't want to come back here to go NAV-ing [be dependent on welfare]'. So in order to provide a livelihood, he will need to adhere to the general advice and knowledge of both teachers and other adults around him, to get educated to ensure employment:

No I couldn't start working now because I could lose my job, and if I wanted a new job they would say, they would see, no he's not been to school, does not have a certificate of apprenticeship and then they would not be interested in me. I don't think.

*Here in the community, or on the outside?*

A bit of both, but mostly outside, but a little in here as well. I think they want people with education in all jobs. ... You hear it at home too, from everybody really. You hear it at home, and you've heard it so many places that it's an important factor, when it comes to work, as I said, they can see that you achieved something.

That means leaving and staying out, in the peripheral context where the possibilities are to be found, but instead of choosing out of interest and lust for adventure, he makes his choice because he fears that otherwise, he will not be able to build a future for himself.

## Identity

Looking at my parents, seeing myself as living on a farm, raising my kids in this traditional culture, is this really who I am? Whether the answer is yes or no, the possibilities for work and providing a livelihood can be found in the context, either within the community or outside it. If there is nothing in the local context which provides a strong clue about career direction, then what to do and when to do it can be an open question:

Have not at all figured out what I would like to become, so instead of stressing that, I just figure I'm not even sixteen and work is still far off, regarding the choices I need to make – they can wait until I have more information, and know what I want.

The analysis suggests that identification, as well as opportunities, affect decision making in a profound way. In the statement above, a girl who plans to live outside the community says she needs more information, about herself as well. This implies that she cannot find those answers about herself – the answers that identification gives – in her immediate surroundings. Illustrative of this, there is a clear understanding that they, the newer generation, feel that they represent something different from the traditional context of the community: '... We, the younger generation, are much more modern and don't care about [gender] labels, so I'm quite sure it'll change – IF we come home.' But she knows that neither she nor the majority of her fellow teenagers will return to this community, so things are more likely to stay the same. For the ones who do stay, staying means participating in the community and continuing what is there, the farm or the firm. It is also necessary to accept the culture, the values, the gender difference and the more traditional lifestyle – perhaps not adhering to it yourself, but accepting how life is lived in this place.

I think it probably has got something to do with us living in a rural community, we live a little on the outside, I am not saying that we are old-fashioned or anything, but I still think that it lingers.

## Conclusion

The task of choosing what do with your life when you are fifteen is a big one. As the counsellor says: 'They are only kids when they leave here, some of them are not even 16'.

For some of them, being able to stay in their home community is pivotal and they will choose their education and future vocation to be able to do that. For others, the best option is to postpone choice by avoiding the specifics and going for the general academic route that allows them to wait, to get a little older, know themselves a little better, and to see what happens. But, even though they are not yet capable of spelling out what they would like to become, they are actively engaged and clear about what they *do not want to become* – dwellers of their home community. That is just not how they see themselves.

The implications for the educational institutions and career counselling in small, rural places is that understanding how attachment and connection to place, and how this relates to identity, is important for choosing education. In effect, this means that the most important and perhaps the most basic decision they make is about their life-course, and the consequential question is what education fits with that. Although simultaneous in time, they are hierarchical in importance, as the concept of contextual layers of relative importance suggests. For the counsellor and other adults in the community, this implies a different starting point for career conversations. While the concern for the teenagers and the wish to give them the best possible opportunities might make the educational trajectories the most obvious advice, the realisation is that for some the competence acquired must connect to a future in the community. For others, the tension between individual aspirations and community needs is not resolved by exercising pressure to inspire them to return. It could rather inspire them to stay away.



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## For correspondence

Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke, PhD Fellow  
The Innland Norway University of Applied Sciences  
[ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@inn.no](mailto:ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@inn.no)

# Seeking the good life - higher education careers services and moral philosophy

Donald Lush

**One** perspective on careers work is that it is a kind of moral philosophy. We seek to help our clients and students discover and live a good life, a question central to philosophy. However, the notion of good seems under-examined in our profession.

This article reviews the three main theories of good in moral philosophy and examines careers practice from their perspective. A moral foundation that focuses on social justice is proposed as a necessary consequence of a claim of rationality and agency on the part of careers services.

## Why think about careers services philosophically?

It is relatively easy to list the activities of a careers service. We help people write CVs and job applications; we prepare them for interviews; we promote job vacancies, internships and placements; we provide workshops and online resources, visits from employers, careers fairs and so on. Underlying these is a conceptual toolkit consisting of approaches to decision making, career exploration and planning as well as employability; our clients gain skills and attributes that enable them to promote themselves successfully to potential employers.

But is that the essence of what we do or just a particular (albeit complex) set of ways of addressing a question that everyone has: what is a good life and how can I live it? And do we, as practitioners, have ways of thinking about the good we do, if any? If we did, would it help us to respond to the demands of our ever-changing environment or provide us with a

central anchor from which to support and extend our work?

## Morality, ethics, good

Anyone who has studied philosophy will immediately recognise this question of what good is as one of its primary concerns, present in its discourses (both in the ancient Greek and Eastern traditions) for almost three millennia. It retains its significance right up to the modern era.

Philosophy (except to philosophers) sometimes has a poor reputation, seemingly concerning itself with abstract and baffling ideas about reality that serve no useful everyday purpose. This may well contain a grain of truth in fields such as metaphysics and logic but everyone has a view about what 'good' is. And this is all moral philosophy is – a debate about good – and one that everyone can relate to and grasp.

In the West, its roots are in ethics, the ancient Greek concern with character. We owe our current word 'moral' to the Romans (as we owe so much else). The Latin word 'moralis' was simply the Roman writer Cicero translating the Greek 'ethika' to Latin as MacIntyre (2011: 46) points out. They mean the same and they both mean a search for the meaning of 'good'.

## Theories of good and their manifestations in careers work

Philosophy offers us three main ways to think about good; we can be good, do good or follow good rules. The philosophers jargon calls these *virtue ethics*, *utilitarianism* and *deontology* respectively.

## Virtue ethics

This is the argument that good is what good people do; it encourages us to develop our character and personal attributes. It has its roots in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Aristotle tells us that the purpose of human life is happiness (1955:66). If you work with students in a careers service this seems like a great hook to hang a lot of our discussions and activities on. But we have to be careful – Aristotle doesn't equate power and wealth with happiness as the 21st century seems so often to do. In fact (and he has been deservedly criticised for this) he seems eventually to believe the highest good is a life of contemplation attainable only to a few such as him. It may be the earliest careers advice on record and it is not all that encouraging. However, on the way to this conclusion he has much to offer us, some of which lives on in our time.

Aristotle did not talk about happiness in the way we conceive it now. He advocated *eudaimonia* (1995:33). It is very nearly untranslatable but covers something like the deep satisfaction of a whole life lived with a strong sense of purpose and for the benefit of one's community. And in order to do this one needs to acquire and constantly practise what Aristotle called virtues. These are characteristics or attributes such as courage, wit, truthfulness, righteous indignation and many others which he laid out in a table (1955:104).

Aristotle's analysis suggests that the virtues are best found by seeking harmony; his famous 'golden mean' between deficit and excess. Courage, for example, is found between cowardice and rashness. How much of our day to day careers work is about encouraging students to try new ideas and plans for their future whilst doing so rationally and carefully, avoiding recklessness?

And I think the virtues live on. Many universities actively promote, as part of their careers work and their institutional offer, the graduate attributes; a set of characteristics and behaviours that strongly resemble Aristotle's table of virtues.

My own institution, King's College London, is clearly Aristotelian about this (2016:35, 9):

Employers will actively seek King's graduates, not only because they are subject experts, but also

because they demonstrate a strong character and the wisdom to use their knowledge and research for the benefit of others.

and

King's graduates are distinguished not just by the content of the curriculum but by their character and service ethic.

One criticism that might be levelled (one that KCL avoids by situating its view of virtue in a sense of purpose and community benefit) is that virtue can become its own good, circular and narcissistic. Nietzsche showed us the dangers of this – losing his mind, eventually, to a megalomaniac and unattainable vision of individual development (1991:158) entirely cut off from social connection.

## Utilitarianism

More recently than Aristotle, though taking the same departure point of human happiness being the purpose of life, we have Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Their utilitarianism, as analysed by Bertrand Russell (2004: 698-705) proposes that good is what maximises happiness for the greatest number of people. Rather than cultivating character as Aristotle proposes, here the focus is very much on doing good. Philosophers call this *consequentialism* because it judges good on the consequences of carrying out an action or actions. It is the dominant moral and political in philosophy of our era and very easy to spot in the claims of politicians or in the rationale of almost any large project.

Utilitarianism prospers in a particular way in the life of universities and in public policy towards them in a focus on wealth. In the UK, at the moment, one major purpose of the university is seen to be doing good by contributing to the wealth of both individuals and society generally through creating highly skilled and employable graduates.

In careers services, this comes to a very sharp point in the work we do with our clients. Higher education is now seen as much as being about getting a well-paid professional job as it is about any of its other purposes. Careers services are often seen as an instrument in achieving that goal and universities are judged and funded on their students' employment

outcomes; all our employability strategies are rooted in it and generated by it.

One of the great difficulties of utilitarianism is that it is possible to use it to justify carrying out almost any type of activity, even those which can have negative impacts and result in unhappiness, so long as that unhappiness is the unhappiness of a minority. Our academic colleagues and our students have a grievance here; they see other 'goods', perhaps more important and valuable in their eyes, such as intellectual curiosity and the freedom of thought and criticism that are also central to the mission of higher education.

Recently, however, there has been a change. The means by which employment outcomes are measured, the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, has been reformed. Whilst the consequentialist dimension has been maintained (good still means a good outcome), we are moving to a new Graduate Outcomes Survey to replace DLHE. Amongst the things it will seek to measure as identified by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), is whether or not graduates perceive they are engaged in meaningful or important activity in the professional roles they eventually secure (2017).

This is a significant departure and, of course, the meanings of 'meaningful' and 'important' are open to debate. They are just the sort of thing philosophers love to discuss. The survey will leave that interpretation to the respondents but the ideas of value and goodness seem inescapable here. Building moral philosophical thinking into careers education could prove helpful for our clients' thinking on this issue.

## Duty

The final major strand of morality is *deontology* – duty. Happiness does not figure here; deontology is all about rules that one has a duty to obey without question. We do not have to look far in careers work for this. Our ethical codes are supremely deontological. The Career Development Institute (CDI) ethical code (2014) contains sixteen uses of the word 'must' in its twelve principles, a sure sign of a claim to moral authority that has to be obeyed.

Deontology can feel a bit like a police action, with the threat of punishment for transgressors. But I think, at least in the example I've chosen, there is something clearly rooted in moral philosophy about it. The CDI's code traces itself, consciously or not, from Kant, described by Russell (2004: 644-5), whose categorical imperative requires any moral law to be universal, applicable to everyone and not exploitative. Kant's famous principle, that people should be treated as ends in themselves (2004:644-5) and not as means to ends, seems very difficult to object to and in our day to day work often sharply real. We are there for them, not for us. Any satisfaction or happiness we feel in our work is pleasant but not necessary. In Kant's world, a careers consultant could be personally miserable, but still do good so long as the focus stays with the clients and their needs. It also seems very difficult to imagine a professional practice without boundaries and commitment to standards. Who would engage with one without the reassurance they provide, for example, on confidentiality and impartiality?

Deontological views of good have one great stumbling block. Rules based systems find it very difficult to deal with exceptions and contingency. A rule is a rule or it is not. In careers work, for example, this issue surfaces regularly in the debate about payment for internships. Many careers services, sticking close to Kant, will not promote unpaid internships on the grounds that they are a form of exploitation. But there are industries where unpaid work is the only chance to gain essential experience. Blocking it means blocking progress for some of our clients. So we have to create an exception and weaken our rule in order to stick to our view of good or risk charges of hypocrisy creating a risk that the rules could become unmanageably complex or even collapse under the weight of their exceptions.

## Why be good?

One of the joys of philosophy is its invitation to question the obvious. Doesn't everyone know one should try to be and do good?

Is morality a set of social rules that we evade if we think we can get away with it? Do we not see this happening in the modern world with the rich and powerful indulging all sorts of abuses, perhaps attempting to justify their abuse on utilitarian grounds?

Is morality, as Plato says Thrasymachus (1997:992) puts it, just a confidence trick, the rules of the powerful? Or could it require something else to avoid this charge?

Plato (1997: 1000) explores this in his tale of the Ring of Gyges. Gyges accidentally acquires a magical ring that makes him invisible. He makes full use of it, taking over a kingdom, slaughtering the king and sleeping with his wife. He goes on to rule a prosperous and successful state, dying peacefully in his bed at a ripe old age, suffering no punishment or bad consequences for his actions. In the story, Socrates, who appears as one of the characters, suggests that Gyges is not good because he is not free. Gyges is, Socrates argues, a slave to his appetites and wrongdoing. Someone rejecting such slavery is the more rational, freer and happier person and by implication, we would say nowadays, the morally better person.

I think this tale has some resonance for careers work. We tend not to regard our clients as a modern day version of Gyges, instead seeing them as Socrates would, as rational, free and inherently good people. And indeed we regard ourselves as such. All of us are better than mere seekers of what we can snatch for ourselves, basing our sense of good on something rational, that allows us agency. Articulating this is valuable: it should free us and keep us free of the danger of being the stooges of power. This is the source of Socrates' famous dictum that an unexamined life is not worth living. To stay free, to have agency and responsibility, we must continuously exercise our rationality in everything we believe and do.

## Duty, rules or reason as a foundation?

Western philosophers have failed, for thousands of years, to solve the problem of morality. At least one, Alasdair MacIntyre (2011:1-5) regards the modern era as a moral disaster zone, adrift from all sense of good, suffering from a catastrophe so great we cannot even see it. Russell's survey of utilitarianism makes clear (2004: 698-705) the failure, after exhaustive and exhausting effort, to locate the *summum bonum*; the underlying and universal moral principle from which morality can claim its authority. Again, according to Russell (2004: 644-5) Kant believed he had solved the

problem with his categorical imperative, but this is not now widely accepted.

If we reflect critically on MacIntyre's moral apocalypse how, in a careers service, could we begin to make positive use of what philosophers have offered us and shape our services so we can make a claim to be doing good?

In philosophy the questions of agency, responsibility and freedom are not settled and there are still vigorous debates about them. But for the sake of the current argument I will proceed in company with Socrates and Plato and assume we are (or at least aspire to being) free, rational agents. What, then, should motivate careers professionals and what should we be trying to achieve, if we accept that? We need to look beyond a set of inflexible rules and appeal to reason, in a particular way.

I think the answer lies in an essential condition of our existence; we are social animals whose individual interests are most effectively served by cooperation and mutual benefit. This is an idea that has appeared many times in philosophy but in modern times is most often ascribed to Thomas Hobbes.

Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, as analysed by Russell (2004: 504-5), said that life in a world where there was unlimited competition between individuals (he called it the war of all against all) would be 'nasty, brutish and short'. Hobbes and his contemporaries proposed a variety of means of founding a binding social contract that would optimise co-operation between people. Their solutions vary, but what they all share is a central idea that one's own individual interests are best and most rationally met by serving the interests of the groups we belong to. So, do we now have a good case to make for careers practice that focuses on social justice, rationality, agency and freedom?

## Different questions, different answers?

Implicit in most careers activity is a question:

- What should or could I do in my career?

I don't want to dismiss this question – it is important. But I want to suggest some more questions that could



lie behind that first question, ones that will often emerge in careers consultations and workshops:

- What sort of world do I want to live in?
- How could I contribute to bringing that about?
- How can I use my skills and knowledge for the benefit of others?
- How can I learn to collaborate effectively for my own and others benefit?

What might consideration of all these factors mean for our practice? How would it change? The careers landscape offers some tempting opportunities. Charities such as 80,000 Hours take this exact view, showing their clients how to have a career that benefits others. Another organisation, Effective Altruism, offers something allied, in using a base of academic research to look at how altruism can be practised effectively. Small consultancy firms such as Koreo, with a mission to promote social justice as the core of its work, are appearing in the same space. The United Kingdom has a strong social enterprise sector employing almost one and a half million people with 78% of these enterprises planning to grow (DDsCMS and BEIS:2017). These enterprises have social benefits as an essential feature. It seems the more you look, the more examples you are likely to find of career opportunities that meet the kind of moral requirements this paper is arguing for.

The mission of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) (1995) is explicitly about social justice and Tristram Hooley (2017) has challenged neo-liberalism in careers work, arguing for alternative perspectives on 'good'. A career in corporate social responsibility is now commonplace with some very large, profit driven organisations.

