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NICEC

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

NICEC STATEMENT

The Fellows of NICEC agreed the following statement in 2010.

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

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

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

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

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TITLE

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Its former title was *Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal*, ISSN 1472-6564, published by CRAC, and the final edition under this title was issue 25. To avoid confusion we have retained the numbering of editions used under the previous title.

AIMS AND SCOPE

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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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Manuscripts are welcomed focusing on any form of scholarship that can be related to the NICEC Statement. This could include, but is not confined to, papers focused on policy, theory-building, professional ethics, values, reflexivity, innovative practice, management issues and/or empirical research. Articles for the journal should be accessible and stimulating to an interested and wide readership across all areas of career development work. Innovative, analytical and/or evaluative contributions from both experienced contributors and first-time writers are welcomed. Main articles should normally be 3,000 to 3,500 words in length and should be submitted to one of the co-editors by email. Articles longer than 3,500 words can also be accepted by agreement. Shorter papers, opinion pieces or letters are also welcomed for the occasional 'debate' section. If submitting in the period May to October, please send to Phil McCash. If submitting in the period November to April, please send to Hazel Reid. In all cases, the co-editor should be contacted prior to submission to discuss the appropriatenesss of the proposed article and receive a copy of the NICEC style guidelines. Final decisions on inclusion are made following full manuscript submission and a process of open peer review.

SUBSCRIPTION AND MEMBERSHIP

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Boundary crossing

Welcome to the re-launched NICEC Journal. The journal has a new title: the *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*. The revised cover also features a colourful fern to convey the spirit of intellectual diversity and creativity that NICEC exists to foster.

The theme of this issue is boundary crossing. I thought this particularly appropriate as NICEC has recently re-affirmed its commitment to career development work across all sectors, roles and fields. This edition features articles focusing on university, school, Connexions and cross-sectoral contexts. There are contributions from independent consultants, researchers, university academics and school teachers. There are also transdisciplinary contributions informed by literary and ethical studies. I am pleased to welcome papers from both experienced writers and newer voices in our field.

Tristram Hooley and Mark Rawlinson take a transdisciplinary approach to boundary crossing. They seek to explore links between career and literary studies by focusing on the narrative turn in career studies. Tristram and Mark argue for an extension of 'narratological literacy' in career development work.

Gill Frigerio considers boundary crossing in terms of roles. She discusses the respective roles of career counsellor and lecturer, and the roles of student and researcher. Gill proposes that the role of student-as-researcher has value for students and staff alike in enhancing career-related learning.

Helen Colley explores the personal and professional dimensions of ethics work in the transformation of career services into the Connexions-branded integrated youth support service. Ethics work, she argues, is an ever-present aspect of day-to-day practice at all levels of organisations, and this has direct implications for policy, management and research.

Audrey Collin, Wendy Hirsh and Tony Watts report on a dialogue event held to encourage communication between careers professionals and researchers who work in different settings. They argue that the event has led to improved understanding between individuals working in the public and private sectors, and education- and employer-based contexts.

Ruth Hawthorn sets out to explore quality standards for group work across different sectors. She considers group work with clients in employed and unemployed settings, and with young people (and adults) in secondary, further and higher education. Ruth argues that the development of a flexible, informative quality framework would have particular value for work with adults in community settings.

Anthony Fitzgerald discusses his research on the career decision-making of Korean boys. He discusses the boundary-crossing experience of living between two influential and contrasting cultural contexts. Anthony makes recommendations for the practice of career guidance in the UK.

Dorothy Davies discusses career education provision for exceptionally able girls in the school context. She argues that the boundary-crossing nature of career education and the needs of this client group necessitate a 'whole school' approach.

Our final contributions take the form of a debate between **Laura Dean** and **Kerr Inkson**. The debate arises from an article in a previous edition of the journal (No. 23) and focuses on the value of metaphor in career development work. In terms of future editions, I would like to encourage letters and short papers for the debate section particularly arising from articles published.

I would like to close this editorial by thanking all our contributors for making this such an interesting and varied edition of the NICEC journal. I do hope you enjoy reading their contributions as much as I did.

Phil McCash, Co-editor

‘After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding.’ – Walter Benjamin

What can careers workers learn from the study of narrative?

Tristram Hooley and Mark Rawlinson

Once upon a time careers work was straightforward, modern and scientific. In *Choosing a Vocation* (1909) Frank Parsons was clear that he was harnessing the power of science and contributing to the development of a more rational and efficient society. The ideas of science and rationality remained extremely influential as careers work developed. There are examples of this across its history and across the theoretical spectrum that has influenced its development. Examples are the development of reliable and valid psychometric testing, the developmental models of Super who sought to “measure” vocational maturity (Super, 1974) and the sociological interventions of Roberts (1968) who attempted to create a “general theory”. However by 2006 Law was bemoaning a discipline that only seemed to generate inventories. His cry was for “fewer lists, more stories” and for re-imagining careers work around the idea of narrative (2006, p.1).

Law was not the first to seek approaches to the understanding of career and to career helping that recognised the importance of narrative. Cochran (1997) set out an approach to career counselling that foregrounded the role of narrative. Krieshok et al (1999) explored how the telling of stories could be applied to the vocational rehabilitation of veterans, while Bujold (2004) theorised that this turn to narrative in career studies was part of a broader constructivist approach.

The turn to stories was also evident in disciplines where the translation of the fuzziness of life into discrete scientific and bureaucratic categories was not only normal, but foundational in both theory and praxis. Greenhalgh & Hurwitz (1999) assessed the value of narrative for medicine and their arguments for its salience speak clearly to practitioners in other fields.

> The processes of getting ill, being ill, getting better (or getting worse), and coping (or failing to cope) with illness, can all be thought of as enacted narratives within the wider narratives (stories) of people’s lives.
>
> Narratives of illness provide a framework for approaching a patient’s problems holistically, and may uncover diagnostic and therapeutic options.
>
> Taking a history is an interpretive act; interpretation (the discernment of meaning) is central to the analysis of narratives (for example, in literary criticism).
>
> Narratives offer a method for addressing existential qualities such as inner hurt, despair, hope, grief, and moral pain which frequently accompany, and may even constitute, people’s illnesses (48).

To restate these points in more abstract terms: lives, and episodes in lives, may readily be perceived as narratives because they are lived in that way. Stories enable a deeper or more rounded understanding of a person, and more broadly our judgements (objective and subjective) ultimately rest on our ability to decode patterns of symbols. This decoding of symbols is an activity which is at the heart of the study of narrative. Furthermore there is a global cultural resource in the form of millennia of storytelling (a narrative archive of human experience and wisdom) which modern scientific approaches to imagining and managing human life cannot afford to ignore.

This article will argue that in this pursuit of narrative approaches careers work would be advised to look around and see what can be borrowed from others who create and/or study stories. Literature, folklore and popular culture provide an enormous resource of materials that may develop understanding and spark individuals in their explorations of their own career narratives. Ramachandran & Arulmani (2010) made this point powerfully at the IAEVG-Jiva International Conference where they drew on the story of the Ramayana noting how it "is replete with examples of the meaning of renunciation, the importance of assessing opportunities, the origin of talents and aptitudes, the empowering of personal potentials, dealing with unexpected occurrences and barriers ones encounters." Stories, they argued, provide a mechanism through which the career counsellor can connect to their client in a culturally relevant and intensely powerful way.

Examining how your own ideas about career intersect with the ideas of others (drawn from as far afield as literature, history, theology and philosophy) offer opportunities for career learning. It also presents a lens through which academic subjects can be interrogated so that learners can engage their learning with their own life narrative. As Ramachandran and Arulmani argue this can provide both fertile ground for exploration and a technique through which the careers worker can encourage the career explorer to stand back and re-examine their own life and career.

The Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky understood how narratives could provide a way of gaining critical distance from your life. In 'Art as Technique' (1925), he claimed that this distance was produced by the acts of defamiliarization by which writers challenged our habitual conceptions of our experience:

> The author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. A work is created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. (Shklovsky, p.16).

The value of art and culture is to make our experience strange to us again, perhaps by having us experience it from different points of view. More recently, Martha Nussbaum (1995) has drawn on this idea of art as defamiliarization – focusing on the significance of standing in others shoes, a quintessentially narrative experience of identification with others - in the development of empathy and of self-understanding in the field of Legal studies. It is clear that such approaches are of potential value to career learning. If engaging with art and narrative can help you to stand outside of your own life, re-experience it and gain greater reflection on it, then it surely has the potential to be a resource for career education that is at least as useful as the statistics, profiles and trends that make up conventional labour market information. What is more, this approach, with its foregrounding of relations between self and other, could contribute to the development of more realistic and more rounded aspirations, and a focus on work-satisfaction and work-life balance, rather that solely on professional identities and remuneration.

For while stories provide a powerful resource for self-exploration they also have the potential to offer critical perspectives that pose unsettling questions about the individual's relationship with the world of work and the world in general. The history of the novel suggests a continual play-off between exemplary stories (from epistolary conduct novels to Chick Lit) and stories which scoff at the pretension and hypocrisy of advice and didacticism. Frequently the impulses to teach and to to play, to edify and to provoke laughter, are combined in the same narrative. Imaginative literature exploits ambiguity and contradiction to have it both ways (literary scholars call this irony), and our efforts to follow or interpret a story lead us to new cognitive and affective apprehensions of our lives. In the current context, the relationships between individual, work and society on the one hand, and the career narratives that bind these elements together, on the other, may be significantly reappraised in the light of encounters with ironic or defamiliarizing representations. The results of these encounters are not guaranteed to be simplistically affirmative: an important dimension of liberal education as it is practiced in our increasingly vocational higher education system is to provide an interval in which the rejection of ideas of advancement, career development and transition to the labour market can be acted out. In that sense, if no other, student and academic life are marked by traces of an earlier narrative form, the *Bildungsroman*.

The *Bildungsroman* is the narrative genre of the career *par excellence*, and it is therefore a good example of how narrative and thinking about narrative can provide powerful and unsettling career learning. *Bildung* is a German word which designates not only education but personal formation, and hence points to the co-adaptation of inner development and outer duty which is a basis for conceptions of vocation, profession and career. The *Bildungsroman* is, according to Franco Moretti (2000), the foundation of the Western achievement in narrative in the nineteenth century. The form emerged in societies that were as different as France, England and Russia and amounted to the invention of a new arena for the representation of and analysis of social and individual life, and their co-dependence. Moretti is perhaps our foremost scholar of the novel in its contribution to the evolution and dissemination of modern consciousness, so it is a matter of significance that his account of the *Bildungsroman* is so germane to the discussion of narrative in careers work.