As facilitators and advisers, we could strongly articulate and promote the benefits of collaboration and show how to get the most from it, rather like the university departments that support entrepreneurs, which tend to take much more of a team approach. Maybe we need to be even more explicit and set up teams of students who plan their careers in collaboration and work together for several years for each other's benefit, with formal training in peer mentoring. Our classroom workshops could be more overtly planned and delivered on the basis

of collaboration and aim to help participants plan to deliver social justice in their careers. Perhaps our online help sheets and resources need to start including and more actively promoting the many organisations and opportunities of this kind.

This development in practice would favour even more emphasis on values and self-awareness than there is already in all our work, starting from Socrates with his demand to examine our lives and returning (in a modified way) to Aristotle, teaching that development of oneself is only rational, worthwhile and meaningful in service of the good of one's community, restoring at least some of the losses and disasters identified by MacIntyre.

However, we have seen the difficulties associated with attempting to revive Aristotelian virtue ethics even though this has been helpful to the analysis. A strict set of inflexible duties as a guiding framework has also been rejected because of its inability to deal comfortably with exceptions. What remains is a form of utilitarianism that retains the value of student outcomes as a way of judging good but in a way that promotes social justice. This in turn depends on our valuing rationality and freedom in the way that Socrates did, exercising this in constant reflection on our work. Combining this with Hobbes' claim that our interests are most rationally served by serving our community we will have a compelling argument for our careers practise expanding our interest in and commitment to social justice.



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## For correspondence

Donald Lush, Careers Consultant  
King's College London/The Careers Group -  
University of London

[donald.lush@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:donald.lush@kcl.ac.uk)

# Do parents of intending 'first generation' students in higher education differ in their need for school support to help their child's career development?

Annemarie Oomen

**About** 40% of the first-year enrolment in Dutch higher education (HE) are 'first-generation' HE students. Career education and guidance (CEG) can make a difference for their parents who have not experienced HE themselves. This article reports on the outcomes of a research project which explores the impacts of a school-initiated career intervention for parents, both those with and without HE qualifications. The results for parents without HE qualifications showed different patterns in their knowledge, self-efficacy and role definition.



## Introduction

Participation in Dutch HE has grown in recent decades. In 2012, 34.4% of 25-64-year-olds were tertiary-educated compared with 30.8% in 2000 (OECD, 2015: 34). In 2013, the Netherlands surpassed the European benchmark of 40% of tertiary graduates in the 30-40 age bracket with 43.1% (European Commission, 2014: 2) which was forecast to rise to 45% in 2020 (Neth-ER, 2013).

Around 40% of those entering HE are 'first-generation', defined as 'a student with neither parent having HE' (Van den Broek *et al.*, 2016: 48 and 3). These students find it harder to talk about their study with their parent(s) and experience less support than those whose parents have attended HE (Nooijens, Rietdijk and Wijngaarden-de Meij, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). This finding raises the question as to whether the parents

of 'first-generation' HE students need more or different support in CEG from their child's secondary school in comparison with parents who have attained HE qualifications. CEG can play a specific role for 'first-generation' HE students and their parents in compensating for the lack of knowledge, skills and network contacts (Sweet and Watts, 2006).

Around the world, schools provide general, non-personalised, information-centred career interventions targeted at parents. It is less common for schools to provide career interventions that go beyond informing or which involve parents and/or communities (Oomen, 2016).

## The career intervention

In 2012, I led a research and development project, funded by the Ministry of Education, to involve parents in CEG in six Dutch senior general secondary schools (HAVO). Pairs of parent(s) and child volunteered for four successive monthly sessions (ten hours in total), which took place in the school after classes, between September and December. Three schools delivered the intervention in the third year ( $n = 92$ ) while preparing 14-16-year-olds for subject choices. The other three schools delivered the intervention in the fifth and final year ( $n = 83$ ) while preparing 16-18-year-olds to choose HE options.

Based on a needs assessment among parents, objectives were set for the career intervention which aimed to support parents to facilitate their children's career building by helping them to be (A) up-to-date

*Do parents of intending 'first generation' students in higher education differ...*

and well-informed about educational possibilities and their financial consequences, the labour market and the use of information resources; and (B) able to make considered career decisions with their child.

Table 1 provides an overview of the programme designed together with the career teachers of the six schools who delivered it with the support of tutors, teachers and heads of department.

The programme was designed as a learning activity for parents interacting with their child. Its pedagogy involved engaging participants actively in contributing

to the learning experience, and ensuring 'relevance' by providing participants with the opportunity to use and apply their insights 'on the spot' (Kirkpatrick Partners, 2009, 2015). Small group discussion alternated with selected plenary sharing of experiences and with opportunities for parents to work directly with their child. The physical presence of both parent(s) and the child facilitated family-learning. Parents as well as senior students from upper secondary and first-year HE alumni students served as role-models. These multiple resources, reflecting the diverse nature of the wider school-community, 'realised' community-interaction (Law, 1981).

**Table 1: Overview of the career intervention's programme**

Session	Focus
1	How the needs analysis outcomes have informed the design of the sessions; The role(s) parents perceive for school staff in CEG and vice versa; The school's aim and activities in CEG in general and this year; Do's and don'ts for parents in talking with their child and practising simple steps to initiate a conversation.
2	The non-linear nature of career development; Speed dating activity with parent answering the questions of students about their career development; Exploring in-depth the child's strengths and interests; Reliable tests and how to discuss test results.
3	Dilemmas in career choice making; Current information: upcoming choices, trends in HE enrolment/access; Experience-sharing by older students about career-decision-making; Comparing and using career exploration websites.
4	Study costs and (financial) issues related to HE study; Provisional study choices by students; Drafting a plan of follow-up steps.



## Methodology

The opportunity sample consisted of parents, with differing HE level attainment (Table 3), who voluntarily registered to take part with their child.

Quantitative data were collected through an on-line questionnaire before (June 2012), immediately after (January 2013) and six months after the career intervention (June 2013), measuring the same concepts across time (Table 2). Respondents were asked how far they agreed with the items using a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 259 respondents from the third year took part and 213 respondents from the fifth year.

**Table 2: Sample items in questionnaire**

Concepts	No. of items	Example of item
Information level	five	'Currently, I understand my child's perspective on the labour market sufficiently.'
Information needs	five	'Currently, I need information on personal support in the career orientation of my child.'
information self-efficacy	four	'In the spring, I will be sufficiently able to work with my child on a considered cluster/HE course choice.'
Guidance and support needs	six	'Currently, I need support in stimulating my child to think about educational, vocational and career choices.'
Guidance and support self-efficacy	six	'In the spring, I will be sufficiently able to perform career interviews with my child.'
Parental role definition	five	'I stimulate my child to think about his/her own future.'
Parental statements	four	'I would steer my child to other thoughts if I dislike a cluster, study or profession'

Quantitative analyses were carried out using the Mann-Whitney test to investigate whether there was a discernible difference in each of the third and fifth years between each of the three measurements, with hypotheses related to the career intervention's objectives (A) and (B) above. To understand whether the impact of the career intervention differed for 'first-generation' HE parents, the responses were analysed by groups of parents involved in the career intervention (i) who had both attained HE qualifications ('both HE'), compared to parents (ii) where one of each ('one HE') or (iii) none of the

parents had attained HE qualifications ('no HE'). For this, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied.

Semi-structured interviews with 27 parents took place immediately after the career intervention and six months later. These were recorded, transcribed and analysed with a grounded theory approach: manual coding, categories/thematic analysis, pattern identification, followed by interpretation.

One year after the career intervention (January 2013), an evaluative, on-line questionnaire with open

questions was filled out by 79 respondents: 49 from the third year and 30 from the fifth year.

## Results

Parents involved in the career intervention improved their capacity to support their child's career development in the areas of broader knowledge of present and future possibilities, more self-confidence in being able to provide help and support to their child which pointed to enhanced parental self-efficacy (cf. Bandura, 1986) and a better understanding of their parental role. A stronger parent-child bond was reported one year later as well as lasting behavioural outcomes for the parents. Parents were coaching their child and encouraging and appreciating their child's own initiative.

Involved parents for the third and fifth year – at intervention and post-intervention – showed different HE qualification attainments levels (Table 3).

**Table 3: Involved parent's HE qualification attainment in third and fifth year**

	Total	Both HE		One HE		No HE	
	n	n	%	n	%	n	%
Third year	115	60	52.2	35	30.4	20	17.4
Fifth year	95	23	24.2	30	31.6	42	44.2

### Both HE

The impact of the career intervention showed up least with 'both HE' parents. Only the third-year parents increased their information level and decreased their information, guidance and support needs. In both years, their self-efficacy in knowing enough, providing guidance and support to their child's career development did not change: it was there all the time. The career intervention made the difference in that the third-year parents had 'a boost' in their information level, and all 'both HE' parents' raised their 'awareness of the strengths and weaknesses' of their child.

### One HE

'One HE' parents experienced an increase in their levels of information, a decrease in their information, guidance and support needs and increased their self-efficacy in making use of information, guidance and support tools to help in their child's career development. Fifth-year parents also were less likely to want to 'steer' their children's career. However, 'one HE' third-year parents showed a fluctuating parental self-efficacy. After the career intervention, they felt more able to make use of information, guidance and support tools, but six months later, compared to their rating immediately after the career intervention, they felt significantly less confident in their knowledge and ability to support their child's career development. These parents may have become less sure following the actual cluster choice making which took place a few months after the career intervention.

### No HE

The parents of 'first-generation' HE students in both years increased their information level, yet with differing patterns. In contrast with third-year parents, fifth-year parents decreased their information, guidance and support needs and increased their knowledge and ability to support their child. They also gained confidence in themselves and in their child, the latter not being there before the career-intervention.

The importance of this finding is that the nature of parental involvement that is most beneficial to their child is expressing confidence, providing guidance and supporting autonomy (Carter, 2002: 3), which leads to the development of self-directed career exploration by students (Bryant, Zvonkovic and Reynolds, 2006).

The needs of 'no HE' third-year parents in both information as well as guidance and support, persisted and the evidence points to the likelihood that these parents still felt that they did not 'have' all the information, skills or tools that they perceived they needed to help their child or to make an informed decision with their child.

### Parental role perception

No differences were found for any of the groups across the three measurements relating to role definition, i.e. parents' beliefs about what they are

supposed to do and their behaviour that follow those beliefs in relation to their children's career development. 'Role definitions are complexly shaped by family and cultural experiences...Subcultural differences (in terms of socio-economic class) are also evident' (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 46).

Differences in perspectives of the three groups on role perception showed on the parental statements. After being involved in the career intervention, 'one HE' third-year parents showed a decline in their support of the statement 'I would steer my child to other thoughts if I dislike a cluster, study or profession', revealing a rethinking of their view on influencing their child, while 'one HE' fifth-year parents increased their self-confidence: 'I am sufficiently able to support my child in his or her cluster/study choice'.

The parental statement showing the most significant differences was 'I am aware what are the strengths and weaknesses of my child' among two groups, six months after the career intervention. 'Both HE' parents showed a medium to large increase in their support of this statement, while 'no HE' fifth-year parents showed a medium increase.

The differences on the parental statements found before the career intervention between parents of 'first-generation' HE students are remarkable when compared to parents who were 'both HE qualified', supporting the previously mentioned finding of subcultural differences in parental role definition.



## Differences of group on value

Differences between the three groups on value are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Significant differences of group on value**

Both HE	One HE	No HE
		<b>Pre-intervention</b>
		Third-year parents showed a lower mean rank ( $r=.20^*$ ) compared with 'both HE' for the statement 'I am aware what are the strengths and weaknesses of my child'.
		Fifth-year parents showed a lower mean rank ( $r=.23^*$ ) compared with 'both HE' for the statement 'I wonder sometimes if my child has enough general knowledge and experience to make an appropriate cluster/study selection'.
	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
	Fifth-year parents showed a lower mean rank in guidance and support needs ( $r=.36^{**}$ ) compared to 'no HE' parents.	Third-year parents showed a higher mean rank ( $r=.31^{**}$ ) in information needs compared to 'both HE'.
		Third-year parents showed a lower mean rank in self-efficacy in knowing enough compared to 'one HE' ( $r=.33^*$ ).
	<b>Six months after intervention</b>	
		Third-year parents showed a lower mean rank in self-efficacy in knowing enough compared to 'both HE' ( $r=.40^*$ ).

\* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$

## Discussion and conclusions

The educational level of parents/mothers has been found to influence the extent of parental involvement in general (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 3). But having attained HE qualifications themselves seems not only to influence whether or not parents are involved in this career intervention, but also when they are involved. The imbalance in 'no HE' parents' participation in the career intervention in the third versus fifth year points (Table 3) to the likelihood of these parents not being aware of the consequences of early educational choices on their child's career development.

The impact of the career intervention differed for cases where both, one or none of the parents were HE qualified. The evidence also points to the likelihood that class or cultural differences existed between groups of parents as shown in Table 4

The pattern of persistent information, guidance and support needs after being involved as 'one HE' or 'no HE' third-year parents is remarkable. It resembles findings in the Australian 'Parents as Career Transition Supports Programme', involving about a similar group of cases, and after which 32% of the participants involved still felt they did not know enough to help their child and 16% were not sure (Bedson and Perkins, 2006: 16). Similarly, the parents in my research also indicated that they enjoyed the sessions and that following them they knew much more and were better able to talk with their child.

These findings are consistent with wider research on educational inequalities explained by secondary effects of social origin. Secondary effects relate to parents' and students' educational decisions made in secondary education (Boudon, 1974). These are found differing across socio-economic status (SES) groups for which Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) proposed their Relative Risk Aversion theory, which Morgan (2005) combined with time-discounting preferences (i.e. horizon in making educational choices). Children from advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds make, on average, more ambitious educational choices. They aim to go on to HE, especially if their parents did so, even if their actual educational attainment is modest and there is a risk of failure in HE. They tend to end up with higher levels

of attainment, but they and their parents tend also to look at the whole future educational and work-career that follows.

In contrast, children with the same level of school attainment but from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds will be less motivated to take such risks. Short-term motivations and current academic performance dominate their educational choices. These students and their parents are more averse to choosing an academically challenging track, tend to over-estimate what is required, and so may not pursue quite realistic goals (Goldthorpe, 2010: 10). Students' high time-discount rate (i.e. short-term horizon) is due to the pressure on students to leave school relatively early to contribute to family income or own earnings, related to the lower levels of economic resources in their families. Students from higher SES origin are less affected by risk aversion, due to a lower time-discount rate, i.e. a longer-term horizon (Breen, Van de Werfhorst and Jaeger, 2014: 266). These secondary effects are strong in the transition from Dutch secondary to HE, explaining for 81% to 94% the HE choice (Büchner and Van der Velden, 2013: 104).

If accepting this explanation for the patterns observed among third-year parents of whom one of each or neither attained HE qualifications, schools are advised to consider the following:

- To involve parents in CEG as early as possible. Third-year parents have the greatest information, guidance and support needs. The overall impact of the career intervention was higher for third-year parents, who were open to change aspects of their parental role perception, were talking more regularly with their child and were more confident in granting their child autonomy in decision making.
- Specific attention and effort are needed to involve 'one HE' or 'no HE' parents, as they seem less aware of the consequences of early choices in educational planning.
- In the career intervention's programme, the discussion should be opened up on the mechanisms of risk-aversion, time-discounting preferences and exploring related implicit assumptions of parents. Successful local



'models' of (parents of) 'first-generation' HE students could be brought deliberately into the career-intervention. Tutor-student-parents interviews seem necessary for parents where either only one or none attained HE qualifications.

- In the case of a large school population of 'one HE' or 'no HE' parents, a whole-school approach to parental involvement might be a sensible way forward. In contrast to the incidental career intervention in this research, the school should consider developing a comprehensive approach to engaging all staff, parents, students, staff, management and governing board. As Lusse (2013) discovered, the issue of career development appeared to be the most promising for the content of comprehensive parental involvement in secondary schools. She proposed three stages in this strategy: establishing contact; cooperating between school, parents and students; and supporting the career perspective of the student.



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## For correspondence

Annemarie Oomen  
PhD candidate at University of Derby, UK

a.oomen@outlook.com

# Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision-making?

Kathleen Houston and Eileen Cunningham

**The** desire for a career epiphany, a sudden realisation of a future career, can often feature as an unspoken wish in career conversations with students and graduates. This yearning for certainty causes indecisiveness, a fear of making the wrong decision or a 'not yet' conclusion.

In this qualitative research study, students and graduates confirmed themes of meta-indecision, a decision to not make a decision. Advice from graduates, careers advisers and employability academics challenged the need for absolute certainty as a prerequisite for first career decisions. This article argues that students and graduates can break through analysis paralysis and shape 'good enough' career plans.

- Key words: career guidance, decision-making, analysis paralysis, decision heuristics.

## Introduction

'What are your future plans? What are you going to do after graduation?' These are the questions I am getting asked and trying to avoid in almost every conversation with an older person. I would answer those questions immediately, if only I knew the answer. The problem is – I am lost. I have a feeling of what I would like from my future, but I am just afraid of choosing the wrong pathway as I am not sure what really would make me happy.

– Justina, third year undergraduate student

Career decision-making is the focus of many a career guidance conversation in higher education. Career guidance professionals and tutors engage in lengthy and uneasy interactions with some students,

undergraduate and postgraduate, who find the decision about the first study to work transition (the first job role after graduation) disquieting. This disquiet, typified by the above quote and characterised by variations of angst, uncertainty or procrastination, may be a feature of a normal life transition or a symptom of unwillingness to be a 'career decider'.

This quest for certainty can pose a challenge, not only for individuals but also for university careers services under pressure to demonstrate 'employability' by focusing on career planning and the all-important first destination (Christie 2017). Graduates may also feel pressure from peers and family to settle into a career quickly (YouGov 2017). A fast-changing economic and political environment and the rise in levels of student debt can influence the decision-making landscape, where security and certainty are the perceived desirable endpoints of the university experience.

In the experience of the researchers (as career guidance professionals and employability lecturers) it seems that some students and graduates are stuck, waiting for a career epiphany, a 'knowing moment', which precedes a definitive career decision. A desire to help those in this predicament is the motivation for this investigation.

## Some key concepts in career thinking

The designation 'career epiphany' is a term that seems to resonate with many people and features in Twitter key word searches. The concept of an epiphany with its religious connotation suggests a knowing and a showing, a sudden change of perception that is life changing. It may relate to the desire for a 'lightbulb' or 'eureka' moment of certainty with regard to a career decision – a moment that may, or may not arrive.

## *Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision-making?*

The term ‘career decider’ is introduced here as a shorthand description for a student or graduate at the point of entry to the graduate job market (including first job, portfolio or self-employment roles), faced with a decisional tipping point.

‘Career thinking’ is more specific than theories of occupational choice, which attempt to explain how people choose a career. ‘Career thinking’ as a term within this research is proposed as a way of focusing on the decisional balances and heuristics that support effective and timely career decisions.

### Background and literature regarding career decidedness

The subject of career decisions has been a key area of research within career studies. The broader context of career learning and occupational choice theories such as the DOTS model (Law and Watts 1997, 1996), planned happenstance (Mitchell 2003), and the focus on career decision-making within career guidance (Bimrose and Barnes 2007) are valuable entry points to the subject of career decisions. Decision-making styles such as ‘rational, intuitive or dependent’ (Harren 1979) or ‘aspirational, evaluative, strategic and opportunist’ (Bimrose and Barnes 2007) also offer useful paradigms for understanding patterns and strategies. However, the precise tipping point at which career decisions are made and how best to facilitate this is still often unclear.

Importantly, being a ‘career decider’ relates to the commitment, clarity or certainty with regard to career direction, signifying the decision point, not just the process of arriving at a decision (Restubog, Fiorentino and Garcia 2010; Fearon, Nachmias, McLaughlin and Jackson 2016, Artess 2018). This does not imply a once and for all decision but rather a willingness to make rather than defer decisions. This is congruent with the ‘life design’ model (Savickas 2009), whereby people continually construct their own careers. Career-decidedness may be considered a desirable attribute of self-direction for graduates within the protean, boundary-less career orientation (Hall 2004; Arnold 2016) with graduate recruiters favouring those who have demonstrated focus through specific work experience and internships (High Fliers 2017).

In trying to understand decision-making (or the lack thereof) social cognition theory offers us some useful insights. Examples include decision biases (Kahneman 2011), overthinking, ‘analysis paralysis’ (Kane 2015), ‘choosing not to choose’ (Sunstein 2015) and maximising/satisficing preferences (Simon 1965 in Kane 2015). ‘Maximising’ is when someone seeks to know everything prior to making a decision and ‘satisficing’ means deciding to find out just enough to reach a decision point. As Schwartz (2004:79) maintains: ‘the best people can do, all things considered, is to satisfice’.

An interesting alternative is the concept of the ‘cognitive miser’ (Fiske and Taylor 1984). It describes a mind state of decisional fatigue, which prevents a person from thinking. In practice decision-making may be characterised by simple heuristics (quick short cuts that help a person make a decision in the midst of uncertainty), or by anchoring heuristics, where someone is overly biased towards one piece of information. Festinger’s (1957) notion of ‘cognitive dissonance’ suggests that holding contradictory thoughts or beliefs (e.g. internal expectations of life and information about the external reality) causes stress and mental discomfort until it is resolved. Each of these explanations resonated with researchers’ experience of career discussions with students and graduates.

### The research

Intrigued by this concept of a ‘career epiphany’, the researchers wondered whether a yearning for a career epiphany might act as a block to balanced and purposeful career decision thinking. This research explores the experiences of students, graduates and career guidance professionals engaging in these important first career transitions. The purpose and value of the research is to open up debate about how best to support career deciders and careers professionals in navigating this life transition and to identify practical advice and strategies.

### Methods

This is an initial scoping exercise based on a qualitative, interpretative practitioner enquiry approach. A broadly phenomenological approach was chosen (Van Manen 2014) as being appropriate to the topic and the experiences of the researchers. Phenomenological

research seeks to illuminate and understand lived experience and is concerned with a 'focus on peoples' perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them' (Langdridge 2007: 4).

A sampling of undergraduate and postgraduate students and graduates provided data for some initial judgments. Survey activity (36 survey forms returned by a mix of postgraduate doctoral researchers and undergraduate students) and individual short interviews (eight interviews) with graduates, using pre-determined questions (see Figure 2) resulted in a reasonable data set for qualitative analysis. The selection of participants was purposive, drawn from those encountered by the researchers in their ancillary job roles as career coaches and employability lecturers. All participants were assured of anonymity and pseudonyms were used to denote individual comments. Informed consent was obtained.

As an addition to these traditional methods, social media channels were utilised to expand the scope. These involved a simplistic Doodle poll for students to complete, a LinkedIn posting seeking the views of careers professionals and a series of tweets to generate a wider range of comments. Examples of the survey statements and the interview questions are found in figures 1 and 2.

## 1. The survey

Students were asked to consider 18 statements which were representative of typical statements presented to careers advisers by students seeking career guidance. While they seem to be leading, this was justified as reasonable so that respondents could be definitive on a binary 'Agree' or 'Disagree' decision. There was an option to add their own statements.

### Figure 1 - Example statements

- I am hoping I will work out what I want to do by the time I graduate.
- I'll decide when I have to.
- I want to suddenly realise what is right for me.

## 2. The interviews

The interview questions were formulated to explore the lived experiences of students and graduates, their

cognitive and emotional responses, how they see themselves, the world and the future.

### Figure 2 - Interview questions

- What does 'career' mean to you?
- What **don't** you want career-wise?
- How would you know that a career or job role was right for you?
- What amount of certainty do you need before you would make a career choice decision?
- What decision-making process do you favour?
- What would help you to make your first career move or decision?

## Preliminary findings

### Decision paralysis and analysis paralysis

Thematic analysis of responses allowed for a focus on the most frequent and strongest themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). The interviews and survey responses indicated a range of narrative threads, which suggested that students were not only choosing not to choose (Sunstein 2015) but deciding not to decide. For example, one graduate emphasised the fear of making a wrong decision as a decision barrier.

I have always taken career planning as a heavy decision which determines my lifestyle choices in future years. – Jackson, third year student

Deferring a decision indefinitely forestalls an imperfect decision. It was clear that some students demanded an impossible degree of certainty before they could decide to decide. Supplementary to this view, it became apparent that despite some awareness of the out datedness of the 'one life one career' model, students still viewed the first career choice after graduation as an abiding and perpetual influence on their whole life.

Career plans have been an area of conflict for me as the career I choose will likely influence the rest of my life. – Fred, third year student

A further theme, from survey responses particularly, suggested that some students favoured a 'maximising'

## Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision-making?

approach (Simon 1956, quoted in Kane 2015; Schwartz 2002) examining every option before making a decision, thus inadvertently delaying the decision and potentially over-analysing every potential career role. This over-thinking approach sometimes resulted in an unintentional avoidance strategy. The maximiser or ‘cognitive optimizer’ (Brockman 2013:39) approach is related to the rational decision-making model that extols the value of thorough research, considering all information and seeking the ‘optimal choice’ (Brockman 2013:39).

While this seems sensible, Fiske (1993) suggests that thinking too hard tests our cognitive capacity and reduces our ability to make a decision, playing to a ‘cognitive miser’ tendency. Gigerenzer (2001) recommends ‘smart heuristics’, what Brockman (2013:40) refers to as ‘fast and frugal decision-making’, on the basis that there is often not enough information available to pick the optimal solution after rational weighing up. This smart decision-making works on the ‘satisficing’ construct (Simon 1956, quoted in Kane 2015) and may also rely on a more intuitive preference for making decisions (Greenbank 2017:276). Fiske (1993) warns against these ‘cognitive shortcuts’ while accepting that this is necessarily a kind of ‘cognitive coping’.

Interestingly, a number of commentators argue that delaying or deferring a decision results in a kind of fixed hesitation mind-set that makes it likely no decision will be made (Ibarra 2002; Sunstein 2015). This also relates to the contemplation mode of Prochaska and DiClemente’s spiral model of change (2000:49). In the contemplation phase of the cycle, an individual may be aware of a problem (a career decision problem) but have no commitment to taking any action about this. There seems to be a curious, self-deluding comfort in this contemplation mode if it is, in fact, not a precursor to action. Within this view, a career decider needs to be supported and encouraged to move into the preparation phase (of the model of change), where there is an intent to take action.

### Career epiphany

There were two survey statements which received very strong agreement amongst students and graduates. Both supported the phenomena of waiting

for a career epiphany. This notion of a career epiphany indicates a perceived expectation by some students and graduates that they will ‘realise’ suddenly what should be the ‘right’ career direction, often without much conscious effort.

Overwhelmingly, a majority agreed with the statement:

*I want to suddenly realise what is best for me.*

Similarly, a further consistency in ‘agree’ statements was:

*I’d be much happier if I could make a career decision.*

It is evident these students recognise the need for a decision point. If in fact these students are maximisers, it might suggest that having too many career ideas can be a kind of entrapment. Ibarra (2002) suggests that ‘being stuck’ is partly about the need to know everything before taking action; she recommends action as a precursor to knowing. Students could test out career ideas, rather than just thinking about them, as a way of understanding their own preferences more completely.

From initial conversations with careers professionals, this yearning for clarity presented itself frequently in career guidance interactions as a need to ‘know’, almost instinctively, what the best career choice should be. Further interviews with careers advisers confirmed that this expectation was common and frequently an obstacle to decision-making and clear career thinking.

### Values based decision-making

Finally, a theme emerged around career decision-making, which suggested that many participants realised the importance of their values: *I want to find a way to create a career/job pattern that fits with my values and motivation.*

This statement received the most agreement across the different cohorts and year groups. Personal values are a well-regarded predictor of career motivation (Gibbs and Griffin 2013; Rokeach 1973; Fearon et al 2016) that fit with the need for a self-directed decision-making approach. Greenbank (2017:276) discusses the influence of student values on decision-making, noting that ‘students demonstrated a preference for making intuitive decisions based on informally absorbed information (rather than research)

and a 'feel' for the right decision'. Additionally, there is a suggestion in this statement of a desire for a more fluid work pattern, one which fits with Savickas' (2009) 'life design' idea of career planning. This makes it even more relevant in terms of a values-driven approach.

## Career misery push and the lure of the dream job

Interviews with graduates offered valuable insight into how career choices are activated and how self-directed careers are shaped. It became evident that being in the wrong job (a first career choice) acted as a prompt towards a better second choice. This 'career misery push', a term that seemed to encapsulate a commonly expressed unhappiness caused by a career false start after graduation, was significant in driving motivation to seek a better career role and make a more effective decision.

Doing the wrong job acted as a catalyst and helped me know what I didn't want and helped me realise what I did want to do.

– Miles, graduate

If cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) is a drive for consistency in terms of what motivates an individual, then it is possible that career misery acts as an activator of massive dissonance, which in its turn causes enough disequilibrium to 'push' the person to take control and be a more active, purposeful career decider.

Other graduates claimed that developing an awareness of their own core values within a first role, drove them towards a better second career choice. This was particularly emphasised by Maria who believed she had achieved her 'dream job' in her first career role. She was surprised to realise that she wanted more fulfilment than this initial role offered. She consequently identified her criteria for a meaningful career life based on her own developed self-knowledge:

Hitting that point of realising what you want to do, surrounded by smart people...interested and engaged.

– Maria, graduate

As a result, Maria was able to seek out a work role in a proactive way, one that matched her values and strengths. This supports the idea of decisional balance

(Miller 2015) where the individual acknowledges and weighs up the criteria that matter most to them, in terms of a fulfilling career. Notably the recognition of a point, the tipping point, which prompts a realisation was evident in this graduate interview. Similarly, other graduate interviewees affirmed that self-knowing plus curiosity and proactivity were the characteristics they relied upon, to inform and support their own career decidedness.

## Implications for practice

### Recommendations from graduates

Graduates who had successfully navigated the early career rapids, the successful career deciders, shared their advice for effective career decision-making. They offered some extremely insightful suggestions.

'Look as much as you can' and 'Find out all the different things you can do – use this process as a good kind of procrastination' (Harriet), a version of the maximising approach.

Nathaniel suggests 'An hour with someone to discuss ideas, to gain confidence to follow own instincts and be given the tools to work it out for themselves'

Sofia recommends – 'Research, lots of research'.

Overall, the graduates commended thorough exploration of career paths driven by attention to personal values; an action orientation in terms of testing out job roles; and a willingness to see a first career decision as not binding in terms of future career plans.

### Recommendations from career professionals

Career professionals recognised that the expectation of a career epiphany or sudden realisation was a common aspiration. The passivity characteristic of this enticingly aspirational state was agreed to be disadvantageous. They endorsed the view that many students are not ready to make a career decision, some being vague, in a panic or avoiding contact with career guidance professionals. Procrastination and delay in terms of career thinking were more common than any kind of certainty.

## Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision-making?

Professionals supported the ideas that values-based activities can develop the required self-knowledge and that time needs to be allocated for practical research into career paths involving internships, work shadowing, networking and active ‘prospecting’ for career ideas. They believed it was important to challenge the idea of a ‘forever career choice’ or the concept of one perfect job for each person. One careers adviser, Agnethe, suggests ‘values are the best indicator of career preference. Doing a values inventory raises awareness of what is needed for a career choice.’

### Conclusions

There is a timeliness to the topic of career decidedness in higher education. The new ‘Longitudinal Education Outcomes’ (LEO) to be introduced in 2018 recognises that postgraduate career transitions are longer and more complex than in the past (HESA 2017). The Career Decidedness Survey (Figure 3) designed by The Careers Group, University of London is being used as part of registration in many universities. The survey assesses where students are on the Decide/Plan/Compete/Sorted spectrum (Gilworth

2016) and raises the profile of career decidedness as an important component of employability learning. Interestingly, a consortium of 16 HE careers services have recently found that over 40% of students entering their final year are still ‘deciding’ (Winter 2018).

This research has identified and clarified some useful concepts (career thinking, career decider, career misery push and career epiphany) which may resonate with practitioners, helping them to identify the pitfalls of procrastination and develop practical strategies to tackle it. Based on this investigation, the notion of a career epiphany aspiration was supported as a phenomenon. While an appealing concept, it would seem that waiting for an epiphany could delay career decisions. Recognising this decisional paralysis and its disadvantages can spark an action-oriented process of exploration.

Career professionals can play a part in encouraging a multi-faceted approach to deciding that combines research with rational and intuitive activity allowing for a ‘satisficing’ decision. Helping students and graduates to understand decisional balance approaches can encourage balanced career thinking and galvanise purposeful action. Introducing tools such as values

**Figure 3 – Career Decidedness survey** (The Careers Group, University of London 2016)

## Career Decidedness (CD)

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Readiness to engage with career management -  
Decide, Plan, Compete

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*Please select the statement which best represents your current careers position:*

- I am not ready to start thinking about my career yet (Decide)**
- I have no career ideas yet but want to start thinking (Decide)**
- I have some ideas about my career & am ready to start planning (Decide)**
- I have a career in mind & intend to gain relevant work experience (Plan)**
- I know what I want to do but not sure how to get there (Plan)**
- I want to spend a year gaining experience (Plan)**
- I am ready to apply for graduate level / professional opportunities (Complete)
- I am ready to apply for further study (Complete)
- I have been applying for opportunities & have not been successful (Complete)
- I have a job, further study or my own business plan confirmed (Other)



tests, career anchors (Schein 1990), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005) and Seligman's signature strengths tests (2017) can enhance self- and career-knowing that can lead to purposeful testing out of career paths. Encouraging such a proactive career thinking approach has the potential to trigger career realisations that lead to pragmatic decisions.