Starting from the example of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6), Morettiargues that the genre helps inaugurate the modern age by asserting that 'youth is the most meaningful part of life' (p.3). Wilhelm Meister's *Bildung* or apprenticeship is therefore bound tightly to the idea of career as a hierarchical progression and a process of self-actualisation. It is 'not progress towards the father's work' but instead 'an uncertain exploration of social space' (p.4). Moretti views the *Bildungsroman* as a symbolic resolution of the permanent revolution of modernity and the conflict between social and individual imperatives. The containment or curtailment of youth's rejection of authority, the process of socialization and accommodation (which is symbolized by marriage bonds in older comic genres), is the *Bildungsroman*'s contribution to the 'curbing' of modernity's dynamism in the interest of making it human, or if you like, meaningful and predictable (p.6).

The career or vocation is, from this perspective, understood as a narrative device for achieving a resolution of warring elements, let's call them desire and duty. The character of the young man on the make - in nineteenth-century European fiction he is often a student- is a component of a social vision in narrative form which achieves a remarkable combination of comprehensiveness and empathy. Balzac, the novelist who styled himself the 'secretary' (an emergent vocational role) recording the social history of post-Revolutionary France, provides us with an example of the career novel in *Père Goriot*. This is ostensibly the story of a retired monomaniac (modeled on Shakespeare's King Lear) but to many readers it is more obviously the tale of the career of Eugene Rastignac. This Law student is recipient of guidance from a number of advisors. The master criminal Vautrin is the most Machiavellian of these:

> I have the honour moreover to draw your attention to the fact that there are only twenty posts of Procureur-Général in France and twenty thousand candidates, including some customers who would sell their families to go up a notch (p.96).

Vautrin presents Rastignac with the choice between the relative obscurity guaranteed by the competitive filters along the career ladder, or the celebrity which is his if he consents to a criminal conspiracy leading to an advantageous marriage. The novel of career is juxtaposed with the novel of dynastic marriage in this dilemma. It could be argued that the novel's continuing power over readers is in part down to the uncertainty as to whether Rastignac can continue to resist the temptation laid before him: his declaration of war on Society at the end of the book has undertones of social and moral critique, but more plausibly Rastignac is embarking on a more aggressive phase in his pursuit of money and positional advantage.

Another aspect of the novel's continuing contemporaneity is that the character of Vautrin sounds remarkably like Zygmunt Bauman, in particular the sociologist's argument, in *Consuming Life* (2007), that socialization is essentially about individuals coming to desire for themselves what the system requires of them (p.68). In other words, a career turns a social desirable into an individual desire. *Consuming Life* is, like *The Art of Life* (2008), a book which takes seriously the idea that we are the authors of our identities, creating ourselves in a manner analogous to the creation of a work of art (p.54). But this self-narration is not a mode of freedom: 'these days each man and each woman is an artist not so much by *choice* as, so to speak, *by the decree of universal fate*' (p.56).

This is a bracing corrective to the fantasy that if our lives are story-like in the way we represent them to ourselves, then we can be the authors of our destinies. Instead, the invitation to understand dimensions of career in narrative terms points to the capacity of narrative to model the complexity of human identities in their interaction with social environments, and the capacity of readers to comprehend the outcomes of such interactions as a meaningful, integrated life. This is not to suggest that the *Bildungsroman* holds sway as the type of life-narrative which offers the most potential for using literature to inform thinking about life choices and life-paths, because arguably that genre was exhausted by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Joseph Roth wrote novels in German between the two World Wars, his own career involving a drift from progressive treatments of contemporary social problems to an ironic nostalgia for the lost certitudes of the Austro-Hungarian empire. His finest novel is *The Radetzky March* (1932), which is concerned with the career-trajectory of the family of a military hero who himself could not live with the symbolic importance the Imperial administration placed on him, for instance as an exemplar of heroism in school textbooks. In the novel, the dissolution of the Trottas' state service ethic parallels the collapse of the Empire in the Great War, and is dramatized in the grandson's leaving the army, or, as he puts it 'the end of a career' (p.306). His resignation is a representation in microcosm of the break-up of a social order predicated on deference and duty. Roth presents this larger judgment in a number of ways, but perhaps most memorably through the sardonic observations of Trotta's friend Chojnicki: 'The career has ended…. The career itself has come to an end!' *The Radetzky March* is a memorial not just to the Empire, but to the *Bildungsroman*, the symbol of social cohesion in the form of a vocational accommodation with traditional structures and values.

A contemporary of Roth's, the critic and intellectual Walter Benjamin, speculated about the broader significance of narrative in the twentieth-century in an essay on the nineteenth-century Russian story writer Nikolai Leskov (his 'Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District', a tragic tale of female emancipation, was the basis for Shostakovich's satirical opera).

> An orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers… The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers. But if today "having counsel" is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. (p.86).

Benjamin's rich speculations pose important questions about bringing narrative thinking to bear on 'counsel either for ourselves or others'. In the first instance, he diagnoses a loss of narratability; not just the eclipse of a genre of storytelling, but a general loss of purchase on experience, an inarticulacy or illiteracy which threatens social and spiritual solidarity. This would seem to deny the potential for narrative to transform understanding that we outlined earlier. But this morbid thought is modified by the idea that the very problem of advising, of helping someone fix on a course of action, is an act of narration, 'a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding.'

From the normativity of shared stories (and the very idea of a storyteller) to a modern condition of being in an unfolding story, we seem to have moved from consumption to production. We can argue whether this flies in the face of the logic of the later phases of economic modernization, with its creation of the subject-of-consumption, but the historical dilemma as Benjamin presents it, particularly our loss of sharable experience, speaks to the dynamics of stability and change which characterizes thinking about career. Graduates, for instance, are like Balzac's Rastignac: they can model their intended progress on existing stories about how successful lives have been achieved in the past (Doctor, Lawyer, Engineer are characters in archetypal narratives of individual accomplishment, social hierarchy, and the reproduction of tradition) but they are at the same time creating the new economic, professional and ethical circumstances which will transform the life stories and career paths they in turn will represent to a successor generation.

Literary studies does not have a monopoly on the understanding of stories any more than literature has a monopoly on the telling of stories. However as we have already shown there are concepts from literary studies (such as genre, or defamiliarisation) which have the potential to inform the way that we see, discuss and analyse our careers *as narratives*. To these ideas we could add conceptions of character as narrative device, or the way the narrative is framed and disclosure managed. E. M. Forster's (1927) distinction between story (what happened) and plot (how the happenings are selected and presented to make the narrative) provides a further readily usable concept with which to help learners make explicit what is at issue both in representing experience and in planning opportunities. However, as we have tried to show narrative is not just another technique through which life and career can be given order. Narrative exists as at once part of the living, the telling, and the understanding of experience. Critical examinations of narrative are therefore as likely to lead us away from order, certainty and decision-making as towards it.

The article has argued that there are strong reasons for opening up dialogue between the fields of career studies and literary studies. This is particularly true in the light of the turn to narrative that career studies, like many other social sciences, has witnessed over the last few years. What is crucial is that this turn involves more than the recognition across the field of a unifying metaphor. Narratives are everywhere - nobody thinks twice about references to the narrative of a political candidate, a policy or indeed a product. But the significance of seeing this – of recognizing that what makes ideas, celebrities and things visible is that they are embedded in a story (primarily a media story) - is fully realized, not by a critique of their mythic or socially-constructed character, but by a fluency in decoding stories (Barthes, 1972).

This article only hopes to undertake the role of matchmaker between literary studies and career studies. It would be possible to go much further in examining ideas that could be borrowed from literary analyses of genre by considering how the analytical tools employed by literature specialists could be utilised in career thinking. What kind of narratives are employers expecting from a candidate at interview - realist, modernist or postmodern? Is it wise to lay bare your struggle to come to terms with the necessity of settling down with a *Bildungsroman*-style c.v.? How do ideas about narrative perspective or focalisation enhance the impact that career stories have, and does a practicing awareness of these forms enable the narrator of a life-story to gain fresh perspectives on their life? These are all areas for exploration rather than prescriptions for practice, but it seems likely it will take an extension of narratological literacy beyond the acknowledgment of the importance of stories to capitalize on the potential of narrative approaches for careers work.

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Reinventing careers: creating space for students to get a life

Gill Frigerio

This paper has been influenced by two emergent themes within recent discussion of higher education teaching and learning. Firstly, it has been argued that rather than treating students as passive beneficiaries of careers advice and guidance, they can be engaged with the process of career development through the academic study of theories of career (career studies), which in turn enhances their own career development learning (McCash, 2006). Secondly, it has been proposed that rather than seeing undergraduate students as passive consumers of the knowledge created by academic research, they can be engaged with the research process and recast as 'producers' of knowledge, which in turn enhances their learning experience (Boyer Commission, 1998).

Both of these arguments chime with questions at the heart of higher education today: what is the meaning and purpose of undergraduate study? Who will I become through being a student? They view the student as an 'embodied learner' (Stanbury, 2010) whose learner identity develops with influences from their own discipline as well as its relationship with others. They also flag up the importance of a research-linked curriculum in higher education, and contrast with what has become an action-oriented norm for careers education in UK higher education institutions, which focuses on tactics for managing the transition out of University.

This article reports on a project influenced by these current ideas in career studies and student research. The project set out to help student-researchers explore their own and others developing stories and subjective careers. I provide a brief overview of the project and its findings, and go on to discuss some of the points of interest which emerged as traditional boundaries between student, researcher, guidance practitioner and manager were crossed.

In charting the varying disciplinary origins of career studies, Arthur (2010) acknowledges the important contribution of sociologist Hughes, who identified critical distinctions between the subjective career (how we see it) and the objective career (how the world sees it), and between identity and role, and the interplay between the two. Savickas (2010: 15) acknowledges the influence of Erikson's work in describing how college students "confront the crisis of identity-formation versus role confusion…[by] creating a clear and compelling story with which to get a life and construct a career." I would argue that this creation of a clear and compelling story is one of the possible outcomes of effective career guidance, which operates precisely at this interplay of role and identity. The place of one to one guidance within the career studies movement has not received much consideration hitherto. However, through this project some questions have emerged for guidance practitioners about the unspoken and tacit career development theories that clients may assume underpin their practice. I end with some observations on the potential contribution that one-to-one guidance can make.

Overview of the project

With the support of an academic fellowship from the Reinvention Centre (a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the

Universities of Warwick and Oxford Brookes aiming to support undergraduate research), I recruited a team of 5 undergraduates to work on a research project of their choosing focused on students' career development. The students were drawn from a variety of backgrounds and were not typical users of the University's Careers services, having been recruited via academics involved with the CETL at Warwick. The students were each paid a bursary for their involvement.

The project began with a series of teaching sessions introducing the students to critical perspectives on careers and employability. To shape the teaching experience, I made use of the metaphors outlined in Kerr Inkson's (2007) textbook *Understanding Careers*; Tomlinson's (2007) work on the narratives of employability constructed by students and my own research on students experiences of guidance (Frigerio, 2010). The members of the student team were then asked to design a research project. The research project took shape out of discussions concerning career studies, employability and the wider work of the Reinvention Centre and Student Careers and Skills (the University careers service). The student-researchers planned and carried out a small scale study of student attitudes towards their degree subjects, their participation in extra–curricular activities and future career; using qualitative interviews with 30 fellow students to explore any inter-relationships between these dimensions. I supported the team in the analysis and writing up of their findings in a joint report which is published on the Reinvention Centre website (www.warwick.ac.uk/go/reinvention).

Prior to the first teaching session, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each student-researcher, exploring their own perspectives on career and employability. I used concept mapping (Novak and Gowin, 1984) to allow each student to identify the concepts they saw as relevant to career development, and the interrelationships of these concepts. My aim was to explore their own theory-in-practice about career development and, by repeating the process at the end of the project, to see what (if any) shifts had emerged.

Student findings

The findings in the student joint report of most relevance to this article concern the primacy of familial relationships in students' prior decisions, and the open-ended approach most were taking to their future career development.

When listening to their interviewees' descriptions of the processes of choosing their degree subject, the student-researchers were particularly struck by the direct influence of parents and other influential figures such as teachers. For example, one student described her father as 'choosing' science for her, before immediately correcting herself to say that he had 'suggested' it. Another described his choice of course as a deliberate rebellion against a parental opinion. Students sometimes spoke of denying or regretting this influence, but still spoke a great deal about family reference points in their decision-making processes. The student-researchers' analysis of the data included the impact of role models from a student's community, and the way 'worldview observation generalisations' (Mitchell and Krumboltz 1996) are constructed from the observation of the careers of parents and siblings.

A further theme emerging from the interviews focused on concerns for maintaining a broad range of options at every stage and, for many students, postponing any specific career actions. Many of the students spoke about their choice of degree subject, even specific areas of study such as biochemistry and mechanical engineering, being based on the breadth of options it would give after graduation in comparison with other degree courses considered. Having a range of options was seen as a priority, and only a minority had either actively narrowed these down or taken any concrete actions to find work. Students were often animated in discussion of their prior choices and general aspirations, but could not be more specific about immediate intentions.

For example, one student (T) who described himself as very motivated and concerned for career as part of his future, reflected:

> T: Every now and then I think about it and I wonder by [hesitates] then I push it aside

> and think about what I want to do, first, at University.
>
> Student-Researcher (SR): So, do you think there is anything that has stopped you from coming to concrete ideas?
>
> T: The worry I will miss out on a potential…on a different career I may be better suited for…I always worry that choosing one career over another, it may be the wrong decision.

Another student reflected ambivalence about the future.

> J: I just cannot visualize what is going to happen…I cannot imagine myself working in an office, in a suit.

Others were taking action but with a very open mind: one student had current applications for investment banking internships but was also actively pursuing medicine and teaching, including gaining voluntary experience. Some students appeared open-minded, viewing their futures as something that would begin to take shape at a point beyond graduation but had little connection with their student lives. For example, a final year student commented:

> M: Right now it [career] isn't particularly important because I am concentrating, on my degree and making sure I get the right grade… however when I leave after I do a few years of travelling and calming down after university and sorting everything out after graduation… it will be really important cos I can concentrate on work experience and erm building up my CV to get a job…although I have been trying to get a job and unfortunately haven't been successful so far.

The preference for many students to postpone actions until after graduation will be familiar to many who working UK HE careers services, but what this quotation shows is that acting/not acting are not necessarily either/or positions. This student had been making applications, whilst retaining a very open-minded view of their future.

My learning from the project

I found that the issues I spotted in the data and my reactions to it differed from those of student-researchers. I could imagine a careers adviser's response to these statements if they were made in a guidance consultation. For example, if a guidance client presented with a broad range of ideas, they would be encouraged to break that down into specific priorities and actions; if a client told of a high number of applications for a broad range of jobs with no success, they would be gently challenged to review that approach. On many occasions, as I crossed the boundary from practitioner/manager to researcher, I had to silence my inner careers adviser. The student-researchers' accepted their interviewees' statements at face value and did not drill down further with their questioning. In contrast, I found myself wanting to ask follow questions, correct interviewees' inaccurate labour market information, challenge inconsistencies or lead them through a process of prioritising and planning a specific course of action. Passive comments such as "I didn't get the chance to do an internship." (M) seemed to me to reflect some ambivalence or unease with the application process that I would have sought to understand.

Student-researcher's learning from the project

I think that in career development terms, the impact on the student-researchers link directly to the findings about family influences and open mindedness. Hearing fellow students describe their family influences caused student-researchers to think critically about what had influenced them, and what they had generalised from their observations of working lives. Two student-researchers described how the project had enabled them to explain to their parents why they were choosing to step away from previously 'endorsed' career trajectories.

> M: This was just something I realised recently, that after conducting all the interviews, most of the students were actually talking about how their families influenced them or did not. But I wasn't actually aware that it was so important

> for me. I said that I am now pursuing the same thing that both of my parents are doing, but I wasn't aware that they actually influenced me in any way. I was thinking that it was purely my own decision because they didn't ever say 'you should try studying Computer Science' and thereby influenced me.
>
> GF: But do you think that they did influence you?
>
> M: Of course. Now I know that they were one of the biggest influences for this. I saw them working in Computer Science every day. What else would influence me more than that?
>
> GF: So it's like you know about Computer Science because you've seen them do it.
>
> M: Yes.
>
> GF: Right, ok. How do you now feel about your decision to study Computer Science?
>
> M: I don't know. Actually, now I'm a little confused about whether to continue studying it because I don't find it that interesting anymore.

Following the semi-structured interviews with all 5 student-researchers at the beginning and end of the project, I could see subtle shifts in the way they conceptualised career. First, they began to view career as lifelong. In initial discussions, they had described career in terms of initial (post-graduation) occupational choice, and indeed found it quite hard to engage with the curriculum content which reviewed research from across the lifespan. In looking beyond the initial transition, two student-researchers described themselves as less sure of their choice of career area than at the project outset, but able to cope with that:

> G:…I think that in comparison to some of my interviewees, I was quite sure about what I wanted to do. Actually, though, I don't know. A few weeks ago, it struck me that I'm not so sure after all. I thought that I was sure, but then I realized that it might not turn out the way I thought it would and stuff like that. It was quite scary. Then I realised what that the people had been talking about…it has reassured me that it is ok to be not sure and to wander around. It's ok to try to look for different things. I don't have to just concentrate on one way to go.

Through the life of the project, the students moved from an objective to a subjective view of career by giving more personalised accounts of their own theoretical constructs of career. For example, at the outset, with only their own backgrounds and the messages they had tacitly absorbed to draw upon, they spoke about career in an objective and generic sense, but by the end they had a much greater sense of their own story. This is illustrated by the exchange below, made as the student researcher compared the two concept maps:

> I: …And I think at this stage [first map], I was very much like 'what would a generic human being going into the workplace do?', whereas here [second map] it is 'what would I do'?
>
> GF: Ok.
>
> I: I didn't even realise that.
>
> GF: Yes, it's interesting.
>
> I: I didn't realise that at all.

This seems to illustrate that, by the end of the project, having each spoken to 6 other students and analysed the data of 30 others, they were better placed to apply the theorising to themselves.

Finally, student-researchers began to understand the complexities of 'career' that go beyond the instrumental 'how to' of many action oriented programmes and publications.

> R: Well…When I drew that, [first concept map] I didn't really think…It comes from more of an ignorant standpoint, because this [second map] has got strategy, planning and a more long-term view…and also a more short-term view as well. The time scale for the 'when' factor sort of completely stretches out how you think about the individual things…There's also a small part about how you can do things…but there's not much.
>
> GF: So, why do you think that map has become

> more complex and detailed for you?
>
> R: I think it's because I've obviously learned more about 'career'. It's not just learning more information; it's sort of a more 'meta' way of looking at it. [Looking at the 2 concept maps] That's sort of just one way of looking at something, whereas as this is an elevated view over the field. I've gone all metaphorical!

It is too soon to track students further into their careers and comment on their further career development. In the months since the project concluded, all five have continued with plans for gaining work experience which were already in development when we first met. The coming months will reveal more about whether their enlarged understanding affects how they move forward. My hope is, and the insights highlighted above suggest, that an engagement with career studies like this provides an enhanced sense of their own identity that will serve as a foundation for future career-making.

Observations for career services

In response to my growing awareness of my own different reactions to the data, I began to compare the stories told to the student-researchers to those I was used to hearing from clients and colleagues who worked with them. The researchers commented that they felt the students spoke with different voices to them as peers than they would to careers advisers, and attributed this to their being respondents to a request for an interview, as opposed to active participants in a guidance process.

The project has left me reflecting on the interplay between the range of provision offered by HE careers services: employer events, careers education, careers information and one to one guidance. The availability of one to one support, client demand and patterns in client usage have led most careers services to move away from the sort of longer career guidance appointments that facilitate a non-directive exploration of a client's subjective career, towards an action-oriented series of short appointments.

However justifiable and necessary this action-oriented shift may be, my suggestion is that, we are in danger of creating an expectation that our provision is in the domain of 'objective' career, and has no room for a non-judgemental exploration of themselves. Despite the potential for one to one career guidance (even in the shortest interventions) and careers education activities such as the project I describe, to be a non-directive safe 'space' for students to construct the 'clear and compelling story' that Savickas highlights, this is difficult to convey to clients and it is a perennial problem for guidance practitioners. Often, students seem to expect our approach to be didactic and instrumental, based on a one dimensional, linear career planning process which emphasises a decisive and planful approach. My fear is that, as a result, students believe that careers advisers will judge them negatively if they have made little progress prior to an appointment. As one student-researcher (M) commented when I raised this issue, "I think a lot of students feel that, although not done intentionally, a careers advisor will judge them for their lack of action, or their thoughts on career." When mixed in with careers service marketing materials full of exhortations to act and career self-help publications full of top tips for success, students may not perceive career education and guidance as a safe place to explore career identity from whatever starting point.