Identifying the career misery push in graduates allows careers professionals to offer more than sad cautionary tales of underemployed graduates in their guidance; it demonstrates that career knowing or epiphanies can emerge out of the experience of working, even in a less than perfect job. Graduates who yearn for an epiphany can create their own epiphany proactively, rather than wait for it to happen, a strategy or mind-set supported by the planned happenstance approach (Mitchell 2003).

Encouraging students and graduates to be 'choosers' not 'delayers' must be the aim for career professionals. This is in no way intended to encourage a fixed career direction. The career decider must be encouraged to see this as just the first of many decisions for the self-directed and value driven protean or boundary-less career, appropriate for the 21st century job market (Hall 2004; Arnold 2016). It is about helping them to see themselves as the hero in their own career story, engaging in it as a process rather than as a single irreversible event.

Helping people understand what matters most for their career life is a worthy pursuit. Valuable careers guidance can be found in the novel 'The Secret Life of Bees' by Sue Monk Kidd (2001): 'The whole problem with people is...they know what matters, but they don't choose it...the hardest thing on earth is choosing what matters'. (p.147)



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## For correspondence

Kathleen Houston  
Senior Lecturer in Employability and Enterprise

KHouston@uclan.ac.uk

Eileen Cunningham  
Lecturer in Social Policy, Careers Adviser and  
Chartered Occupational Psychologist

e.a.cunningham2@salford.ac.uk

# Career services for international students: comparison of case studies of higher education institutions in Europe

Erik Zeltner

**The** rising number of international students and their successful transition from higher education (HE) into the graduate labour market is a challenge for students but has also become a critical factor for host higher education institutions (HEIs). This development and general lack of quality in careers service provision for internationals raises strategic and service issues. Based on case studies generated from three European HEIs, I provide a contrasting analysis on careers service provision by taking current trends and developments and the views of careers representatives on the expectations of international students into account.



## Introduction

During the increasing progress of globalisation, there has been significant growth in international student numbers<sup>1</sup> in HE. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of international students has more than doubled from 2.1 to 4.5 million (OECD, 2013). The anglophone countries, including the UK, are still preferred destinations. However, other countries have been catching up in recent years. Besides the UK, which has a worldwide market share of 13%, Germany and France, with 6% market share each, have become popular European destinations (i-graduate, 2014).

From the view of international students, the top motive for studying abroad is international recognition

<sup>1</sup> International students are those who have crossed borders for the purpose of study as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

of qualifications. However, other factors, such as financial considerations and starting a career in the country of graduation, have become more important in their decision-making process (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2014). For instance, in Germany, a growing percentage of over 50% stated that they would prefer to develop their careers in Germany after graduation (Ripmeester & Pollock, 2013).

The growing number of internationals who are highly interested in developing international careers is a challenging situation for the students but also for the host countries. For HEIs, it means that the provision of careers services and career and cross-cultural-related learning itself can take on greater significance. The economies of the host countries, including the companies and institutions, are interested in gaining a highly skilled workforce. The government and its policies are driven by diverse interests, economic factors, and political ideologies, which influence the framework conditions of HEIs. For international students, these circumstances have a high influence on entrance conditions into the labour market and their integration, and they affect the opportunities of careers centres and the emphasis of their service provision.

If we review European countries, different trends and conditions that the international students and careers centres must deal with can be identified. In the UK, there is a trend of tightening border restrictions, including relatively complex visa regulations for international graduates, whereas in Germany, regulations for non-European graduates are less complex and offer better chances for integration at first glance.

Besides the visa regulations and labour market restrictions, there are further barriers for a successful integration into the labour market in the country of graduation, such as a lack of foreign language skills, a lack in the careers service provision for international students, etc. In Germany, a lack of German language skills is the most crucial problem for internationals for setting up their careers in Germany but there is also a perceived lack in careers services (Ripmeester & Pollock, 2013). This is also obvious in the UK. Even though the satisfaction of international students with careers services is at a high level, there is also a relatively high level of dissatisfaction (Equality Challenge Unit, 2012).

Obviously, in both countries, there is a need for developing new methods for careers services for international students. Further research results for Germany imply that there is a need for better service promotion and a bilingual service provision (Ripmeester & Pollock, 2013). Therefore, I included the Netherlands in the research where bilingualism of services in HE and in society in general is at a high level.

Other factors that influence the careers provision for HEIs are financial constraints or opportunities which raise the question of how careers services have evolved differently in HE in each country. In the UK, the first careers services were set up in the late nineteenth century (Cambridge University Careers Service, 2002). In Germany and the Netherlands, a minority of careers services were established before 2000, and the majority have been established afterwards (Career Service Netzwerk Deutschland, 2014).

With reference to these environmental conditions and developments, I attempted to gain deeper insight into careers provision for international students in the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany. Based on three case studies conducted in cooperation with three internationally oriented HEIs, I explored the current state of their careers provision and how they support the career development of their international students.

## Research Strategy

To gain more in-depth knowledge of the careers service support for international students, I endeavoured to find one HEI as a cooperation partner

from each of the countries of Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands. My aim was to explore the range of services and to describe the existing services more profoundly. As a second step, I analysed the findings by comparing the results generated from each HEI. Therefore, I chose the research strategy of multiple case study (Yin, 2009).

Using a convenience sampling procedure (Biggam, 2008), I identified HEIs with a high number of international students, including evidence of specialised services. Throughout the acquisition process, I selected three HEIs where interviewees were fully engaged in the careers department and could therefore provide fuller and richer information and views from a similar angle, which made the description, comparison, and contrast easier.

## Data Collection Methods

In terms of triangulation (Denscombe, 2007), I selected three different sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). First, I partly integrated the results of desk research in the initial literature review and used it as a resource for developing the semi-structured interviews. Second, I conducted a content analysis of semi-structured audio-recorded face-to-face interviews with one careers representative from each HEI.<sup>2</sup> Third, I also conducted a content analysis of data from other relevant written sources, such as the web-pages of HEIs and further material taken from brochures, training handbooks, flyers, etc. The opportunity to make use of three different sources enabled me to obtain a fuller picture of the services offered to internationals and put me in the position to write a comparative analysis.

## Analysis and Findings

The analysis encompasses the services that are explicitly offered to international students and how these services are embedded in the overall programme, including the institutional establishment and strategy, followed by marketing of services, environmental trends and developments, expectations of students, and financial aspects and outlook.

<sup>2</sup> Interviewees were representatives of careers centres, and I guaranteed them and their institution full confidentiality and anonymity.

## Institutional Establishment, Services and Strategies

### The UK HEI

About a quarter of the over 30,000 students of a top-ranked UK HEI are internationals. The university has received several awards for careers provision for international students. In 2011 the University Executive invested significantly in the employability services in order to match the growing expectations of graduates for first class career destinations. This led to a rise in staff numbers from 20 to 70 and the department rebranding to become a global, first-tier careers service. Consequently, the careers provision has become highly differentiated with a broad range of functions, such as career guidance, employer relations, work experience, mentoring, and widening participation.

Due to the recognised gap related to cultural differences, UK business life, and a lack of careers services in students' home countries, the role of a designated specialist was established, who operates independently and functions as a connecting link to the five existing faculty teams. The organisational form of the 'hub and spoke' model allows a higher specialisation and a more in-depth careers provision for all students. The international careers specialist does not carry out one-to-one services. However, the careers consultant is responsible for the overall programme offered to international students and carries out workshops dealing with job-seeking strategies, preparing students for recruitment fairs, networking skills, UK business etiquette, and intercultural awareness. A second part of the workshop series is conducted by guest speakers and comprises visa law, applying for internships, job seeking in Asia and China, etc.

Additionally, the careers consultant is supported by the student ambassador team, consisting of nine international PhD students, who are hired for about three hours per week and are trained professionally to support workshop activities, marketing services, and managing the careers club, which is a monthly meeting during the term where career and study issues are discussed in an informal setting. For further international career information and training

opportunities, the HEI offers free access to the website [passportcareer.com](http://passportcareer.com) or the internal virtual learning environment student portal.

### The Dutch HEI

The Dutch HEI was established in the 1970s. Half of its students have international backgrounds, and most of the courses are offered in English. The careers service was founded in 2007, and the team was formed out of a combination of existing psychological counsellors and library support staff. Because of the high percentage of international students and the fact that the careers staff can carry out the services in Dutch and English, there was no extensive need for offering separate services for internationals, although UK careers services functioned as organisational role models.

Similar to the UK HEI, there are two different forms of one-to-one careers sessions. First, there is 'quick careers advice', a 20-minute careers session, followed by the opportunity for in-depth counselling if needed. Each counsellor is responsible for a certain faculty or a range of subjects. Students can also use the online career library, which provides several career links about work and study, video interviews with experienced professionals, country-specific career information and vacancies through the website [goinglobal.com](http://goinglobal.com), and information on the top international companies and organisations via [vault.com](http://vault.com). The contents of the workshops are similar to the UK HEI but are offered in English, Dutch, and German due to the high number of German students.

Student learning and studies are delivered in the light of the so-called problem-based learning approach (PBL), which involves more than simply acquiring knowledge. Students develop their own ways to solve problems or deal with tasks within their studies. The PBL approach is part of the HEI strategy and implemented into the careers service provision.

### The German HEI

The German HEI is a member of TU9, which is an alliance of leading institutes of technology in Germany. More than 15% of the over 40,000 students are internationals. The internationalisation strategy published in 2010 also focuses on the enhancement of the service support and career development for

## *Career services for international students...*

international students and scholars. The centralised careers service, founded in 2007, sees itself as a hub for building the students' capacities in terms of their career and professional development. The strategy includes networking by bringing the labour market on campus. The emphasis of the careers services for international students is strongly focussed on integrating them into the German labour market by strengthening their employability skills. In addition to the central approach, there are some employability advisers working in some of the nine different faculties for certain target groups or special purposes, such as an employability adviser for female students in mechanical engineering or a careers adviser, who is directly placed at the faculty of arts and humanities. More in-depth career-related workshops are offered to students from the Dean's list, which is a list of the 5% of the students with the best study performance in their year of study.

The central careers services consist of three pillars. Soft skills training, application practice and know-how, and network events are on top of the employability agenda. Due to limited human resources, many of the offered services are organised or carried out by external partners like the recruitment fairs, workshop series, and careers week. One-hour one-to-one careers sessions are offered by the central careers service and comprise curriculum vitae and cover letter checks or developing job-search strategies. Other issues, such as financial, psychological, or visa problems might lead to referral and are covered by other internal or external specialists.

Additionally, there is an exclusive service offer for international students. In cooperation with the Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BfA), the national governmental body of job centres in Germany, the careers service offers a programme that is conducted once a year for a group of 30 internationals with good prospects to integrate successfully into the German labour market. The careers service is responsible for its marketing and the pre-selection of students, who must apply for the programme. A final selection is made in cooperation with the BfA. The programme is conducted by external suppliers of the BfA and consists of workshops and one-to-one sessions.

## Marketing

All HEIs use similar channels to market their services, including newsletters, social networks, and hard copies or posters that are distributed on campus. All interviewees responded that word of mouth is most likely one of the most successful methods of marketing services. To raise the attention of internationals, there was a consensus that targeting the local international community, such as the Chinese, can make a difference. If you take these considerations into account, then the international students' ambassador team of the UK HEI could be seen as a role model to market the services to the international student community effectively.

## Environmental Trends and Developments

During the process of tightening border restrictions in the UK, non-European graduates normally must leave the country directly after graduation and, only in some cases, can stay up to six months after graduation. Therefore, other services have become relevant, such as the provision of information for global careers, cooperation with recruiters from the students' home countries, and the offer of more internship opportunities for internationals alongside studies.

The dominating environmental factor of a declining job market in the Netherlands is a challenging situation for those students who are planning to set up their careers in this country. Surprisingly, it does not change the strategy of careers services. This is because of the PBL philosophy of the HEI, which is also part of the counselling approach. In relation to border restrictions, the visa and labour market legislation in the Netherlands is right in the middle of the UK and Germany. Graduates from non-European countries can stay up to one year after graduation to find a job that meets the requirements of a highly skilled migrant or a labour migrant job, and the Dutch language skills of internationals need to be on a sound level, depending on the international level of the hiring company and the regional culture.

Germany has slightly loosened its border restrictions for international graduates. Those graduates affected

by visa restrictions must prove the coverage of their living costs during their further stay in Germany and are then allowed to stay up to 18 months after graduation. The duration offers a better chance to find a qualified job that meets certain requirements for a long-term stay but also offers graduates the chance to gain some more international (work) experience. The political and public discussion in Germany is influenced by the need for certain kinds of qualified professionals, especially for engineers and technical staff. However, there seems to be a gap between this identified need and what most employers expect from graduates. These high expectations comprise perfect German language skills and a German 'habitus', whereas legislation creates opportunities, there are significant challenges of language and cultural gaps. Some workshops deal with these issues such as 'working or applying in Germany' or 'marketing one's own migration background successfully'. The programme of the BfA offers an additional chance for managing the transition process.

Currently, each state offers its international graduates different timeframes for entering the labour market successfully. However, the statements of the interviewees illustrate that even though there are different timeframes in each country international students still must deal with the same kinds of challenges and obstacles, such as a lack of foreign language skills, cultural differences, and prejudices determined by employers.

## Expectations of International Students

Career representatives expressed a variety of different expectations of international students derived from observation:

- Gaining work experience in the host country after graduation;
- Careers advisers are often perceived as recruiters;
- High pressure to succeed in studies is influenced by family expectations and because of a lack in language skills and cultural awareness;

- Career dreams of working as an engineer in Germany are derived from famous brands (e.g., BMW and Audi), the outstanding reputation of German engineering, and the slogan 'Made in Germany'.

The statements above demonstrate the different expectations and experiences of international and national students in terms of receiving careers services and their career planning during studies and after graduation. Most international students of the HEIs are highly interested in gaining work experience in the host country after graduation. The statements regarding the last three bullet points have been more often observed in relation to non-European students.

The challenge for the careers services is to deal with these expectations effectively by explaining to students what they can deliver and what is not included in the services and in providing a shift in the career planning by raising the international students' awareness of global careers and opportunities for a successful re-integration into their home country.

## Financial Aspects and Outlook

The budget for international careers services of the UK HEI is part of the departmental budget and is centrally funded. There is a strong commitment for carrying out careers services, especially for international students. Career-related workshops are for free, which is different to the Dutch and German HEIs, where students must pay low fees. The Dutch careers services are also centrally financed. This has not always been the case. At the beginning, services finances were decentralised through faculties, but it has turned out that the existing structure of today is appropriate for delivering these services more effectively. The careers provision of the German HEI is financed in several ways. There is the centrally funded careers service but some faculties make use of the option to offer more specialised services, which are financed through the respective faculties. Finally, there is the BfA programme for internationals, which is externally funded by the German government.

In terms of plans for future services, interviewees mentioned the following initiatives and directions:

- UK HEI - stronger global and international focus, including strategic cooperation with international recruiters from overseas and expansion of UK internship opportunities alongside studies;
- Dutch HEI - closer collaboration with faculties, integration of career content into curricula, and targeting students at an earlier stage of their studies;
- German HEI - expansion and strengthening of centralised services to satisfy high demand for one-to-one sessions and workshops as well as hiring a careers specialist for international issues.

The given financial opportunities align with the current developmental state of each HEI. The internal structures and procedures of the careers services of the UK HEI are on the highest institutional level; therefore, the current focus is on developing and creating external relations, partnerships, and opportunities for internationals in the UK and overseas. The Dutch HEI has also finished the internal development of its structures for delivering its services to international students, whereas the German HEI has the biggest potential and is on the way to developing more on-site services for their international students.

## Conclusions

The different expectations of international students regarding their own careers and the careers service provision are challenging and require a customised careers service and proper marketing, especially for those who are coming from different continents. The three cases illustrate highly developed career service programmes for students and international students in their countries. My interview partners have clarified potential gaps, needs, and plans for future activities and development of the careers services for international students.