In contrast, the project inspired the sorts of conversations around work and career advocated by O'Regan (2010: 23). Whilst it is not possible to comment on the impact on the research participants, for the student-researcher these conversations helped them to construct their own narratives: a transformative process of identity formation and "self-making" (Savickas, 2010: 15). This was a one-off project, and the generous funding is unlikely to be repeated; however, I believe the value of the student as researcher concept in career education and guidance has been demonstrated and that the project has illuminated the power of a career studies-informed approach. It suggests ways in which innovative career education and guidance can facilitate this transformative process of self-making.

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'Ethics work' in career guidance: navigating ethical principles and ethical pressures in an under-resourced service

Helen Colley

There are widespread expectations that strong ethical principles will be at the heart of professional practice in career guidance. But what does 'doing ethics' involve at the day-to-day level of front-line work? And how do higher-level institutional arrangements and policy decisions impact on this? Recent research on career guidance in Connexions suggests that we need to take a much closer look.

Professional ethics: principles and problems

Ethics in career guidance, as in many other human service occupations, have always been held to be of great importance in underpinning high standards of practice, conferring professional status, and at the same time ensuring professional self-regulation and protection of the public. Formal Codes of Practice adopted by professional membership bodies, such as the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG), are often viewed as the foundation on which all other aspects of professional work – knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes – rest (Plant, 2001). In turn, such Codes of Practice are themselves usually founded on principles drawn from the realm of moral philosophy, such as beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and justice (Mulvey, 2002), although such principles tend to be less explicit in career guidance than in some other professions (Reid, 2004). It would be naïve to assume that the existence of these codes renders the resolution of ethical issues simple in practice; indeed, the ICG itself acknowledges this (ICG, n.d., a). Real-world situations, of course, require personal dedication, the constant exercise of professional judgement, and the balancing of different principles which may at times stand in tension.

However, there remain widespread tendencies to simplify the complexities of ethics-in-practice, not least by the presentation of out-of-the-ordinary examples in case studies commonly used in initial education and continuing professional development (CPD) for practitioners. A typical set of such case studies can be found on the ICG's website in support of its Code of Ethical Practice, some of which appear also to be drawn from a university programme in career guidance (ICG, n.d., b). Some convey scenarios in which a schoolgirl has been beaten up by bullies, or a young girl sexually abused by an employer; others, for example, portray moments at which career advisers are put under pressure by the educational institution in which they work to promote its interests above those of their clients. I do not wish in any way to decry the importance of career guidance practitioners understanding how to deal with such serious issues, which of course arise from time to time. Nevertheless, using these kinds of case studies as the main vehicle for learning tends to suggest that ethical matters are posed only by exceptional or occasional problems or dilemmas – an approach that hinders educators, students and practitioners from exploring ethics as an integral and constant aspect of day-to-day practice (Banks, 2009).

Other questions have also been raised about the extent to which Codes of Practice, underpinned by awareness of moral philosophies, can robustly guarantee ethical practice. A decade ago, Mulvey (2001) pointed to the pressures brought to bear upon professional practice by the new managerialism dominating public services in recent years, and attendant risks of 'ethical drift' (pg. 23). Audit cultures and accountancy practices prioritise technical rationality, instrumental thinking, and institutional performance indicators over 'thicker' understandings of public service goods. Not only can this lead to a general distortion of priorities, but also to 'ritual practices' (Cribb, 2009: 34) oriented to meeting targets rather than service users' needs – and even to downright cheating.

The new ICG Code of Ethical Principles (c.2009) for the first time addresses such issues. Within its third principle of 'duty of care – to clients, colleagues, organisations and self', it states:

> Members must fulfil their obligations and duties to their employer, except where to do so would compromise the best interests of individual clients.

In its supporting guidance for the Code, the Institute also argues that this is not simply a matter for individual practitioners:

> Organisations should be operating to principles congruent to the ICG Code of Ethical Practice. […] Members should be prepared to challenge [*their organisation's*] policies and procedures if they could be an infringement of the Code of Ethical Practice. (ICG, n.d., a)

Unfortunately, although the other principles of the Code are illustrated in this document with case studies and commentaries, this element of the third one is not. Once again, this raises issues about power relations in the workplace if practitioners do challenge perceived breaches of the Code by the organisation. It is also blurred by the possibility that organisations may powerfully but informally insist on practices which are never formally specified in written policies and procedures. Any practitioner challenging their organisations may therefore find themselves either ignored or, more seriously, disciplined for their pains. It is unclear from the ICG's guidance what recourse they might have in the situation, or what support might be on offer to them.

A difficulty in this whole discussion is that it can remain at a highly abstract level. Banks (2009) argues that there is a need to pay attention to what she terms 'ethics work': the day-to-day, even hour-by-hour, work of practising ethically, and of confronting ethical issues of a more pervasive, if mundane, kind. To investigate and understand such issues is neither a philosophical nor a codified approach, but a *situated* one, concerned with the often invisible and unspoken social practices of being ethical that permeate our working lives. How *do* practitioners – consciously or otherwise – enact ethical principles in their regular professional activities? What *work* do they have to do to invoke, attend to, or defend these principles? What is the *nature* of routine ethical decisions they have to make and ethical stances they take?

Such 'ethics work' comprised a key theme that emerged from a recent project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, on the 14-19 career guidance profession in England since its absorption into Connexions in 2001 (Colley et al, 2010). The core data in the project were generated in 2008 through narrative 'career history' interviews with 26 practitioners who had originally trained as careers advisers and then worked in Connexions, with lengths of service ranging from 2 to 20 years. Nine of these had subsequently left Connexions for reasons of professional disagreement with the way policy was being implemented through this service; while 17 were still working in Connexions, and were drawn from three local services in the North of England. All participants and locations have been anonymised to protect confidentiality (See end note for details of the full report, including methodology.) The findings shed considerable light on the issues we have discussed so far.

'Ethics work' in Connexions

As many readers will be aware, the delivery of career guidance for young people in England has undergone a series of radical infrastructural changes as a result of government policies over the last 15 years. Provided through specialist careers services since 1973, the New Labour government elected in 1997 first 'refocused' their work to target 'disaffected' youth; and then subsumed careers services whole-scale into a new generic youth support service, Connexions, in 2001. Career guidance was only a part of the broader remit of the new service, which has remained severely understaffed throughout its existence. Careers advisers worked alongside other practitioners drawn from youth services, school-teaching and other social services, all designated as Personal Advisers (PAs). Resources no longer allowed for universal career guidance provision, practitioner caseloads were very high, and service funding was tied to targets for reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training ('NEET'). In April 2008 a further, chaotic restructuring took place as the national Connexions service and its area structures were devolved to the much larger number of local authorities, resulting in further funding reductions. Here, I explore three aspects of PAs' 'ethics work' in this context: ethical dilemmas; pressures to engage in unethical practices; and challenging these pressures.

Ethical dilemmas: whom to help and how?

PAs offered many accounts of ethical dilemmas they faced on a daily basis. In particular, they had to make constant choices about whom they could help, and how best to allocate their meagre time-resources. Some of those working in schools worried about how to try and maintain a universal service and offer CG interviews to all Year 11 pupils, when caseload size meant they had to resort either to inadequate 10-minute interviews, or group interviews which did not offer confidentiality. It was difficult for them to have to make judgements about which young people they could help, whilst others would be seen only cursorily, or not at all:

> I just felt like I was doing a really poor quality of job everywhere and actually not being particularly effective with anybody, and that was really stressful, and I thought that I'm not going to continue doing this. It's not me. (HS, ex-PA)

This tension was sometimes felt particularly sharply by PAs working with young people classified as needing intensive support. Some of the most vulnerable young people needed a lengthy period of help, and were unlikely to come off the 'NEET' register in the foreseeable future – but PAs felt under pressure from managers to meet their 'NEET' reduction targets. This meant prioritising those most likely to come off the register because they needed less support. Faced with this situation, the same PA could take different stances at different times:

> I spent most of last week with one client who is homeless and has got lots of issues and no one seems to want to help him because they've tried before and they say he doesn't engage and goes round and round in circles. That was most of my week. (BM, PA, pg.2 of transcript)
>
> If you can help the majority a bit, it's better than helping one person a lot when they might not even move into something positive. (BM, PA, pg. 4 of transcript)

PAs seemed to feel that these were individualised decisions they had to make on a continual basis. Organisational policies and procedures appeared to be reduced for them to the singular imperative of meeting 'NEET' targets, offering little guidance to practitioners in their decision-making. Supervision meetings, which might have been an opportunity to gain support and spread some of the responsibility away from the purely individual level, were described by most PAs as managerialist and disciplinary in nature.

Pressures towards unethical practice

A number of PAs recounted instances where they had felt under pressure to engage in practices which they felt were clearly unethical. One typical example involved submitting young people on the 'NEET' register to vacancies which the PA believed were inappropriate for the client, as in this account:

> I can't remember which training provider I sent [*the client*] along to, but it was whichever one was recruiting at the time, and I sent him off

> to the training provider and that was it. If I had the choice, I would not do that with him, but you know, when these e-mails go out, you're monitored. You'll have a monthly supervision, and you were sort of given – it wasn't the thumbscrews – but you were basically grilled on why you didn't offer this person this or that or what-have-you. So I felt with this person I had no choice, and you go home, at the end of the day, thinking: 'Why do I bother? This is not what I trained for'. (BT, ex-PA)

This highlights how difficult it can be for PAs to adhere consistently to their ethical beliefs and practices. Other examples reflect different inconsistencies. One ex-PA told us of 'creative accounting' measures by one manager and their team to ensure that an unfeasibly large target had been 'met'. Here, the unethical aspects of such cheating appeared to be outweighed by the ethical benefits of maintaining resources to help those young people with intensive needs who could realistically be supported by the service.

A number of ex-PAs also felt their role had been shifted away from caring for young people, and towards surveillance and control. This was reinforced by the fact that Connexions had very few resources or facilities for directly supporting young people, but was equipped mainly with tools for tracking, and represented another ethical pale they were unwilling to go on crossing.

> I found it a little paradoxical that we had to go and do home visits and sort of play a heavy-handed role, and yet if the [*young person*] came into the office, we had nothing, nothing more to offer, really. That was a difficult situation to be in because it was like a policing, authoritarian thing to do to them. (LJ, ex-PA)

Challenging unethical pressures

Nevertheless, in line with the ICG Code of Ethical Practice, PAs and ex-PAs had often challenged managers about 'ethical drift'. However, this led mainly to conflictual encounters rather than any change. One narrative here illustrates very well the on-going 'ethics work' of one recently-qualified PA, encountering, internalising, and then resisting the pressure to meet targets:

> It's pressure all the time to get people signed up [*for training courses*], and I've got one [*client*] now and I can tell he doesn't really want to do it, and before I came here [*today*], I was supposed to take him to his training provider for his first induction, and I said, 'You need to go'. He said, 'I can't. I've got to stay at home and look after my sister', or something. So I came away agitated because I couldn't get the sign on.
>
> But it shouldn't be like that at all. The young person has got a situation at home. He can't deal with it. He's got things going on at home. He wants to do his driving lessons. He's got to look after his older sister who apparently is disabled. So this is the second time he missed his appointment, and I'm putting pressure on that young person to sign up, and it almost reminds me of back years ago when a double glazing salesman rang, saying: 'Come on! Sign here, sign here!' I'm thinking, this isn't right, this. I had to back right off and say, 'Fine, if you've got things on the go. If you want to sign up, fine. If you're not ready for it, that's cool', and yet I'll get a bit of background grief [*in supervision*] about me not achieving a sign-up. I don't think it should be like that, myself. It shouldn't be like that at all. It should be person-centred. (SB, PA)

This PA repeatedly challenged his manager over similar situations, but found the response conflictual. He was warned to remember that meeting targets paid his wages, and the 'grief' did not remain in the 'background'. When his short-term contract came to an end, it was not renewed, and he lost his job. Similar accounts of these pressures were frequent among ex-PAs, and contributed significantly to their decisions to quit Connexions.

There is a postscript to add to these data before moving on. In disseminating this research, I have been struck by the polarisation of responses these accounts have provoked. We have had many practitioners say how strongly the data resonate with their own experiences, and how pleased they are that the project has made visible the pressures and dilemmas they face. On the other hand, some senior managers from Connexions have stated that they do not recognise these problems, denied that they exist in their services, and challenged the validity of our findings. This may of course be the case: to gain such in-depth data, we could only talk to PAs and ex-PAs from 11 of the 73 local services existing in early 2008. But this does not eradicate the validity nor the broad generalisability of such case study research, for – as physical scientists well know – we can learn a very great deal from only one single case, so long as it is thoroughly investigated and properly theorised (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In our project, the strong similarity of experiences within 11 different services, and across PAs with very different lengths of service since their career guidance training, suggests that this is not just coincidental. (We would also question the basis on which managers' objections are raised, since they seem founded on assertion rather than evidence.) How, then, can we understand the research data about ethics work in Connexions, and their broader implications?

Professional ethics: from top to bottom

The narratives constructed by PAs demonstrate the on-going deployment of their vocational commitment and their professional judgement in trying to 'do the right thing' by their young clients, and the tensions and pressures they had to navigate as policy decisions conflicted with this. All this, I would argue, constitutes work although it is not often recognised as such. Reid (2004) has argued that we need to trust this 'ethical watchfulness' (pg. 46), balancing practitioners' common sense with more formal measures of accountability. While she suggests that supervision might offer a means to do that, and support PAs by providing a space for reflection and co-reflection, our data indicate that this is not necessarily the direction that supervisory practices have taken in Connexions. Moreover, we see clearly how the filtering down of national policies, mediated by targets and resources allocated to services, have a major impact on the day-to-day ethics work of individual PAs. This indicates the need to 'zoom out' from the practitioner level in order to understand fully these processes.

Cribb (2009) argues that, while professions and practitioners themselves clearly do play an important part in the construction of ethical principles and practice, we need also to consider other levels at which these are formed. Caring work in human services does not comprise only the relationship between practitioner and client, but also the work of those who determine care needs and allocate care resources – that is to say, policy-makers and employing institutions (Tronto, 2010). All too often, these remain invisible behind front-line human service work, and absent from the day-to-day ethics work this entails; yet part of their work is in the pre-construction of occupational roles *and the ethical positions and practices they invoke*, prior to the entry of any actual practitioners into those roles (Cribb, 2009). Yet this policy formulation tends to be conducted from positions of power and privilege, assuming a hierarchy of expediency over responsibility, and outcome over process, which obscures concerns about the manner of policy implementation (Wilson, 1999). Managers of human service institutions are in a difficult position, mediating between those who formulate policy and those who implement it as front-line practitioners. But as Mulvey notes, they cannot place all the responsibility for ethical practice on the shoulders of practitioners:

> …a professional-become-manager managing in a way that is at odds with the values of his or her professional discipline is simply incongruent (2001, pg. 22)

As we have seen from the project data, practitioners' position at the end of the 'implementation' chain confronts them with considerable dilemmas around ethical boundaries. When, for example, is the greatest good served by ensuring the provision meets its targets, retains its funding, and is thereby enabled to continue functioning as best it can? Where does the boundary lie between the valid claim that work roles can have on our ethical behaviour, and our own independent ethical agency? To what extent does the re-ordering of work such as career guidance constitute a *reorientation* of ethics, or go over into an *erosion* of ethics? When should we conscientiously object, comply, or adopt a stance of 'principled infidelity' (Cribb, 2005: 7-8)? At the very least, there is a need to understand that ethics work goes on from top to bottom in career guidance and other human service work. At the same time, the top-down imposition of ethical positions and practices, however unintentional, can create unsustainable tensions for practitioners at the 'bottom', and intensify – both in terms of frequency and in terms of difficulty – the ethics work they have to do. As the ICG notes these tensions in its new Code of Practice, it would be very helpful for its supporting guidance to include discussion of how the conflicts recounted by PAs in our project might best be addressed, and what support may be on offer to practitioners issuing challenges to unethical procedures.

Finally, this poses a research agenda for career guidance, youth support, and other forms of human service work. Ethics work arose in our project as a powerful theme within a broader investigation of the changing roles, identities and practices of careers advisers within Connexions. There is, however, a need for further, in-depth investigation focused on the study of ethics work, situated in authentic practice settings, and using sociological methods and frameworks of analysis. We have already seen in our project the value of narrative 'career history' interviews. Ethnographic approaches, using on-going observation in addition to interviews, might be particularly revelatory – although gaining access to services for such research might be difficult, especially when they are facing further cuts in resources. At the same time, a larger-scale survey might also be useful in identifying more fully the extent of ethical conflicts and issues that are being encountered across 14-19 career guidance in England. Whilst such research may not have an immediate impact at the 'top', it might provide evidence for professional bodies like the ICG to advocate with policy-makers, and it might be valuable in informing the initial education and CPD of practitioners, as well as supervision practices in the workplace.

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Notes

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Sharing experience of careers work in different settings

Audrey Collin, Wendy Hirsh and A. G. Watts

What do the practices of career support given to individuals in various settings have in common? Whether labelled career advice, career education, career guidance, career counselling, career coaching or career development, what are the differences between them? The answers to these questions could throw new light on practice in the career field and suggest ways to enrich it. However, the relative lack of contact between career professionals working in different settings – such as schools, colleges, higher education, public employment services, the voluntary sector, private-sector career services and the workplace – gives little opportunity to address these questions. We therefore propose that practitioners from a variety of settings should engage in dialogue; and, importantly, that researchers should also take part in this dialogue, and help to stimulate and disseminate learning widely across the whole career field.

We have set out a proposal for dialogue across settings (Collin and Hirsh, 2010) which can be seen as part of a wider development to break down the unhelpful compartmentalism of the various academic disciplines with an interest in the concept of career (Collin and Patton, 2009). We are seeking to put our proposal into effect by promoting opportunities for dialogue among career professionals and researchers who work in different settings. We hope that these dialogues will be held in such a way that the learning from them can be reflected upon and disseminated. Organisations might wish to include a dialogue event within their own programmes, or to 'piggy-back' such an event on to one of their scheduled meetings. Anyone interested in how we are taking these ideas forward, or in running a dialogue event and wanting some support with its content, facilitation or reporting, will find our contact details at end of this article.

The present article reports on a half-day dialogue event held by NICEC in July 2010. Those invited included NICEC Fellows and Members, the members of the 'dialogue action group' (see Collin and Hirsh, 2010), and some other experienced and reflective practitioners. The 27 participants came from public- and private-sector providers, and included careers advisors in schools and higher education, organisational career consultants/advisors, academics and researchers. They belonged to diverse professional bodies.

The event was built around structured and concurrent dialogues on the three themes of 'purposes and rationales', 'delivery models, tools, and approaches', and 'ideas and theories', each as applied to careers work in various settings. The afternoon opened with brief introductions to these themes, after which the participants, having been briefed with a list of questions before the meeting, worked in the facilitated group of their choice. The event concluded with observations from the rapporteur, Tony Watts (incorporated in the 'Emerging themes' section below), and a summary of follow-up actions. This article is part of the process of reflection on, and dissemination of, the dialogue which took place at the event.

The purposes and rationales for careers work

Charles Jackson introduced the topic of the 'purposes' of careers work and its 'rationales' with a quotation from Amartya Sen (1999: 85) about development. Sen saw this as the 'capabilities of people to do things – and the freedom to lead lives – that they have reason to value'. Charles applied this to career, to emphasise the essentially moral purpose of careers work.

Two other broad purposes for guidance, from the economic/business perspective and that of social policy, often shape provision. For governments, such drivers tend to prioritise certain groups such as the low-skilled, the unemployed and benefit claimants. In business, career attention is often focused on high fliers, or people being made redundant. This leaves many people without much career support at all, making the issues of the extent of universal services, and how limited further services are to be targeted, all the more critical.

Charles suggested that careers work often has several sets of stakeholders: if we do not persuade them of the wider value of career support, then provision is not sustained. Deeper issues of purpose lie beneath the surface of debates about models of provision. These include: whether we are seeking to enable or to control individuals; whether guidance can address discrimination; whether we seek to influence the attitudes and actions of employers; and whether individuals are seen as responsible for their own employment difficulties.

This group's participants were asked to examine the purposes and rationales for career support as seen by the different stakeholders in services in different settings. What rationales can more readily be sustained across stakeholders and in changing circumstances?