Because careers services at each HEI are exposed to completely different environmental conditions regarding the design of course programmes, the labour market, visa legislations, financial means, cultural differences, or evolution of careers services itself, it is of great value to compare the services

for professionals to gain deeper insight into how contextual factors have an effect on careers service provision and how careers centres have successfully been setting up their services. Consequently, a contrasting analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the different systems widens horizons, leads to new insight regarding awareness, ideas, and opportunities for careers provision, and raises critical issues for discussion.

For instance, the question arises regarding under what circumstances an implementation of a dedicated careers specialist for international students can bring an advantage to the whole system of any internationally oriented HEI and how this kind of additional service can be carried out successfully. Furthermore, it is of great interest how a mix of proper marketing of careers services and contextual factors, such as the designed course programmes of the German HEI, including compulsory internships for students, lead to an outstanding demand for career-related workshops and one-to-one sessions among students. Other issues arise through a change in environmental conditions and the professional opportunities of international students or graduates regarding potential labour markets because careers staff at HEIs in general and, in particular, at participating HEIs do not always represent the proportion of international student population, and consequently, there is a lack of awareness and skills of current careers staff regarding cross-cultural competencies, including potential links to international recruiters from home countries.



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## For correspondence

Erik Zeltner, Independent Careers Consultant

[erik.zeltner@gmx.at](mailto:erik.zeltner@gmx.at), [www.entre2c.eu](http://www.entre2c.eu)

# 'It all kind of symbolises something doesn't it?' How students present their career image online

Tristram Hooley and Beth Cutts

**I**t has become common to share images of yourself online. There is evidence that employers are using these images as part of selection decisions. This article presents a research project which explored these issues with current undergraduates. It found that students had a clear understanding of what a professional online career image would look like, but that this was not reflected in the images that they shared. However, students were careful and considered in the images that they did share; they just did not want employers looking at them. For careers professionals this situation presents an ethical challenge as to how far we want to curb students' online identities to ensure their employability.



## Introduction

We can share all sorts of information about ourselves online. Many people have enthusiastically embraced this opportunity leaving a substantial digital footprint which includes images. The images of us that are available online are not simple representations of our physical appearance. Each image that we share contains clues about who we are, what we do and what we might be like. Goffman (1959) developed the concept of 'impression management' to describe the way in which people seek to utilise their appearance to influence others to view them favourably. Hooley & Yates (2015) have explored this with specific attention to career development and argued that a strong 'career image' can offer individuals advantages in their career. However, the failure to recognise that career is a context within which our online images might be

consumed can create problems for individuals. Careers professionals might respond to this by warning clients and students of the potential dangers and seeking to improve their digital footprint. But, careers professionals should also be careful about turning themselves into 'image police' and seeking to channel individuals' online sharing of images into a limited (and dull) set of work-related 'personal branding' (Buchanan, 2017).

## Digital footprints

Undergraduate students use social technologies extensively (Piela *et al.*, 2014). The research that has been conducted on what they disclose online has typically looked at risky behaviour, for example using social media to reveal your current location (Chang and Chen, 2014), alcohol use (Shah, Alfonso and Jolani, 2015) and smoking (van Hoof, Bekkers and van Vuuren, 2014). Chang and Chen (2014) argue that students' decisions about self-disclosure are not usually based on a rational consideration of costs and benefits but are rather influenced by the habitus of their peer community. In other words 'if everyone else is doing it, it must be OK'.

This kind of self-disclosure has some implications for students' careers. Woodley and Silvestri (2014) and El Quirdi *et al.* (2015) have both explored this, noting that there are issues that result from students' ability to effectively broadcast information about themselves through social media and employers' willingness to use this information to inform recruitment and employment decisions. Conversely others have highlighted how the careful and purposeful creation of an online personal brand can bring career benefits (Labrecque, Markos and Milne, 2011). Hooley (2012)

has argued that individuals can develop, and be encouraged to develop, the skills which enable them to use the Internet effectively for their careers, including thinking about how they represent themselves online and how they manage this representation over time.

For employers this kind of self-disclosure on social media also poses questions about how information about candidates' wider lives should be used to inform employment decisions (Madia, 2011). There is evidence that the use of social media in recruitment is becoming increasingly popular (Roth *et al.*, 2016), but it is less clear how employers are using information that they gather from online surveillance. Research suggests that online evidence of alcohol consumption, nudity and provocative pictures impact negatively on an individual's overall employability (Betances *et al.*, 2012). However, there is also debate as to whether the use of online information of this type is useful, reliable, relevant and ethical for recruiters (Davison *et al.*, 2012) with some research suggesting that it accentuates gender and racial biases (Van Iddekinge *et al.*, 2016). More critical voices have also urged caution in encouraging individuals to regulate their online self-presentation for fear of what a future employer might think (Buchanan, 2017). There is a danger that such self-regulation limits individuals' freedom of speech, creativity, sexuality, identity and wellbeing in the service of conforming with social norms.

## The Graduate Selfie project

To explore issues of social media use, image sharing and the intersection with career we developed a research project with undergraduate students from a single midlands university to explore this. We recruited nine participants for the study (described here as Students A-I) and talked to them in a semi-structured interview about what photographs were available about them online.

We used the methodology of photo elicitation in the interviews (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation involves using photographs in an interview situation to stimulate discussion. The combination of language and image culminates in a clearer understanding of the participant's ideas. This is ideal for a project about image sharing as it allows participants to demonstrate visually what they mean when they use

descriptive language and generic terms such as 'smart' or 'well-dressed'. During the interview, we asked the participant to enter their name into an Internet search engine. This generally produced several photographs of the participant. After discussing these photographs, we then asked the participant to show us a number of their social media profile pictures. The interviewer asked questions about these photographs and asked participants to identify which of the photographs discussed was the most professional, and why.

We transcribed the interviews verbatim, including copies of the photographs that the participants discussed. We then produced codes from the transcripts manually; we read through the transcripts and highlighted key words or themes that occurred frequently. The process of coding the data helped us to organise the information and assisted us to develop an analysis of the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). We used the respondent's own phraseology as the basis for the codes assigned (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay and Milstein, 1998).

## Being 'professional'

When participants were asked to talk about how they wanted to present themselves for employers they talked about the importance of portraying a 'professional' persona. Participants had specific ideas about what professionalism meant, how a professional person would look and how to convey a professional image in a photograph. Participant H saw appearing professional as a simple process: 'You want to look professional and you want to look neat and tidy, make sure your hair's washed. Just basic things like that, you don't want to look scruffy'. Looking professional involved being clean and presentable and was also generally connected to sombre colours and Western business dress.

Participants' discussions of professional appearance and how this should be performed through the medium of a photograph were consistent. However, as we will go on to argue, this clear understanding about professionalism did not necessarily influence their online behaviour. They generally describe a professional photograph as one which contained the following elements.

*'It all kind of symbolises something, doesn't it?' How students present...*

- headshot. 'I don't think they need to see your whole body, I just think they need to see your head.' (Participant H);
- smile. 'It's important to smile.' (Participant A);
- looking directly at the camera. 'Looking straight on, to be direct and give that (professional) impression.' (Participant C); and
- smart dress and grooming. This included the importance of 'neat hair' (you should have 'hair out of your face' – Participant B). Male participants highlighted that it is important to wear a business suit.

Participants had some concerns about what this kind of professional career image meant for them. Participant H talks about this professional image as a 'barrier' which you can erect to keep employers from finding out who you are. Participant A sums this up, 'It's probably best to be as simple or kind of non-descript as possible.' The idea of being 'non-descript' implies that one does not posit anything that can be described; one is a blank canvas. Participant B explains why this kind of 'non-descript' approach to presenting yourself online is the best strategy. 'I think you should be as plain and simple as possible. You don't know what the other person is looking at. You don't know what they think about things so there's no point in you putting any signifiers in there that you think are good but they will think are bad.' Participant G was also aware that photographs could be viewed in different ways: 'It all kind of symbolises something doesn't it? In a world where one thing can stand in for plenty of other things, you've got to be careful.' Participants assumed that an employer would interpret their picture either positively or negatively and therefore sought to present as little information as possible.

A 'non-descript' image was seen as necessary because the participants did not know what an employer would want to see and also because there was a perceived tension between being professional, or employable, and being yourself. Therefore, the recommendation was to remove all evidence of identity that the participant would usually present online. Participant C demonstrates this when asked to talk about a photo that he had identified as professional. 'There's nothing here that could be misinterpreted, that could

conceivably give a wrong impression.' Participant D similarly described an image by saying 'I don't think it's damaging or an incriminating image, it's just my face.' Whilst participants were concerned with averting failure, they mainly did not talk about how to present themselves positively to employers in their online profiles.

Some participants felt uncomfortable about suppressing their identities to appeal to employers. Participant H argued that 'you need to show that there's a person behind that'. While Participant F was keen to find an employment context that allowed her to be herself: 'I'd rather be with a company that was open about self-expression'. This concern by students about the need to compromise their identity as they move into work has been noted in other research (Cutts, Hooley & Yates, 2015) and the discussion of online images crystallised this issue for the participants. Uncertainty about what was wanted made them feel that they should scrub their online identity of signifiers. Ideally, though, they would like an employment context that did not require them to do this.

## What images are being shared?

Participants revealed that they were currently using social media as a means of constructing and performing various facets of their identity. Butler (1988) argues that our identities are not fixed but are rather dynamic and performed. Goffman (1959) also discusses the various roles adopted by individuals in different areas of life in terms of performances and notes that a set of unspoken rules, of the kind that our participants were able to articulate about 'professionalism', governs the various 'parts' played in different situations.

Social media websites are a stage on which individuals perform their identities (Van Dijck, 2013). People use social media to highlight and develop different elements of their persona according to the image they wish to present. Previous research demonstrates that students consciously present a certain image of themselves on social media (Peluchette & Karl, 2009) and that this image is aimed at their peers rather than at employers (Dash & Schmidt, 2015).

The online personas of our participants included the fun-loving party-goer, the committed partner, the musician, the good friend, and the socialite, with these images often being combined. The predominant types of photographs that our participants shared with us were the:

- night out;
- selfie;
- participant with friends; and
- participant with their partner.

Many of the participants' photographs were taken on a night out. Their concern was to create an impression of themselves as 'fun'. Participants B, D and I had chosen photographs taken on a night out whilst wearing fancy dress as their profile pictures. Participant B said that this shows that she is a 'partygoer', Participant D said that she 'looks fun' in the photograph and Participant I said he looks 'happy'. In Participant B's photograph, she is dressed up for Halloween as a vampire; her make-up is very heavy and she is pouting at the camera. She is with two more girls in the photograph, who are kissing her on each cheek; the girls are also dressed up for Halloween. This photograph is developing the 'partygoer' image in various ways; the participant is in fancy dress, demonstrating her willingness to get involved and do something different; she is also with friends, showing that she is sociable and popular. Student D also discusses various photographs taken either before or during a night in town. In one photograph, she is wearing a sombrero. The photograph is clearly taken late at night, and the participant is smiling whilst pulling at each side of the hat. The pose deliberately draws attention to the sombrero, showing that this was a different and exciting night.

The students also shared selfies with the interviewer. A selfie was seen as an ideal vehicle for Goffman's (1959) 'impression management'. Through a selfie participants could manipulate how they appeared. One of Participant C's selfies was used with the aim of promoting himself as a musician. In the photograph, he is alone, and has headphones around his neck, and a guitar in the background. His expression is serious, or, as he put it 'I look deep in thought.' The participant consciously used the photograph to convey specific personality traits as part of his identity as a musician.

Participant F shared a lot of selfies with the interviewer. These were generally taken with her friends and provided her with a way of cataloguing her friendships. She felt that the selfies she took with her friends showed that she was 'laid back but social' and it 'just looks like I'm with friends having a good time.' Several of the photographs were taken with the same person, and the participant saw this as a demonstration of her loyalty in friendship: 'It shows I've got constant friends; because both pictures have been with the same person it shows that I can hold down a relationship or friendship.'

Student H also saw her photographs on social media as a way of indicating her sociable side, and demonstrating friendships. Her photographs with friends were both selfies and photographs taken by someone outside of the shot. One of these photographs is of her alongside two friends just after doing a charity run to raise money for cancer research. They are stood in front of the 'Race for Life' advertisement board, which bears the slogan 'Cancer, we're coming to get you.' The participant said that this 'shows that I'm happy. I might be totally knackered but I'm happy especially in front of that banner as well.' She highlighted that this photograph had multiple connotations: she is with friends, and therefore it demonstrates that she is sociable and likeable. It has further signification: she is showing via a number of visual signifiers that she is a caring individual as well as a willing volunteer.

Several participants used their social media sites as a way of demonstrating their commitment to their partner. Other than her image as a 'partygoer', Participant B's photographs were largely of her and her husband. She talked about a photograph of them on their wedding day that she had used as her profile picture. She chose this photograph 'because I love my husband and I like to have him in my photo.' Three of the four photographs that Participant I talked about were of him with his girlfriend; he has his arm around her in all of these photographs. He describes the meaning that is conveyed in these images as follows 'It says that this is me, this is me on my nights out, and this is the person that I'm with, here we are. I feel like it just says I'm a nice guy who has a significant other.' He also said 'I feel it might be important to (his girlfriend) that I'm not alone in the picture'.

*'It all kind of symbolises something, doesn't it?' How students present...*

Participants were using photos both to demonstrate and build their identity and also as a part of the building and maintenance of relationships and social ties. The way that participants described these images suggested that, in many cases, they were carefully and thoughtfully managing the presentation of their online identity. However, the sharing of images was part of a conversation that they were engaging in with their peers and one to which employers were not invited.

## Tensions between different identities

Participants were using social media to express their identity to their peer group, but were generally not concerned with performing a professional identity for future employers. They found it difficult to choose a photograph that they viewed as professional and when asked to think about which image they would show to an employer they generally chose one which was the least representative of their identity. Participant A demonstrated this as she chose a photograph as professional because 'It doesn't give any clues' as to her personality.

One way that participants managed the tension between how they would like employers to perceive them and how they were presenting themselves online was to view employer surveillance as something that might happen in the future. Participants felt that they would have to compromise their identity and be professional when they moved towards work rather than feeling a need to compromise it while they were students. Clearly employers may not respect these boundaries in the way that students anticipate.

Participant I felt that it was 'silly' for employers to use social media images to select employees, but had been struggling to get a job and was wondering whether it was to do with his social media profile. Similarly, Participant F also felt that it should be possible to maintain multiple identities for different areas of life, saying 'when you're in a work place you've got a very different face on to wherever else you are'.

Participants felt that their social media profiles, and their non-professional identities, were not the business of employers. Participant B asked, rhetorically, 'really who's your Facebook for, is it for them (employers) or is it for you?' Participants were very concerned with

keeping their Facebook profiles separate from their working lives. Several participants felt that what they put on Facebook was 'private', as Participant G said 'Profiles such as Facebook are private so you can't see them anyway'. However, the belief that something should be 'private' was not always linked to an active strategy to ensure that it is kept private e.g. careful use of Facebook privacy settings.

Participants often articulated contradictory and/or naïve positions. They assumed that they understood what employers wanted, but made little effort to deliver this. This is largely because they perceive themselves to be operating in what Shirky (2008) calls 'small worlds' and have internalised the rules and the frame of reference of these small worlds into their habitus. The participants understand themselves to be operating in the small world of the university and operate without actively thinking about these rules or considering that other people might be accessing the content that they are producing. They have either no, or very limited, experience of employers entering their university online world and surveying them. Consequently, there is an assumption that concerns about 'professional' online presentation can wait until the point at which they enter the world of work.

## Conclusions: The gap between theory and practice

The students who participated in this study were careful and considered users of social media. They understood the tools and used them consciously to perform their identity within the small world of the university. Participants had internalised the rules of the environment that they were in and this led them all to present remarkably similar images on social media. Through the genres of the night out; the selfie; the photo with friends; and the photo with a partner, the participants were able to create and communicate an identity to those around them. This online identity creation was designed to emphasise a range of different attributes and attitudes: fun, sexy, friendly, loyal, caring, family orientated and so on. It was not created with the idea of looking 'professional' and indeed the idea of professional identity was frequently viewed as antithetical to their sense of self and the identities that they had created as students.

Although students were not performing a professional identity this was not because they were unaware of what such an identity might look like nor was it because they believed that they were unable to perform such an identity. Rather the professional identity was seen as neither relevant to the context that they were in nor desirable. It is a coat that they are willing to don when the time comes despite some concerns about how well it might fit.

For careers professionals this raises some concerns. If employers are surveying students' online identity as part of recruitment, selection and management processes, the attitudes of our participants should be viewed as potentially risky. In this case careers professionals may wish to develop interventions to encourage students to develop their understanding of employer surveillance and adapt their behaviour in response to it. Social media extends the boundaries of employment and potentially requires individuals to behave as if they are at work at all times. The most straightforward response to this changing situation is for careers professionals to encourage individuals to develop their digital career literacy (Hooley, 2012) or digital career management skills and to closely regulate and self-censure their online self-presentation. However, there are also ethical concerns about the careers profession acting as the herald of a new world of employer surveillance. The participants in this study were uncomfortable in the thought of the employer gaze being directed at them and concerned that it would limit and constrain their identity. Young (1990) has described these kinds of constraints on identity as 'cultural imperialism' where ruling class culture becomes the 'referent' and the 'norm' against which all other cultures are (negatively) judged. Given this, careers professionals run the risk of damaging or limiting individuals' identity in the attempt to transform them into employable workers. Hooley & Sultana (2016) argue that if career guidance is going to take a social justice stance it needs to challenge this kind of cultural imperialism by supporting individuals to build a critique of such oppressions and develop both individual and collective strategies to challenge them. For example this may include campaigning collectively against employer surveillance of social media as well as individually responding to it by curating your online self-presentation.

Careers work helps individuals to navigate an unequal and imperfect world. The growth of online image sharing and the employer surveillance of it is yet another dimension of this imperfect world through which we need to plot a careful path. The opportunity to do good by raising issues about online career image needs to be balanced with the potential dangers of limiting individuals' online identities in ways that diminish their lives. Given this there is a strong case for careers professionals to view their role as one of educating students about the way in which power is exercised through social media and recruitment processes and empowering them to consider a range of responses rather than simply warning against posting certain images and advocating for the self-censorship of identity.



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'It all kind of symbolises something, doesn't it?' How students present...

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## For correspondence

Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education  
University of Derby

t.hooley@derby.ac.uk



# A critical response to Hooley's Seven Cs of digital literacy

Tom Staunton

**This** article will provide a critical analysis of Tristram Hooley's Seven Cs of digital literacy. This analysis will be based on responses from the theoretical tradition of New Literary Studies (NLS) to digital literacy. The key findings of this article are that NLS points towards the Seven Cs, firstly, developing an autonomous view of knowledge and skills where learning is seen as separate from context and, secondly, which obscures forms of exclusion and inequality. Finally, this analysis will discuss an alternative basis for careers practice based on online pedagogy and critical investigation.



## Introduction

There is a growing theme in the career development sector that how career development is enacted and supported is being changed by the advent of the internet. A significant figure in this growing literature is Tristram Hooley. Hooley has been involved in co-writing two important pieces on this subject in the form of 'Careering Through the Web' (Hooley *et al.* 2010) and 'How the internet changed career' (2012) around the time that interest in the internet and career was increasing. This article will focus on Hooley's Seven Cs of Digital Career Literacy (2012). Despite being five years old the Seven Cs has been paid little attention from a critical perspective. This article will aim to provide a critical account of the Seven Cs and by doing so open up avenues for discussing how we understand digital careers enactment and how careers practice equips individuals to respond to the internet.

This article will particularly draw attention to critiques that have been made of the linked concept of digital literacy from the field of New Literary Studies (Lea

and Street, 1998). I will explore how these critiques can be applied to the Seven Cs. The article will explore how these critiques draw attention to how the Seven Cs encourages an individualised view of career, looks at ability as autonomous rather than embedded in context and creates a potentially problematic relationship to power structures.

## The Seven Cs of Digital Literacy

Hooley's Seven Cs were first articulated in the article 'How the internet changed career' (2012) and has also featured prominently in a number of subsequent pieces such as Longridge, Hooley and Staunton, (2013), Hooley, Shepherd and Dodd (2015) and Hooley, Bright and Winter (2016). In his original article Hooley (2012) sets out how the internet has reshaped the context within which careers are pursued by individuals and the linked question of 'what skills and knowledge do people need in order to pursue their careers effectively using the internet?' (p.3) Hooley draws attention to four functions of the internet in relation to career development where the internet is described as a career resource library; an opportunity marketplace; a space for the exchange of social capital and a democratic media channel. Hooley states '...all of these functions are underpinned by an individual's digital career literacy and their capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that the internet affords.' (2012, p. 5) He then proceeds to articulate the Seven Cs of digital literacy as describing the underlying competencies individuals need to pursue their careers in a digital age. Hooley lists them as Changing, Critiquing, Communicating, Curating, Collecting, Connecting and Creating.

Hooley draws explicit lines between his work and the concept of digital literacy articulating how the concept,

alongside information literacy and career management skills, forms an underpinning concept for his digital careers literacy. Hooley notes that digital literacy articulates how to act in a digital environment and so digital career literacy is how to '...develop effectively a career in the online context' (p.6). Hooley draws attention to a number of works on digital literacy such as Eshet-Alkalai (2004) and Rosado and Bélisle (2007) which relate to his work. Similarly, although not mentioned by Hooley, it is worth noting the similarity between Belshaw's (2011) 8 Cs and Hooley's Seven Cs. All of this places Hooley's Seven Cs in the tradition of digital literacy frameworks which articulate a number of separated competencies which describe the items needed to operate effectively in a digital environment.

## New Literary Studies

The term digital literacy was first coined by Gilster (1997). Since this point digital literacy has been developed into a number of schemas such as Belshaw's (2011) eight competencies and Sharpe and Beetham's (2010) pyramid. Alongside the development of these ideas has been the development of a range of critical responses to digital literacy. One vein of this literature comes in the form of pieces which make use of New Literary Studies (NLS). NLS developed as a critique of the skills agenda in HE in the UK in the late 1990s. Against an agenda which focussed on literacy being based on autonomous competencies which sit above contexts NLS articulated literacy as being found in the personal meaning of literacy acts tied to specific social and cultural contexts (Gourlay and Oliver, 2014).

A number of recent works, such as Gourlay and Oliver (2014), Lankshear and Knobel (2006) and Sefton-Green, Nixon and Erstad (2009) have drawn attention to how digital literacy tends to describe literacy in the same autonomous terms which the skills agenda employed and make use of NLS to respond to this. Though these arguments do not relate directly to the field of careers I will use an examination of these ideas to critique Hooley's Seven Cs and propose new directions for careers theory and practice in relation to these perspectives.

There are two sets of ideas I will look at. Firstly, that digital literacy takes on an autonomous view of literacy.

Street (2003) noted the danger of seeing literacy as devoid of social contexts, that it can be delivered 'autonomously' with wider social contexts being an afterthought. Literacy, for Street, always occurred in a context. Gourlay and Oliver (2014) note Belshaw's (2011) use of metaphorical elements in his scheme, which they see as implying that Belshaw sees literacies like substances that are clearly delineated from each other and which have an essential core that is not affected by context. Similarly Lankshear and Knobel (2006) note that digital literacy is often seen as an 'it' or a 'thing'. They go on to state that

"Digital literacy" consists in so many lists of abstracted skills and techniques that a proficient person can "do". Once they "have" these "skills" they can use them purposefully [in a variety of contexts] (p. 16)

They describe how digital literacy is seen to have 'causal efficacy' which can 'generate outcomes in the world' (p. 15). They are careful to note that this is not to say that skills are not a part of literacy. Instead they argue that to see skills as the only part, especially in a way that sees them as an element which is constant irrespective of context, is to hold a misguided view of how people generate outcomes in the world.

This brings us onto the second of the critiques, as we mentioned earlier, that NLS employs, that digital literacy ignores the socially constructed nature of literacy. To take Lankshear and Knobel's phrase that digital literacy claims that people can 'generate outcomes in the world' (2006, p. 15) it ignores that what outcomes are worth generating are socially constructed rather than objectively established. NLS argues that while these outcomes may appear objective and common sense in their nature they in fact involve notions of exclusion and inequality. Street states that central to NLS is '...asking "whose literacies" are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant'. (2003, p. 77). This comes out of the claim that by terming something or someone literate you make something or someone else illiterate. Because of the dichotomous nature of this way of thinking it is vital to expose 'whose literacies' are we considering? Who is determining what literacy is and to what end? Similarly Sefton-Green *et al.* (2009) state;

We argue that the term “digital literacy” incorporates more notions of exclusion and division than is commonly supposed and that it exposes the contradictory politics of literary education in new and provocative ways. (p. 108)

Sefton-Green *et al.* (2009) go on to discuss how print literacy was initially yoked to the emergence of middle classes and the needs of industrial society. Similarly, they argue, digital literacy is linked to the economic needs of the information age and what is required for individuals to compete for employment and to become consumers.

Gourlay and Oliver (2014) make very similar points when critiquing Belshaw (2011) and by extension other taxonomic forms of digital literacy. They note how Belshaw’s digital literacy ‘...is reminiscent of rather aspirational neoliberal “graduate attributes” and is ‘...an ideological wish-list that positions a student as a particular kind of subject’ but does not position the individual as meaning making agent. They conclude by noting that digital literacy ‘support[s] an underlying ideology of the graduate as a quality-assured “product”’. (2014, p. 147).

Under this analysis when we ask Street’s (2003) question ‘whose literacies’, we see digital literacies are the literacies of neoliberalism, graduate recruitment and ‘marketised education’ (Molesworth *et al.* 2010, Brown and Carasso 2013). This is far from the common sense and objective nature that the autonomous model of literacy I discussed above implies. Rather than being the non-contextualised ‘elements’ that we might think them to be, under this analysis digital literacies are linked to a very specific agenda which does not attempt to incorporate the student as a meaning maker in their own right.

## Critically Analysing the Seven Cs

I have drawn attention to two main critiques that authors have made of digital literacy using NLS. In this section I will explore how the same ideas could be applied to Hooley’s Seven Cs. I will consider these under the headings of autonomy, community and power structures.

## Autonomy

As I have noted before the Seven Cs explicitly builds on digital literacy as a concept. This includes adopting the same taxonomic structure as others, such as Belshaw (2011). The Seven Cs is presented in its own version of an autonomous model, with Hooley describing digital literacy as involving particular ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (2012, p. 5) The delimitation of its Seven aspects into ‘elemental’ units is further emphasised in Longridge, Hooley and Staunton (2013) who conclude by noting that the aspects of digital careers literacy could be translated into independent learning outcomes. The underpinning implication of the framework is that any individual, in any online context pursuing any career, can improve their prospects through developing the seven competencies. Furthermore there is an implication in the above piece that the core skills are developed as part of formal education and certified before someone starts using them (as is normally the pattern in formal education).<sup>1</sup> We have to ask if digital practice is embedded in individuals informal worlds whether we can expect it to be significantly transformed by looking at it ‘from afar’ through formal education. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) make an interesting comment on this noting;

Courses are created to teach learners these tools/techniques/skills, and certify them when they are finished. (This logic is almost the exact reverse of what young people do when they set about learning how to play an online game and become part of an online gaming community.)  
(p. 16)

I would assume that ‘the exact reverse’ referred to here is to gain mastery before starting practising as opposed to starting practising and so developing mastery through practice. In an autonomous model, where skills are seen as decontextualized, the temptation will be to create a learning experience that is similarly devoid of context in order that skills can be properly assessed and certified.

<sup>1</sup> In Hooley, T., Shepherd, C. and Dodd, V. (2015) the authors do discuss how the Seven Cs could be used in a more informal manner across the lifespan so this is not an aspect that is hardwired into the Seven Cs but more a feature of how it is often produced.

## Community

As well as its taxonomic nature we also see the Seven Cs holding a particular approach to context and especially to social relationships. On first analysis Hooley mentions context in a number of ways, such as saying the Seven Cs are rooted in the contexts of career and the digital world (Hooley 2012) and that the Seven Cs operates in a social context of 'social process' based around the importance of 'social and professional networks' (Longridge, Hooley and Staunton 2013, p. 5). But in this we see that the Seven Cs has a tendency to describe how individuals can fit into the digital world and how they can use it effectively for their career. This sees individuals as separate from their environments and able, through the right techniques, to gain mastery over them. This analysis echoes McCash's (2006) analysis of Law and Watts (1977) DOTS model of careers education where McCash draws attention to DOTS view of individuals standing above environment in a manner which promotes individualism and self-interest. It is important to see that though the Seven Cs discusses a variety of ways of interacting with others it still maintains an individualistic stance towards other people. This develops a view of others in line with Horkheimer's (1974) instrumental rationality where other people are reduced to their usefulness; or to Adorno's (1974) description of young aspiring workers who Adorno describes as possessing no relationship or connections that are not viewed as 'of use' to an individual's career. This view of career can be seen as being in contrast to McCash's (2006) who described careers as unavoidable social projects or to how Hooley (2015) has elsewhere discussed career as a communal project shared by individuals. This critique can be applied to most other employability based approaches to career (see Frayne 2015) but it is important to notice the Seven Cs relation to this type of conception.

## Power Structures

As I noted before a key feature of NLS is that literacy incorporates elements of exclusion inside it (Street 2003, Sefton-Green *et al.* 2009). By defining something as literate you make something else illiterate. So how does this play itself out in the Seven Cs (Hooley 2012)?

Digital career literacy is concerned with the ability to use the online environment, to search, to make contacts, to get questions answered and to build a positive professional reputation. (p.5)

The Seven Cs of digital career literacy is a framework which describes the skills, attributes and knowledge required to effectively use the online environment to build a career.

(Longridge, Hooley and Staunton 2013, p.9)

Both of these quotations reveal a focus on individuals being effective and professional, themes which are developed throughout the literature on the Seven Cs. This echoes Buchannan's (2017) argument that employability leads to a situation where individuals' digital lives are increasingly subsumed into a professional identity. Similarly this echoes Gourlay and Oliver's (2014) analysis that digital literacy privileges the formation of an aspirational neoliberal subject who is a 'quality assured' product. This ends up positioning the individual as being responsible for fitting into wider social structures. This can be problematic. Firstly, as McCash (2006) describes, this type of approach ends up making the individual responsible for their own actions. Buchannan (2017) directly links the formation of individual responsibility as a key tenet of a neoliberal society. This in turn can obscure wider structures that may limit an individual's activity. As I have argued elsewhere (Staunton 2016), we could see the internet as a contested space where power structures and vested interests limit the ability of individuals to participate. Secondly, this type of thinking can end up inducting individuals into a neoliberal viewpoint where they are encouraged to assume that being effective and professional are simply common sense ways of operating in the world. McCash (2006) points out that individuals come to careers education with evolving political views and that careers education should encourage the development and testing of their views rather than presenting one view of career as orthodox. In these terms there is a danger that the Seven Cs can end up reifying neoliberalism.

In conclusion NLS, alongside other critical perspectives, has allowed us to explore the Seven Cs as involving a limited pedagogy based around autonomy, encouraging an individualistic instrumentality and upholding neoliberalism against

other ways of understanding the political nature of career.

## Alternative Practice

From our analysis so far I am going to construct three different principles that could be used to describe what an alternative approach to digital career development might be, in light of our analysis of the Seven Cs:

1. An inductive approach to the internet
2. A communal approach
3. A critical approach

Firstly then, an alternative approach should be inductive. This is to say it should be drawn out of how people actually experience the internet. This follows on from Lankshear and Knobel's (2006) comment about how people learn to play video games or use online communities. This description focusses on how people develop their use of technology through experience and personal experimentation. I do not want to say that this means that there is no place for formal learning but there should be a greater interaction between formal and informal learning and between individual's time in the classroom and online. A helpful starting point for this is the developing pedagogical tradition of connectivism (Staunton 2016, 2017). Connectivist courses aim to embed individuals in an online community where the course focusses around social-learning strategies and peer-to-peer support to develop appropriate pedagogical strategies (Stacey 2013). To put this another way features of the online world, such as digital content and peer-to-peer support, should be a significant part of pedagogy. Connectivism also tends to prioritise students developing their own views and solutions to problems over a prescriptive approach to education. So rather than asking how can the internet support career, a course could be set up to explore the relationship between the internet and career and this could be delivered, in part, using online features. This is not to make an argument of offline versus online as a delivery method but that direct experience of phenomena (in this case the internet) should form a significant building block of pedagogy in this context. This direct experience gives a space for individuals generating their own practice rather than defining what it should be in advance.

Secondly, an alternative approach should be centred around community. Part of heeding NLS's belief that literacies are developed in context is to pay attention to the social situations of students. Their existing digital worlds should be recognised as part of the context of how a scheme of careers education is delivered. Digital careers education should be contextualised, a thought that very much links with the idea of connectivism discussed above. Some of Hooley's writing around social justice provides a helpful perspective on how to move forward on this. Citing the importance of Freire (2005), Hooley writes;

[Freire] argues for the centrality of context and highlights the possibility of transforming this context. Again we can restate the essence of this method as, notice people's experience, locate it historically and contextually, offer personal resources to manage life as it is, encourage the development of collective solutions and the transformation of oppressive structures.