Varied rationales and service provision

The group strongly endorsed the moral standpoint of Sen's quotation, and noted that it stresses 'life', not just 'work', and allows for many kinds of 'value' from the individual's point of view. Participants also explored the educational purpose for career support as helping individuals to learn to manage their career. This starting-point tends towards a universal and developmental purpose for careers work. It contrasts with the social policy and economic perspectives in which careers work is often seen as addressing the problems or 'deficits' of particular types of people, so leading to more targeted career services. Targeted services can be compulsory or voluntary for the individual. Voluntary services can lead to the better-informed taking them up (if they are seen as desirable), or can become stigmatised (if they are associated with disadvantage and deficit).

Clients who are in work or outside it

Career support may have different purposes for people who are 'inside' organisations or in work than for those who are 'outside' the active workforce. Some employers have devised career strategies to retain valued employees, but such approaches may further raise entry barriers for those 'outside' work, especially older workers or those leaving full-time education.

Varied stakeholders, different purposes

Among the stakeholders in career support are individual clients, practitioners, guidance-providing organisations and organisations funding or influencing the service. They commonly have somewhat different perspectives on the purposes of guidance. At times their interests are congruent, but they can also pull apart or directly conflict. The current thrust of policy rhetoric is to position individual clients more as 'customers' than as 'clients' for guidance, although what this means in practice is unclear.

Guidance as identity formation for the young

Many aspects of purpose, values and guidance practices are shared between professionals working with adults and with young people. However, it could be argued that there is also a fundamental difference. Up to their mid-20s, most young people are still engaged in establishing a distinctive adult identity, and career support is intimately linked to the creation of that identity. Linked with identity is aspiration: guidance can, and sometimes does, play a significant part in motivating young people to learn.

Career support as efficient use of resources for adults

In the current fiscal and policy climate, the rationale for the state to provide guidance for adults may well be challenged (though since the dialogue, the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review's commitment to an all-age careers service is encouraging in this respect). Providing career support for adults can be seen as enabling individuals to make the most efficient use of whatever learning and work opportunities are available. Conversely, cutting such support may save money in the short term but lead to career decisions which are costly both for the individual and the economy.

Private-sector suppliers

Career professionals in private-sector suppliers are involved in outplacement and talent management on the one hand, and as providers of unemployment and welfare-to-work programmes on the other. They share many purposes and values with those working in public-sector agencies, but there is insufficient interaction between the two.

Employer-based guidance

Career support provided by or through employers creates some dilemmas for career professionals concerning impartiality and independence. Those working in these settings may be under pressure to see only those who are being 'counselled out' of the organisation, and not those whom the organisation is keen to retain, for fear that guidance may tempt them to leave. The purposes, price and nature of outplacement support may change as employers' policies and the labour market change over time.

Delivery models, tools and approaches

Christina Evans introduced this topic by sketching some of the delivery models and approaches used in careers work in higher education, schools, employing organisations and by independent practitioners. In addition to the formal delivery of career support by private- as well as public-sector suppliers, the importance of informal careers work – especially in the workplace – was emphasised. This can be as part of training programmes, networking groups, through self-help resources and via professional bodies. In higher education, careers work is often embedded in the curriculum through meta-skills development, emphasis on personal development and reflection, work experience/volunteering and activities with employers and alumni.

Christina also referred to: the focus on talent management in employing organisations; varying access to career support for different groups at different life stages; and finding the balance between treating career development as continuous ('keeping healthy') and addressing periods of crisis. Perhaps more important than differences in delivery models *per se* is the great variation in the quality and consistency of support available.

This group was asked to examine the practical delivery models for career support in different settings, tools and approaches, innovative models and how interventions are designed to help individuals take real action.

Varied practices, common interests

Participants found it difficult to generalise about differences in the structure and quality of career support between sector settings, as differences between organisations even in the same sector appeared great. The group felt that for good practice in any setting, we need 'institutional dynamism' and individuals with the vision and ability to influence policy and resources.

Although the mix of career activities varied between organisations, different settings were interested in a similar range of options – for example, group work as well as one-to-one interviews and methods using ICT. Another similarity across settings was the intention to embed career learning and personal development planning within the daily experience of learning and working.

Impartiality is an important concept for all career professionals, although there was some discussion of whether its real importance varies from one setting to another.

Partnerships of organisations and of people

Partnership working has long been central to good provision across all sectors. Schools work with external specialist services (and also with employers, parents and others), though these partnerships were seen as under threat by current policy changes. In HE there are internal partnerships (between careers services and teaching departments, for example) and also between HEIs and external employers and professional bodies.

Organisational partnerships require collaborative working between different kinds of people. For example, specialist career staff work variously with teachers in schools, with academics in HE, and with managers in employing organisations.

Access and entitlement

Settings have many different issues with regard to access and entitlement to career support. Entitlement is often not clear, and there may be a further gap between access policies and availability in practice. Some groups – for example, the self-employed and those working in SMEs – tend to have no distinctive provision at all.

Applying career learning to real decisions

A significant issue across settings is whether individuals can apply the career education they receive, and the career planning skills they supposedly acquire, to real decisions. Are guidance and support services accessible to them when they are making decisions and most need that support? The group talked about career professionals having ‘recipes’ or practical understandings of how to make career decisions, which may not be fully conveyed in the way career education is delivered. This gap between theory and practice may in part be reflected in contrasting ideas about career guidance as a one-off experience or as enabling people to manage their own careers.

Ideas and theories

Lyn Barham suggested that the word ‘theory’ can refer both to formal theories and to the loosely associated ideas that inform practice. Practitioners may not draw explicitly upon the former, but what and how they practise will be based upon the latter, including their own personal theories. These may often be implicit and unacknowledged, and are informed by their ‘world views’, which are highly individual hypotheses about such basic issues as the nature of the world and how it can be known (Pepper, 1942).

Practitioners’ personal theories influence their response to ‘career’ in its various forms – institutional or individual, objective or subjective – and in particular to the latter, which is complex, highly individualised and nuanced. While subject to individual interpretation, the career is shaped structurally and is socially situated.

In the interaction between helper and client in careers work, their individual world views, understandings of career, and expectations of what for both of them constitutes ‘help’, will be brought into juxtaposition, possibly involving conflict and negotiation.

This group was asked to discuss how ideas and theories inform our understanding of the nature of careers and of the processes of career guidance and support, whether and how theories are used in practice, and whether new theories or ideas are needed.

The significance of theories that look below the surface

The discussion began with the significance of theories that recognise the political and social dimensions of the organisation of work and of labour. Such theories focus on how careers are socially constructed through the social structure and the division of labour, and draw attention to issues of power and gender. Aspects of identity are similarly constructed: the significance of this is seen when outsiders join an organisation and need to 'fit in'. Attention to how employees have to manage and deploy emotion reveals otherwise hidden aspects of work in service and care settings.

Explicit and implicit theories

Participants recognised that there are both explicit and implicit (or tacit) theories of career. Unacknowledged assumptions underpin the powerful 'discourses' of employability and league tables that are current in schools, universities, and the professions. At the same time, practitioners, clients and academics may articulate competing and critical theories. It was pointed out that it is important to contextualise ideas and theories.

Education and society

The group discussed the implications for careers work in education of how people connect to society through work. Schools tend to offer an individualised notion of career, based on predominantly psychological perspectives, and expressed in terms of individual 'results'. But if we see work and society as interconnected, then careers work in educational settings should have a citizenship dimension which embraces both a proper 'selfishness' and a caring for others. This is reflected in approaches that bring mentors into schools. These also develop the self-efficacy of young people.

The changing context of career

Some academics are examining the impact of global economic and labour market changes on traditional patterns of work and learning. People's responses to such change may lead to disruption of their working lives but also to new connectivities and collective agency (Seddon, Henriksson and Niemeyer, 2010), giving new career development possibilities. At the same time, the group noted that we should not forget or neglect 'old' career theories and models. One of those mentioned was the 'old new' idea of the boundaryless career, though that may overstate how much contexts are changing.

Decisions and career development

This group recognised the need to pay attention not only to decisions and turning-points, but also to the periods between them. The Canadian and Australian Blueprints were cited as examples of a contemporary perspective that focuses on continuous career development. However, this can create a tension in practice: while some clients may value the opportunity to develop a toolkit of lifeskills, others may want help in dealing with their immediate situation.

Other issues for theory to address

Other issues mentioned as requiring attention in theory included: the linking of structure and agency; of the explicit and the tacit; of the organisation and its context. As with the 'Purposes' group, there was interest in how 'outsiders' negotiate careers. It may also be useful to examine how theory and practice in the career field might relate to the strong current interest in well-being and positive psychology.

Emerging themes

It seems that conversing explicitly across guidance settings decontextualised, and thereby clarified, some underlying principles and tensions. Issues emerging from this process included those of leadership, impartiality, partnership, entitlement and access. These took different forms in different settings, but were based on common principles and raised common tensions and dilemmas.

Various purposes and organisational constraints

A key theme of the dialogue was the tension between a broad and moral view of the purposes of career support and pragmatic views of its various purposes and organisational constraints. Indeed, participants were well aware of the different interests of the many stakeholders in careers work which takes place in various settings: public/private; in education/employing organisations; concerned with adults/young people; etc.

Impact on career support

Careers work is essentially labour-intensive, and organisational constraints may lead to variable access. Some individuals may receive career support via the educational or work organisation to which they belong; some as citizens. But access in many settings is targeted to particular groups of people and therefore restricted.

Organisational priorities also influence the quality and nature of career support, which addresses the needs of the individual but also the economic and organisational context in which it is being provided. In addition, stakeholders in career support have vested interests, for example in retaining pupils or employees, which may impinge on the impartiality and client-centredness of services.

Impact on career professionals

Professionals often find themselves having to resolve conflicts between idealism and pragmatism in individual cases, for example how to offer one-to-one support to an individual for whom on-line support is not appropriate. For them to manage such tensions calls for what is essentially political behaviour; strategies, tactics, and choices have to be made in the light of the particular context and available resources. The organisations with which they work need vision and leadership to give them clear goals and the support to achieve them.

Managing the tensions in careers work mirrors to some extent the process of career development itself. Individuals' career development usually has to be negotiated within organisational contexts, with very uneven distribution of power, and sometimes with sharp distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. One of the purposes of career support services is to empower people within these processes, in negotiating their sense of individual identity, of organisational identity, of social identity, and of social contribution.

Career support for life and at key moments?

Another strong theme across settings was that career support is potentially both an educational activity (skilling individuals for managing their work and learning) and also a support at particular moments of decision or crisis. The former tends to be developmental, preventative and aspires to be universal in nature. A similarity across settings (including employing organisations) is the intention to embed such career education into daily learning and work. By contrast, careers work aimed more at crisis support is often based on a deficit model and more likely to be offered only to some people at some times. An issue raised by two groups was the relationship between these two perspectives and, for example, whether career education goes far enough in equipping individuals to apply their career skills when they face moments of crisis or decision. This would be a useful topic for practitioners and researchers to discuss further.

Theory and practice

Careers work is carried out in a fast-changing environment. The nature of work, organisations, values, life courses, identities – and hence of opportunities, threats, motivations, aspirations, structures – are all changing. We need new ways of thinking about career, and still face huge conceptual challenges in making sense of our rich and ambiguous field. There are already many career theories, but few are practitioner-friendly. Professionals in all settings need clearer explanations of such theories as well as greater awareness of their own tacit and implicit theories. Academics need to work closely with career professionals on the application of theory to practice, preferably across settings, and especially in initial education/training and continuing professional development.

The process of dialogue across settings

Many found this dialogue a novel and refreshing experience, and it achieved a brief meeting of minds. Participants used their own examples to identify and explore issues of common interest. The discussions were too short and too broad, however, to permit a systematic identification of the similarities and differences between the settings represented. More formal research on professional practice in different settings would be valuable.

The dynamics and outcomes of a dialogue will inevitably be shaped by the roles and settings of its participants, and who they are will be determined by the nature of the organisation hosting the event. The role of a discussion facilitator is crucial in keeping a group focussed on both a topic area and making cross-setting comparisons. Note-takers are also essential, to enable the wider sharing of the dialogue.

Of the three topics we chose for this event, 'Delivery models, tools and approaches' gave the greatest opportunity for participants to share concrete experiences. There were more academics and fewer practitioners who discussed 'Ideas and theories', making it more difficult to relate theory to practice. However, we can see the overall event in some sense as theorising practice. One suggestion was that this could be done in a direct and specific way through using career theories with clients ('teaching the recipe', 'breaking the code'). Phil McCash (2008) has been promoting this idea through his concept of 'career studies' in higher education: there would seem to be considerable scope for pursuing this idea further.

In theorising practice in these ways, the conversation started here could be seen as establishing dialogues not only between practitioners working in different settings, but also between practice and theory. In doing so, it may help practitioners to develop stronger tools for coping with, and also informing and influencing, public and organisational policies.

In a broader international context we can see this event, and others which may follow, as part of wider movement to establish closer working between the many professional associations to which career professionals belong. In Australia, for example, the Careers Industry Council of Australia (CICA) has been supported by the Australian Government to develop cross-sectoral professional standards. Here in the UK the work of the Careers Profession Task Force, and the subsequent establishment of a Careers Profession Alliance (which has already agreed a common code of practice), are promising recent developments.

Such top-down, institutional actions need to be complemented by a bottom-up process, driven by practitioner experience of the benefits of establishing common ground across settings. The dialogue described here can be seen as instigating such a process. The range of participants at this NICEC event meant that the conversation has started at two of the more difficult potential intersections: between the public sector and the private sector, and between education-based services and employer-based services. Current professional structures tend to reinforce barriers. But the discussions that have taken place here suggest that it should be possible to surmount them.

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The website http://www.careerstudies.net is being used to collect and share materials relevant to these dialogues across settings.

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Quality criteria for group work

Ruth Hawthorn

This paper reports on a practical rather than a scholarly exploration of how quality assurance in career learning for groups is approached across the different sectors of career guidance largely in the UK. In some sectors (career education in schools is an obvious example) group work is a main mode of delivery and we would expect all quality criteria to address it. In others, where the one-to-one interview is seen as the professional's key contribution to client progression, we could expect that group work would be sufficiently different to require its own set of quality criteria. With these expectations I conducted a small exploration across the spectrum of career help that was available in early 2010.

Quality criteria include formal lists of standards for practitioners and services, but other measures too, some of which are subsumed in the standards but not always spelled out. Group work is mentioned somewhere in most professional practitioner standards, but in some cases the implication is that the competences are just the same, only applied to more than one person at a time. I spoke with managers and practitioners as well as researchers and writers of standards, for career work with adults in employment and unemployment, and for young people (and adults) in secondary, further and higher education, and also those not in education, employment or training. Where possible I looked at the standards and materials myself. While I found good and interesting approaches in some sectors, in others there was a suprising lack: not only of specific formal practitioner standards, but also of any sense that they might be needed – either because the differences with one-to-one work were not appreciated or because group work was so strongly the expected mode of delivery that it was not seen as even potentially problematic.

The writing of lists of standards is of necessity a dry and technical skill. In order to be of use in assessment and quality assurance they require a precise grammar and logic. But the gap between the grammatically correct standard on the one hand, and the reality of good professional practice on the other is an extremely difficult one to bridge. The necessary formality has a way of sucking the underlying meaning out of something that needs to be lively and creative. This may contribute to why standard writing for group work collapses: when formalised, the career planning content may look so like one-to-one work that it is not worth repeating separately. But I will suggest that one consequence of this is that not enough attention is paid to the great benefits of good group work, ones that cannot be achieved in one-to-one situations. Its strengths and differences lie not only in the career content, but in the pedagogy, and it should not be seen as an alternative to individual work but in addition to it. If the real advantages of group work could be reflected better in professional quality criteria it could do more to improve the way we help individuals.

Conversations with practitioners suggested at least three ideas that would merit further investigation:

i. some of the best group work was done without using detailed quality standards

ii. sometimes, where certain quality criteria were used, it made things difficult and actually worse for the clients and the staff.

iii. it is not helpful to look at group work itself, or the quality criteria, in isolation from their context.

This is a rapidly changing field. My examples are taken mainly from the situation in Britain in early 2010, with some from a European context. But while the details may change, the issues may be more enduring. As always, some cross-fertilisation between sectors of practice can be helpful.

Themes

i. Career standards 'nested' within other standards

Career learning in groups is often offered within or alongside other programmes that have their own systems of quality assurance. This means it is hard to find standards for group guidance that stand alone, and do not need to be read alongside other standards. For example, career education and guidance in schools is quality-assured as part of all educational programmes by Ofsted. Ofsted standards (Ofsted 2010) themselves do not go into detail about careers work (although many of the outcomes that Ofsted looks for do come from careers work. See Barnes, 2010; Ofsted, 2009). So the Department for Children, Schools and Families also developed detailed standards for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) (DCSF, 2009). These standards give detail on the content the programme should cover, and are used alongside and within the more general Ofsted ones. While this nesting is complicated and contributes to the sometimes extreme stress of the whole inspection regime, the detailed IAG standards do give teachers an idea of what the curriculum should be - and also what they need to be doing with other interested parties such as parents and local employers. But perhaps because it is so obvious to practitioners that it does not need stating, they do not cover more generic points about group pedagogy and its potential in careers work:

- That people (of any age) can learn from others in the group
- That group work can build up peer support
- That group work enables an organiser to bring in outside speakers and specialists.

Group work in a school setting (or other initial education including further and higher education) has advantages that are not available to much group provision for people outside it. These could be the basis for additional quality criteria in other sectors:

- That group work is supplemented by individual career guidance
- That with continuity from year to year the programme can be improved gradually and teachers can develop good practice.

Another reason for the invisibility of group work among quality statements comes from another version of the nesting problem. It is difficult to draw a clear line between standards for group guidance and standards for one-to-one work: many of the skills needed overlap. But even where standards include groupwork they rarely explain what is different about it. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) lists 91 competence statements but only one, 4.4, is about groups and all it says is 'Use group counselling techniques' (IAEVG, 2003).

ii. Multiple stakeholders

Career work can be funded by more than one government department or other organisation, each with its own quality criteria, for example in provision for unemployed adults which has several different government sources for funding as well as an extensive voluntary sector. Jobcentre Plus programmes are directly linked to the payment of benefits, so involve an element of compulsion for the clients. In the spring of 2010 the national careers advice service for adults was called *nextstep* (now replaced by its successor Next Step). Although there was no compulsion to use it, funding for one-to-one help was free of charge to some clients, but others could only have face-to-face help (as opposed to web or telephone help) if it was in groups.

Both with Jobcentre Plus programmes and with *nextstep*, group provision mainly took the form of job-getting skills: one-off workshops on some aspect of self–awareness or of job-search, like CV-writing or interview skills. These were usually short, some only lasting half a day. There were some on-going group options that people could drop in or out of up to a fixed time limit of a few weeks, before going off to vocational skill training or, hopefully, into a job. They did not offer full career guidance or career education, or career management, but they were a part of that work. Just as much as more substantial programmes they needed meaningful quality criteria.

Perhaps because neither staff nor clients had much choice, a feeling had developed among both that group work was less use than one-to-one help. It is true that some of the advantages of group work we saw in schools are absent here:

- There was no time for the group participants to build up peer support
- The funding was never good enough to employ experienced, qualified staff
- The funding was never long-term enough for them to develop expertise and improve their programmes.

Some of this group provision suffered badly as a result. But in spite of this there were good examples of what is possible within the remit. The agencies that actually delivered this service were subcontracted on an open market and varied considerably in nature, so clear, official quality standards on how to strengthen and extend this good practice to others would have been helpful. But none of the official quality arrangements available in early 2010 that were used for these programmes , including practitioner standards, were specific to group work. *Nextstep* staff had qualifications in one-to-one work but there was very little about the career potential of group work in their qualification: the two elements in the NVQ 4 unit on group work focus on group management rather than on career content (Edexcel, 2006). These standards were being revised a the time of this enquiry, but drafts of the new standards were not significantly different with respect to groups (Lifelong Learning UK, 2010). *Nextstep* providers had to be accredited against *matrix* quality standards, but these were somewhat 'open-weave'[1] and contained nothing specific about group work. The quality criteria used for programmes commissioned by Jobcentre Plus focused either on compliance with legal requirements, such as health and safety or equal opportunity requirements, or on hard outcome measures such numbers getting into a job or joining a training programme rather than the more difficult to quantify outcomes like increased confidence or longer-term career management skills (Lintern, 2010). It is these which are particularly achievable through good group-work.