(2015, p. 2)

This method leans on the importance of locating education inside an individual's context and bring people together to create collective solutions. This initially may seem abstract as to what this means for digital career literacy but a starting point is to say that we should move away from practice which sees the internet as a resource for individuals to make use of for their own ends and see it firstly as a place which can enable groups of people to come together to create solutions to the problems they face. So the site of education becomes both the students' online relationships with their classmates and their wider digital community.

Finally, a new approach should involve critical exploration. If we look again at Hooley's work above (2015) one of the key tasks that people do together is locating their experiences in a historical and contextual relationship. This sees career as a social project, connected to broader social structures and open to critical investigation. It is not merely about how individuals progress or achieve meaningful outcomes though this may be a branch of what investigating career in this manner achieves. A key aspect of this is that debate about how the internet and career fit together should be central to careers

## A critical response to Hooley's Seven Cs of digital literacy

education. This echoes McCash's (2006) call that careers education should engage with debates around what career is or it risks becoming 'an emasculated version of career development that is shorn of controversy and intellectual complexity' (p. 435). This can be a counter to the concern NLS raises about forms of literacy which induct people into becoming neoliberal agents without their knowledge as it creates debates around the nature of career and how it relates to wider socio-political structures.

To bring this together in a simple statement about an alternative way to approach educating people about how the internet interact with their career would involve practice which:

- 1) Makes use of online pedagogy
- 2) Is focussed on contextual approaches to pedagogy
- 3) Takes a stance of critical investigation towards the relationship between career and the internet

## Conclusion

In conclusion I have explored how Hooley's Seven Cs ties itself to the wider agenda of digital literacy. I have explored how NLS highlights how this approach leans on an autonomous model of education and creates hidden exclusions. In light of this analysis I have drawn attention to what alternative practice could look like, practice which makes use of online pedagogy, is focussed on social approaches to pedagogy and takes a stance of critical investigation to the relationship between career and the internet.



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## For correspondence

Tom Staunton,  
Lecturer in Career Development, University of Derby  
[t.staunton@derby.ac.uk](mailto:t.staunton@derby.ac.uk)

Tom also writes a blog about careers education and theory at <https://runninginaforest.wordpress.com/> and is active on twitter (@tomstaunton84) and on LinkedIn.

# The Robots are Coming! The response of careers professionals to the future of the graduate job

Nalayini Thambar

**The** future of work, shaped by technology, threatens graduate jobs, even in traditional professions. So how do we equip students for their future, not the world we know? For 30 years, employer requirements and graduate roles have seen little variation, but reviews of key sources suggest a change has begun. Drawing upon current perspectives on the future of work, this article identifies challenges and opportunities for higher education careers professionals relating to the relevance of knowledge and practice. It also suggests that this futuristic landscape provides further opportunity to challenge a persistent binary divide between 'being academic' and 'being employable'.



## Introduction

Across higher education, careers professionals have been accustomed to a relatively steady graduate market with as much change within higher education itself. The term 'careers professional' is commonly used across the sector to describe a range of roles, differently configured by institution, covering responsibility for careers education, information, advice, guidance, employer engagement and the management of placements. Careers professionals are experts in helping students to identify their values, skills, knowledge and motivations, to identify the sectors or organisations in which they wish to develop their careers and to make successful applications. The focus on 'graduate level jobs' means students must be helped to understand the particular skills or attributes

that employers are looking for. This endeavour has been assisted by a regular production of lists, often the result of surveys, usually in order of priority. A review of representative lists from 1988 to 2017 suggests that relatively little has changed over time.

The author is the proud owner of a carefully preserved cutting from a 1988 edition of the Sunday Times, shown to her then by her (slightly anxious) father, six months before she graduated in history and economics and, to her delight, presented by him to her when she took up her current post in Nottingham twenty five years later. Godfrey Golzen's 1988 article reported on moves taken by the then Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) to explore and articulate the connection between 'humanities and employment'. Comparison with the list of skills sought by graduate employers within the Association of Graduate Recruiters' 2017 Development Survey suggests that while order and terms may have changed - for example, graduate job-seekers are now much more familiar with the concept of 'commercial awareness' - the qualities required now still resonate strongly with the Golzen article; what is the purpose of commercial awareness if not to contribute to informed decision-making? A review of the skills required by employers in the intervening years: CBI (1994), Bennett (2002), Edge Foundation/SCRE (2011), supports the suggestion that variation has been limited, even when uniquely articulated skills are highlighted. The Bennett (2002) list is derived from a survey of over 1000 graduate employers, published roughly at the mid-point between the Golzen article and the 2016 data collection for the AGR 2017 survey. All five lists are presented in figure 1 for comparison.



**Figure 1: Articulations of skills sought by graduate recruiters 1988-2017**  
(uniquely articulated skills in bold)

<b>Golzen (1988)</b>	<b>Bennett (2002) (alphabetical, not priority order)</b>	<b>The Edge Foundation/ SCRE (2011)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communication</li> <li>● Motivation</li> <li>● Personal Qualities (application of ideas, persistence)</li> <li>● Interpersonal Skills (<b>tenacity</b>, teamwork)</li> <li>● <b>Informed Decision Making</b></li> <li>● <b>Management</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adaptability/Flexibility</li> <li>● <b>Analysis</b></li> <li>● Communication</li> <li>● Initiative</li> <li>● IT</li> <li>● Leadership</li> <li>● Motivation</li> <li>● Numeracy</li> <li>● <b>Organisation</b></li> <li>● <b>Presentation</b></li> <li>● Problem Solving</li> <li>● <b>Self-confidence</b></li> <li>● Teamworking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team working</li> <li>● Problem solving</li> <li>● <b>Self-management</b></li> <li>● Knowledge of the business</li> <li>● Literacy and numeracy relevant to the post</li> <li>● ICT knowledge</li> <li>● Good interpersonal and communication skills</li> <li>● Ability to use own initiative <b>but also to follow instructions</b></li> <li>● Leadership skills where necessary</li> </ul>
<b>CBI (1994)</b>		<b>AGR (2017)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Personal and Interpersonal Skills</li> <li>● Communication</li> <li>● Information Technology</li> <li>● Application of Number</li> <li>● Problem Solving</li> <li>● <b>Modern Language Competencies</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Negotiating/influencing</b></li> <li>● Commercial Awareness</li> <li>● <b>Dealing with conflict</b></li> <li>● <b>Self-Awareness</b></li> <li>● Business Communication</li> <li>● <b>Managing up</b></li> <li>● Interpersonal Skills</li> <li>● Problem Solving</li> <li>● Teamwork</li> <li>● <b>Resiliency Skills</b></li> </ul>

## Evolution not Revolution

Ongoing feedback from graduate recruiters indicates that the consistency of these lists reflects a graduate job market where change has been incremental, not dramatic. The introduction of technology within the workplace is apparent in the appearance of 'Information Technology' in 1994, 'IT' in 2002 and 'ICT' in 2011, and a disappearance by 2017, suggesting that such proficiency, perhaps not always rightly, is now assumed. Over this period, technology has primarily enabled recognisable graduate roles while the biggest transformations to jobs have been within technology-

related roles themselves and in opportunities for start-up companies to fill new niches. Careers professionals have kept pace with these developments through research, experience and contact with employers, augmented by labour market reports. Market changes have reflected economic cycles, most recently the recessions as a result of the dot.com crash in the early 2000s and the 2008 financial crisis. There has also been sector evolution: the 'Big Six' accountancy firms are now the 'Big Four' financial services firms. No one is seeking to recruit entrepreneurial accountants, if ever they were, and there are now opportunities to be fast-tracked into client-facing public sector roles, for example teaching and social work. For students,

often bewildered by the range of job possibilities, the familiarity of skills important when writing their UCAS personal statements, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving, are reassuring. Highlighting such skills in a graduate job application, with updated examples that demonstrate contribution to outcomes and relevance to job and company, are demanding, rather than alien tasks.

## The Revolution at Hand

There is increasing prediction and evidence that the growth and complexity of new technologies is starting to extend far beyond enabling traditional, recognisable work, to transform the world. Schwab (2016) talks of The Fourth Industrial Revolution, where big data, artificial intelligence, bio- and nano-technologies are starting to combine, creating possibilities that will redefine how we live and the jobs that humans do. Based on research undertaken by the World Economic Forum and a number of associated Global Agenda Councils, Schwab identified a number of 'Megatrends' which represent the fourth industrial revolution. He organised them into 'Physical', such as autonomous vehicles and advanced robotics; 'Digital', for example the Internet of Things, where people relate to and engage with products through connected technologies and platforms; and 'Biological', exemplified by the speed at which a human genome can now be sequenced - a few hours - compared with the 10 years it took to complete the original Human Genome Project. Some examples cited are familiar to many, such as the rise of Uber, or targeted medical treatments based on high quality genetic data. Equally, Schwab accepts that at the time of writing, some concepts are still abstract and he features a number of yet-to-be-tested predictions alongside examples. He concludes by calling leaders of all aspects of society to engage with these changes together to develop holistic perspectives that can identify integrated solutions, so that the revolution is harnessed to improve, rather than undermine, a society where humans can thrive.

Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates and Elon Musk are amongst those concerned by the threat to human labour from advances in robotics. Hawking continues to warn that artificial intelligence could transform society through the eradication of poverty and disease, but could 'evolve' to the point of outperforming

humans, presenting as a threat, not a powerful, controllable force for good (Osbourne, 2017) while Gates has suggested that those companies using high levels of robotic labour should pay a 'Robot Tax' in order to compensate for the loss in taxes from human workers. This could help to pay for jobs where human interaction will apparently remain paramount, such as caring for children and the elderly (Waters, 2017). Musk has called for a Universal Basic Income for those whose work is displaced by automation altogether (Weller, 2017). A more optimistic perspective suggests that sector changes will result in the redistribution of human labour to improved jobs, possibly in greater numbers (Bakhshi, 2017).

Susskind and Susskind (2015) approach this issue from the perspective of the professions including health, education, law and architecture, traditionally dominated by graduate level jobs. They contend that technology and artificial intelligence will transform roles currently fulfilled by human experts applying specialist knowledge and expertise. They suggest that in a technology-based internet society, traditional professional work will be seen as unaffordable, antiquated, opaque and underperforming. They also suggest a number of trends which demonstrate the movement of professional work, traditionally considered an individually delivered craft, towards configurations resonant with processes. They suggest this is taking place in three ways: 'routinisation' where appropriate elements can be configured into processes introducing higher levels of efficiency and consistency akin to standard operating procedures; 'decomposition' – the breaking down of professional work into component parts, 'multi-sourced' for fulfilment through other people or technology; and 'disintermediation and re-intermediation' where professionals replace elements of their face-to-face service with an online version or try to deliver their services online to enhance their presence (Susskind and Susskind, 2015: 119-123). The authors provide many examples where this is already taking place, including education, where they suggest that the move towards blended learning, flipped lectures, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and open-access online journals, harnessing the new technologies available, provides more personalised learning experiences changing the nature and range of roles within education:

In all of these illustrations the historical monopoly of traditional teachers, tutors and lecturers is challenged. There is less need for the 'sage on the stage' and more of a job for the 'guide on the side'.... There are new roles and new disciplines, like education software designers... content curators... and data scientists. (Susskind and Susskind, 2015: 60)

Changes to professions are expected to impact directly on the availability and nature of many graduate roles, with change particularly notable in areas where experience and knowledge have traditionally been built through large amounts of information management and analysis within early career responsibilities. For example, artificial intelligence now enables the rapid scanning of hundreds of legal documents for consistencies and inconsistencies, traditionally the work of those beginning their legal career. Another illustration is the change to the hiring pattern of Goldman Sachs' stock traders; from 600 in the year 2000, to just two graduates in 2017, the remaining work undertaken by 200 computers (Gleason, 2017). That it was tempting to write 'two humans' in the preceding sentence is perhaps telling.

## The Challenge to Careers Professionals in Higher Education

Graduate jobs are being transformed, amidst as much speculation as evidence, but now is the time to review practice, not cling to traditional assumptions about graduate careers, if students are to be prepared for a work life that spans decades. This section considers key challenges to careers professionals and the opportunities offered by these changing times to futureproof expertise and practice.

A profession is considered a distinct type of occupation, which uses a specialised body of knowledge and expertise to solve a particular type of problem (Torstendahl, 1991). A challenge that professional groups have faced in relatively recent years is that of 'information asymmetry' (Abbott, 1998), where information on many issues is readily available to all. This changes the deployment of professional expertise from the provision of information to the

interpretation and application of information to a setting, group or individual. As graduate careers change in ways described above, information on future roles and career paths is speculative, tentative and subject to change.

This presents a challenge to careers professionals, whose understanding of graduate roles and career paths provides context for their work, particularly when advising and guiding students making career choices. Knowledge about graduate roles built up over a number of years, even previous personal experience, may soon be far less relevant. This challenge may be heightened in services where an 'account management' approach to key graduate recruiters reinforces a focus on recruitment processes, rather than understanding the projected shape of a career a number of years hence affected by technological advancements. Relationships that focus on recruitment processes and outcomes are critical, but without keeping abreast of the conversations and trends at the heart of organisations, it may be difficult for careers professionals to enable students to navigate much beyond an altered opportunity structure, graduate recruitment processes and the first two years in the workplace.

Before the concept of the fourth industrial revolution was widely discussed, a study was undertaken across 14 institutions in England, Scotland and Wales, interviewing 22 careers advisers in higher education, with varied backgrounds and qualifications, about their professional identity. It suggested that their identity was undefined, locally focussed, unrecognised, unconfident but dedicated (Thambar, 2016). The study identified a reluctance for careers advisers to define themselves as experts, which can be explained by the aim of enabling students to manage their own career development, rather than to maintain a stronghold on scarcely available knowledge to encourage dependency (McCash, 2006). However careers advisers also described an absence of a clearly defined body of knowledge that they can claim as their own, particularly when engaging with academics. The subjects of the study described that knowledge as occupational and sector intelligence, rather than the guidance and career development techniques and theories that underpin their work. Feedback from the dissemination of this research nationally and

internationally indicates a resonance with careers professionals, not only careers advisers. In an academic setting where expertise defines individual roles and shapes institutional purpose, it is incongruous for careers professionals to seek recognition and operate with confidence without their own clearly-articulated expertise (Thambar, 2016).

## The Opportunities for Expertise

The uncertainty surrounding graduate work provides new opportunities for careers professionals in higher education to develop expertise and specialist knowledge that strengthens their practice. The quaintly titled, but still relevant Labour Market Information, with occupational knowledge, can be reinvented by being at the forefront of insights into the future of graduate work. Engagement with current debates and workplace developments, not just recruitment trends, illustrated with real-world examples, would give careers professionals a knowledge advantage and refreshed authority within their field.

This may mean reviewing engagement strategies with employers to extend beyond strong links to facilitate graduate-entry recruitment to the building of insights into the projected evolution of graduate career paths. As change gathers momentum, individual perspectives and experiences could illuminate and contextualise wider-ranging surveys. Alumni well established in their careers, perhaps in the eye of the technological storm responsible for crafting their organisation's future work, could become as valuable to careers professionals for their practice as to the students encouraged to make alumni connections.

Such approaches could support a refreshed presence for student-facing careers information that balances trends and predictions with information on graduate roles in their current form. This will help to create a distinct identity for knowledge developed and deployed by careers professionals as an informed, impartial assessment of present and future graduate work. This is likely to be welcomed by students attempting to plan and envisage their future, bombarded by speculation as debates about a world, defined and altered by advanced robotics and technologies, enter popular culture.

As careers professionals translate and decode these debates to support students with their career planning, providing reassurance in uncertain times, they would naturally address the challenge of 'information asymmetry'. There may also be a further learning and service opportunity for some when students are helped to understand the developments taking place by reflecting on the role technology already plays in their lives. This would require insights into technological interactions with distinct generational characteristics, which would enable those working with entrepreneurial students to keep pace with evolving possibilities.

More than ever before, students will need to understand how they can still develop relevant skills and experience for an undefined future of work, with an emphasis on long-term employability rather than immediate employment. For those advising and guiding students, understanding and conveying a range of career theories, not least the interplay between decision making, opportunity awareness, transition learning and self-awareness (DOTS), could help students to develop conceptual frameworks and ways of thinking that equip them to develop their career over time (McCash, 2006). Appreciation of career theories such as 'planned happenstance' (Krumboltz, 1998) and concepts such as a growth mindset that introduces possibilities through learning, trying and taking risks (Dweck, 2006) will prepare students to navigate an unpredictable future. This requires expert knowledge of career theories and the process of employability development alongside the ability to translate that process for those who are being supported and enabled. These are not new features of professional careers work, particularly for careers advisers, but describing guidance, careers education and career development skills in the context of the future of work, provides an opportunity to refresh and re-badge expertise, emphasising its relevance to the challenges that students are likely to face.

## Robots as peacemakers: Academic and Employability experts aligned at last?

Strengthening careers professionals' expertise may better position them as the institutional experts on

graduate careers, equipping them for an academic environment with a distinct body of occupational and sector knowledge that contextualises their practice, and provides a confident basis from which to discuss the future of work with academic colleagues. However the uncertain graduate landscape provides a further opportunity for those seeking to engage in academic partnership to support or enable institutional employability approaches. Despite the institutional spotlight on employability in the UK, particularly England, often in response to higher undergraduate tuition fees, a narrative still prevails that ‘being academic’ and ‘being employable’ are parallel paths within the student journey. These paths align on vocational courses leading to an academic qualification that grants admission to professional practice or accreditation (for example veterinary medicine or branches of engineering). In other disciplines, the paths are often distinct with work resulting in successful alignment lending weight to a narrative that employability has been brought into the curriculum. This implies that previously, an academic curriculum might have been ‘employability-free’. However, the World Economic Forum has identified ten skills that it suggests will equip workers of the future for career success in the fourth industrial revolution. They are listed here:

**Figure 2: Skills for Success in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (World Economic Forum, in Schwab, 2016)**

1. Complex Problem Solving	6. Emotional Intelligence
2. Critical Thinking	7. Judgement and Decision Making
3. Creativity	8. Service Orientation
4. People Management	9. Negotiation
5. Co-ordinating with Others	10. Cognitive Flexibility

Schwab (2016) does not explicitly refer to the skills required for roles involving significant interaction with advanced technology. However, an investigation into the skills required for work in 2030 conducted by Bakhshi et al (2017) is complemented by a list of 20 skills which includes those needed to engage effectively with new technologies:

**Figure 3: 21st Century Skills (Bakhshi et al, 2017)**

1. Judgement and Decision Making	11. Critical Thinking
2. Fluency of Ideas	12. Instructing
3. Active Learning	13. Education and Training
4. Learning Strategies	14. Management of Personnel Resources
5. Originality	15. Co-ordination
6. Systems Education	16. Inductive Reasoning
7. Deductive Reasoning	17. Problem Sensitivity
8. Complex Problem Solving	18. Information Ordering
9. Systems Analysis	19. Active Listening
10. Monitoring	20. Administration and Management

These two lists effectively challenge the concept of an employability-free curriculum, indicating that complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, cognitive flexibility, fluency of ideas, deductive and inductive reasoning, all fundamental to academic endeavour, are skills for future career success. This gives careers professionals an opportunity to build strong partnerships with academic colleagues, not simply to find ‘slots’ of time for employability input, or encourage signposting to careers services, but to collectively present and refine the students’ curricular experience to support their employability development. This is traditionally an area where partnership is hard won or the result of an institutional mandate and, in the case of careers advisers, where a sense of being a junior partner through a lack of qualification or a defined body of knowledge can undermine confidence and agency (Thambar, 2016). However, the possession of cutting-edge knowledge about the latest developments to graduate roles across sectors, while supporting academic endeavour as relevant to the future employability of students, provides the basis for a balanced partnership. Careers professionals could work alongside academic colleagues to make the implicit explicit in relation to student development of academic skills to support their employability. In this setting, careers professionals would not have to ‘fight their way in’, and academics would not feel distracted or undermined by the prospect of accommodating

## The Robots are Coming! The response of careers professionals...

employability development at the expense of their core practice and subject expertise. Tensions around the purpose of higher education can dissipate as a transformational learning experience in its own right simultaneously equips students for their future career.

An example of this in practice, is the development of professional competencies within the curriculum at the University of Nottingham. A working group of academics and careers professionals, having considered the current thinking on the future of work, have mapped the academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular Nottingham student experience to identify the opportunities available for the development of each of the ten skills in figure 2. From this the group has identified four competencies which are naturally developed through academic study and will prepare students for success in the future: professional communication, digital capability, co-ordinating with others and reflection. Examples of assessed activity through which students will develop these competencies are currently being gathered, alongside case studies and identified champions to support academic development and messaging for students. This development has been welcomed at an institutional and disciplinary level for supporting a response to changes to graduate work, while acknowledging the continued relevance of academic endeavour.

## Conclusion

The future of work, and the impact of artificial intelligence and advanced technology on graduate jobs, is uncertain in shape but not likelihood. The challenge for careers professionals is to harness this uncertainty and position themselves at the forefront of the debate, understanding the speculation and contextualising it through their own investigation, enhanced by engagement with employers and career-established alumni whose perspectives and examples will deepen understanding of the changing opportunity structure. This rejuvenated expertise could then be used in combination with career development skills to prepare students to succeed in an uncertain future. The expertise could also be used as a basis to forge strong, mutually respectful, partnerships with academic colleagues so that students recognise that by developing their academic skills they develop their

employability. Confirming this approach would enable institutions to communicate a consistent message of responsiveness to the future of work, which would enable employers to engage, and students to flourish, even while preparing for a world that few of us dare to predict.

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## For correspondence

Dr Nalayini Thambar,  
Director of Careers and Employability, University of Nottingham

Quality Director, The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)

[nalayini.thambar@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nalayini.thambar@nottingham.ac.uk)

# Recent and forthcoming publications

NICEC is committed to serious thinking and innovation in career development work. This list gives a flavour of the breadth and depth of Fellows' engagement in career development. (Names of NICEC fellows are highlighted in bold typeface.)



**Andrews, D. & Hooley, T.** (2017) "...and now it's over to you": recognising and supporting the role of careers leader in schools in England, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 45(2) 153-164

Brown, C. & **Yates, J.** (2018) Understanding the experience of midlife women taking part in a work-life balance career coaching programme: an interpretative phenomenological analysis, *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16(1), 110 – 125. 10.24384/000472

Di Palma, T. & **Reid, H.** (2018) Career development told through narrative research: exploring the stories of Italian and English young people, *International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance*, (in press).

**Hirsh, W.** & Tyler, E. (2017) *Talent Management: Learning across Sectors*, London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

**Hooley, T.** & Grant, K. (2017) *You're Hired! The Graduate Career Handbook*, Bath: Trotman.

**Hooley, T., Sultana, R.** & Thomsen, R. (eds.) (2018) *Career Guidance for Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism*, London: Routledge.

**Moore, N., Vigurs, K., Everitt, J. & Clarke, L.** (2017) *Progression for success. Evaluating North Yorkshire's innovative careers guidance project*, Final report. Northallerton: North Yorkshire CC.

**Moore, N.** (2018) Thinking digitally in a digital world. *Career Matters* (6.1), Stourbridge. CDI.

**Pollard, E.,** Hadjivassiliou, K., Swift, S. & Green, M. (2017) Credit transfer in higher education, Department for Education

**Pollard, E.,** Hadjivassiliou, K., Swift, S. & Green, M. (2017) *Accelerated degrees in higher education: Literature review*, Department for Education.

**Pollard, E.,** Williams, M., Huxley, C., Green, M., Martin, A. & Gray, H. (2018) *Capturing school-to-work transitions with longitudinal data sources*, Report 512, Institute for Employment Studies.

**Reid, H.** (2018) Telling tales: a transformative space for alternative discourses in research, in S. Jackson (ed.)

*Developing transformative spaces in higher education: Learning to transgress*, Oxon: Routledge, TaylorFrancis (in press).

**Reid, H. & West, L.** (2018) Connecting big and intimate worlds: Using an auto/biographical imagination in career guidance, in T. Hooley, R. Sultana & R. Thomsen, *Career guidance and social justice in a neoliberal world*, Volume 1. New York: TaylorFrancis/Routledge

**Reid, H. & Soan, S.** (2018) Providing support to senior managers in schools via 'clinical' supervision: a restorative and purposeful professional and personal space, *Professional Development in Education*, DOI: 10.1081/19415257.2018.1427132.

Williams, M., **Pollard, E.,** Langley, J., Houghton, A-M. & Zozimo, J. (2017) *Models of support for students with disabilities*, Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE)

**Yates, J. & Cahill, S.** (2018) What kind of shoes does a social worker wear? A content analysis of four occupational prototypes, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*. Online first 10.1080/03069885.2018.1437596

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## FORTHCOMING (2018)

**Chadderton, C.** (forthcoming June 2018) *Judith Butler, race and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Chapter six, entitled 'Aspirations and intelligible subjects', is likely to be of interest to readers of this journal.

Christie, F. & Burke, C. (eds) (2018 in press) *Understanding Graduate Careers: Research, Policy and Practice in Context*, London: Routledge.

This edited book contains the following chapters from NICEC fellows:

- Chapter 5: **Ball, C.** Tackling graduate labour market myths
- Chapter 8: **Artess, J.** Learning to be employable
- Chapter 9: **Gilworth, B.** Organisational responses to the employability agenda in English universities
- Chapter 10: **Neary, S. & Hanson, J.** HE careers professionals – challenging the perception that we're a bunch of nice ladies in cardigans who sit students down for a lovely wee chat about their futures
- Chapter 12: **Winter, D.** The rise of the practitioner-researcher: how big data and evidence-based practice requires practitioners with a research mind-set
- Chapter 13: **Frigerio, G.** Making connections through practitioner research



# Call for papers | Forthcoming events

## Open call for papers for the November 2018 issue: Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

In order to enable a wide and varied spectrum of contributions, there is no specific theme identified for the next issue of the journal. Accordingly, papers are invited on any subject related to career development. As a rough guide, the following contexts and/or topics may be addressed. Any further suggestions to the editor would also be welcome.

### CONTEXT(S) COULD INCLUDE:

- Workplace settings (e.g. career coaching, L&D, HR, outplacement)
- Educational settings (e.g. schools, further education and skills, higher education)
- Informal settings (e.g. community-based)
- Career development work with young people in any context
- Career development work with adults in any context

Potential authors should note the following deadlines:

**Initial expressions of interest: 30th April 2018**  
supported by an article title and brief abstract (100 words)

**Final submissions: 31st August 2018**

### TOPIC(S) COULD INCLUDE:

- Creative practice
- Innovation in relevant concepts or theories
- Current labour market issues
- The organisation, management or marketing of career support services
- Emerging policy, corporate and/or governmental issues
- Expanding and/or innovative services and areas of activity
- Global, international or non-UK-based work
- Social justice, critical pedagogical and/or emancipatory practices
- The role of learning in the support of career development
- New tools, technologies and models
- Fresh critical perspectives
- New case studies and other empirical work
- The relationship with lifelong learning, employability, well-being or other areas.
- The training and education of people who provide career help
- Any other relevant topic

With enquiries and expressions of interest, please contact the editor, Phil McCash: [p.t.mccash@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:p.t.mccash@warwick.ac.uk)

## NICEC Events Calendar 2018

Date and Time	Event	Place
Thursday 10 May 2018 2pm-5pm	<i>Network Meeting:</i> Theme: Decent Work	Allen & Overy LLP, One Bishops Square, London E1 6AD
Monday 18 June 2018 5pm-6.30pm	<i>Seminar:</i> Career guidance and career decision making in Norwegian schools (Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences)	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London
Tuesday 18 September 2018 5pm-6.30pm	<i>Network Meeting:</i> Theme: The impact of Brexit on careers	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London
Thursday 22 November 2018 5pm-6.30pm	<i>Seminar:</i> Girls' career decision-making (Professor Charlotte Chadderton, Bath Spa University)	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London

### Event Costs:

#### Seminars and Network Meetings:

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

# Forthcoming events

## CDI Training, Conference and Events Calendar 2018/2019

Date and Time	Event	Place
Wednesday 18 April 2018 Thursday 3 May 2018 Tuesday 26 June 2018	Using Motivational Tools and Techniques to Support Career Decision Making	London Exeter Sheffield
Friday 20 April 2018	Engaging the Disengaged - Scotland	University of the West of Scotland, Paisley
Wednesday 25 April 2018	An Introduction to Careers Leadership in Schools	London
Wednesday 25 April 2018	Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance – A Workshop for School and College Governors	Sheffield
Thursday 03 May 2018 (am) Thursday 05 July 2018 (am)	Master Class: Transforming the Careers Guidance Interview – An Effective Integrated Counselling Approach	Central London Exeter
Thursday 03 May 2018 (pm) Thursday 05 July 2018 (pm)	Master Class: Achieving a Breakthrough with the “Stuck Client” – The Art of Effective Challenging	Central London Exeter
Tuesday 08 May 2018	Improving Your Group Work Techniques – Scotland	University of Stirling
Tuesday 08 May 2018	How to Start a Careers Advice Business for One	Sheffield
Wednesday 16 May 2018 Wednesday 10 October 2018	Insight into Labour Market Information	Manchester London
Thursday 24 May 2018 Friday 13 July 2018 Thursday 18 October 2018 Thursday 13 December 2018 Thursday 24 January 2019	Advanced Career Guidance and Coaching Skills	Manchester Exeter London Swindon Birmingham
Tuesday 12 June 2018	NLP and Careers – Using Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) in CEIAG to Accelerate the Learning and Inform Decision Making	Birmingham
Thursday 21 June 2018	Career Coaching – Exploring Models and Improving your Practice	Sheffield Hallam University
Ongoing: various dates throughout 2018 and 2019	CDI Certificate in Careers Leadership: essential training for people who are either new to the career leadership role or who have many years of experience and would like to have accreditation for their work.	Venues in Birmingham, London and Manchester

**Webinars (free to CDI members): see the CDI website for dates and topics**

### Booking a place:

For details, costs and booking individual or group places, visit the CDI website:  
[www.thecdi.net/Skills-Training-Events](http://www.thecdi.net/Skills-Training-Events)

For enquiries and to discuss your training needs, contact [Claire.Johnson@thecdi.net](mailto:Claire.Johnson@thecdi.net)

## ABOUT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector. We have a growing membership of 4500 individual members and affiliate organisations and speak with one voice for a lively and 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 services for all throughout the UK.

All CDI members subscribe to a Code of Ethics, which is supported by a strong disciplinary process, and subscribe to the principles of CPD.

Importantly the CDI is responsible for the UK Register of Career Development Professionals; the National Occupational Standards (NOS: CD); the first Career Progression Pathway for the sector; UK Career Development Awards; QCD and QCG/D qualifications; the CDI Academy; the Careers Framework and a UK-wide CPD programme.

Below are a few of our major achievements:

- A powerful brand supported by an evolving website [www.thecdi.net](http://www.thecdi.net); social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) presence; and quarterly magazine *Career Matters*;
- A schedule of CPD, skills training, webinars and conferences based on market analysis and members' training needs;
- A growing media and lobbying presence with the CDI recognised as the *expert voice* in the field; advising politicians, speaking at conferences and commenting on policy;

- The establishment of the UK Career Development Awards – ten sponsored awards including *Careers Adviser/Coach of the Year* and *Careers Leader of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award*;
- Clear focus on professional identity and increasing the professionalism of the sector through our influence, ownership and development of the QCD and QCG/D and the CDI Academy including the new *CDI Certificate in Careers Leadership*.

## ASSURING QUALITY

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 Development (previously the QCG/D) 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 the NICEC/CDI research-focused events which take place twice a year across the UK.

The Journal is made available to all CDI members via our website.



# Contents

## EDITORIAL

- 2 Overview of this issue  
**Lyn Barham and Michelle Stewart**

## ARTICLES

- 4 Career choice and counselling in rural northern Norway  
**Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke**
- 11 Seeking the good life – higher education careers services and moral philosophy  
**Donald Lush**
- 17 Do parents of intending ‘first generation’ students in higher education differ in their need for school support to help their child’s career development?  
**Annemarie Oomen**
- 25 Waiting for a career epiphany – a barrier to career decision making?  
**Kathleen Houston and Eileen Cunningham**
- 33 Career services for international students: comparison of case studies of higher education institutions in Europe  
**Erik Zeltner**
- 40 ‘It all kind of symbolises something doesn’t it?’ How students present their career image online  
**Tristram Hooley and Beth Cutts**
- 47 A critical response to Hooley’s Seven Cs of digital literacy  
**Tom Staunton**
- 54 The Robots are Coming! The response of careers professionals to the future of the graduate job  
**Nalayini Thambar**