In spite of this vacuum, or perhaps because of it, some interesting quality measures emerged. In the case of *nextstep,* government funding was deployed through regional agencies that then subcontracted its delivery, including groupwork, to local providers. Regional agencies had an interest in ensuring good quality among those subcontractors (they were mindful of the next tendering round), and some developed their own standards for groupwork. Those used by *nextstep* East Midlands during this period were exemplary (*nextstep* East Midlands, 2010):

- were tailored to the reality of what could be offered in that particular funding programme
- were short, clear and user-friendly
- covered the career-related content
- covered the processes in preparing for and in running a group
- required that client feedback be collected, and included detail about what that should cover.

Even more complicated than this varied picture of government programmes, work with unemployed adults in the voluntary sector was hugely varied. It could be funded by public money from local, national or European sources, but the work was run by third sector organisations. Its strengths compared with the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills programmes were that:

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[1] When standards are used for formal, external assessment there is a tension between their specificity and their application. Being very specific limits their application but being more general makes them vaguer, and therefore more open to abuse through 'box-ticking'.

- It could be targeted at groups with specific needs such as ex-offenders, or older adults, or people from one very local community, or one trade union group
- It could take whatever form the providers can negotiate with the funders
- It can often go on over a longer period than the official programmes
- Group members can gain confidence from their peer support
- It can be quite informal. (Hawthorn and Alloway, 2009.)

But the quality criteria they used are as varied as the funders and agencies themselves. They ranged from overly-tight to the overly-loose: funding through the European Union can require lengthy and detailed information about beneficiaries, inputs and outcomes, while other funders may only suggest client satisfaction questionnaires, with no particular requirement as to how the information collected is used. There is no single picture for this sector, but it seems reasonable to assume that quality guidelines could be helpful.

iii. Client Satisfaction

Client feedback is important, and if the right information is collected and then used critically it is essential to a good quality service. Too often a provider refers only to the percentages that show satisfaction rather than listening carefully to the few negative comments. There are benefits of light touch quality assurance in group work using only client feedback, but perhaps only if other controls are in place. One example from yet another sector, career advice for adults facing redundancy, comes from the Human Resources unit for the BBC[2]. The BBC has not traditionally experienced the high staff turnover that is characteristic of the media industry more generally, but recent pressure to reduce its costs has resulted in a policy to shed jobs. Again unusually for this industry, the BBC currently maintains its own outplacement advice service. It is a high quality service for all staff up to grade 11 (redundancy support to senior management is contracted to different external provider). Employees who are facing redundancy are offered mainly group activities but with one-to-one help also available. People can choose several kinds of group session that include getting-a-job skills but also career guidance. The only quality criterion they use is a carefully monitored client satisfaction level, but the service is provided in a way that engenders a continuously improving service. It is contracted out on a long-term basis to a specialist team that, as noted with schools, is able to build on their continuity of provision from year to year. The service is well-funded compared to provision in the public sector so staff have time and resources to develop their own professionalism and programme.

iv. Meta-criteria

Professional codes of practice are potentially important quality criteria, though like professional standards not always explicit enough about work with groups. One exception to this is the work of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). This has gone far beyond a simple statement of principles. AGCAS runs a professional qualification with its own set of learning objectives. This includes four days of training entirely about group work, covering nearly all the elements we might look for in a set of quality standards for any sector and built around specific learning outcomes. (AGCAS 2010). The course includes:

- theories underpinning group work
- planning, delivery and evaluation

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[2] Personal communication with Katharine Edwards and Una Murphy, joint Managers of CareerLink Plus, BBC HR Direct

- the management, facilitation and communication skills needed, including using a range of facilitative skills
- the place of group work in the guidance process within the context of their organisation
- how to select, adapt, design and implement appropriate materials
- how to recognise and respond to the needs of different client groups

and involves the delivery of two assessed groupwork sessions.

For ensuring the quality of provision, the national body responsible for quality in universities, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) involved AGCAS in developing quality guidelines (QAA, 2010), again detailed and specific about content and method. An important feature is that these national QAA quality criteria are recommendations only, on the assumption that universities will have their own quality assurance systems. So the QAA offers its standards as precepts – universities can check their own standards against the QAA precepts, to be sure they are covering everything they should. There are some parallels here with the 'nested' standards in the school sector. The advantage of this 'meta-criteria' approach – criteria for assessing criteria - using precepts, is that they provide a framework but let locals decide for themselves exactly what they want to do.

The meta-criteria approach is particularly useful when trying to devise standards that would apply to all target groups within one country, or across a number of countries. Because of the precise grammar of standards they are very culture- and language-specific, and date quickly. For this reason the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP, and The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, ELGPN, have adopted the meta-criteria approach in recent reports and recommendations about quality assurance[3] But if their meta-criteria frameworks are to be useful for group work, they must make very clear what are the most distinctive features of good group work. Neither of these two European systems, nor as mentioned earlier the international standards of the IAEVG, do this.

Conclusion

The examples of group work so far have included at least three different kinds: career education/ career management (learning about careers), career guidance (about making immediate choices), and 'getting-a-job skill' workshops (with no wider education or guidance content). We have also seen a number of stakeholders, each with slightly different but overlapping interest in maintaining high standards:

- The government, thinking about value for public money
- Providing organisations, hoping to win future contracts
- Professionals, concerned about professional integrity and therefore with an eye on their own career development
- Clients and their families.

All of the first three are of course concerned to improve and deliver the best possible guidance work for their clients. But two at least also have an interest of their own, to obtain future funding or jobs. Quality criteria that cannot be used superficially to 'tick boxes', without actually meeting the needs of clients, are difficult to design and implement. This applies to all those measures that I have touched on in this paper:

- quality standards for provision
- professional qualifications standards

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[3] See, for example, CEDEFOP(2009) in which all the so-called 'client-interaction competences' contain a subtitle which says they should all apply to 'working with individuals or groups, face-to-face, by telephone or online' but do not specify what the differences between these might be. ELGPN mission for WP4 Quality can be found at http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/elgpn/themes/wp4.

- ‘precepts’ or meta-criteria
- pedagogy and theories of learning a specified curriculum with associated learning outcomes
- professional codes of practice
- legal obligations (e.g. health and safety)
- ‘hard’ outcome measures
- ‘soft’ outcome measures
- client satisfaction feedback

They all have different but overlapping uses. Some can be used for external formal assessment and quality control, some internally as a tool to improve provision gradually, and some for either. Given the variety of contexts and purposes of group work, the most effective quality assurance system would be worked out at a local level according to kind of provision, with particular goals, and for specific target groups.

But I suggest these could usefully be drawn up within a framework set by meta-criteria that are agreed at national level, and could be made relevant to all the target groups mentioned above. Meta-criteria for group work should cover process and organisational issues such as funding, premises, resources and staffing. While requiring the skills and understanding involved in one-to-one guidance, professional standards for staff should also require those specific to group work including an understanding of its particular benefits. Much of the necessary work here has already been done by AGCAS but other professional associations should be involved in refining their work to ensure ownership across the board.

This development of a flexible, informative quality framework for group work could particularly benefit work with adults away from or less well positioned in the labour market, or in community settings, where help with career planning and management is particularly fragile in resourcing and continuity, but also more likely to be offered in short-term groups. It would not just benefit the funding agencies (thinking about value for money); it could help encourage and motivate professionals and managers, and it could improve the experience of a very large number of recipients.

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Notes

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Career decision-making strategies of Korean boys and implications for career guidance practice in England, UK

Anthony Fitzgerald

Recent government legislation to upgrade the provision for careers in schools has suggested that greater efforts need to be made to engage minority ethnic groups (MEGS) in the career decision making process (DCSF, 2010). A multicultural approach enabling a closer understanding of the needs of specific ethnic groups is seen as one way forward. It was a call for more evidence-based research to investigate the issues that provided further impetus for this study (DCSF, 2010).

Twenty-first century career education and guidance (CEG) in the majority of UK contexts offers unprecedented challenges from the perspective of working with MEGS. Furthermore, with the onset in 2004 of strong economic migration from other EU states to every part of the UK (IPPR, 2007), diversity has spread beyond cities. The majority of our educational institutions reflect a more global picture. Over the past ten years there has been unabated year-on-year growth in demand for places by international students at UK HEIs (UCAS, 2010). It is my view that careers professionals in every sector need to rise to the guidance challenge.

Introduction

This study considers a new affluent, educated immigrant community that has established itself in south west London over the past thirty years. New Malden is now home to the largest population of South Korean immigrants in Europe. I believe this group has been neglected in the literature. The objectives of this study consider the particular cultural heritage of Korean boys (aged 11-18 and who attend a maintained school), their approach to career decision making and the implications for guidance that arise from the findings.

The selected Korean community lives in the London boroughs of Kingston, Sutton and Merton (Putt, 2007). Around 625 Korean students (Royal Borough of Kingston,(RBK), 2010) attend maintained schools in the borough of Kingston. Their arrival in the UK dates back to the 1980s when the first Korean ambassador settled in Wimbledon and other diplomats nearby in South London. In the 1980s, Samsung opened their first large UK factory in Tolworth, Surrey and migrant workers found affordable housing in nearby New Malden. Also known as 'Little Korea' or 'New Mal-dong'. It was reported in Think London (2009) that more than 200 businesses were concentrated in a small area run by Koreans and exclusively serving the local Korean community and the student community in Greater London. Putt (2007) argues that Koreans seem self-sufficient and have a clear understanding about why they are here compared with many other ethnic groups in London. It is thought that the main reason Koreans move to the UK is to study (40%), followed by parents' work (31%) and personal employment (13%) (Putt, 2007). With higher education (HE) participation rates of up to 90%, competition to enter HE in Korea is fierce (Putt, 2007; Lee, 2006). Art and Design remains the most popular area for HE study among Koreans in the UK because of the lack of such courses in South Korea. South Korea is currently the fourth most important international student market to London's HE sector and is set to move to third by 2012 (Think London, 2009). It appears it is education as an end in itself that ensures an esteemed place in Korean society rather than money and social class. Korean values are rooted in Confucianism (Kim and Dickson, 2007; Breen, 2004).

Literature review

Career theories and approaches that I consider among the most relevant to working with clients from MEGS include Multicultural Counselling Theory (MCT), social cognitive theory, social constructionist theory and Brown's values-based theory. Patton and McMahon's (1999) Systems Theory Framework (STF) outlines an integrative picture of career theory which has been helpful to me in evaluating the complexity of career influences as well as how career theories inter-relate.

MCT has begun to challenge the western approach to career counselling that favours one style of interviewing clients. Whilst content models (such as Egan, 1990; Culley, 1991; Ali and Graham, 1996) offer a choice of different approaches each focuses on the client as 'self empowerer'. In contrast, Pedersen (1985) notes that for many MEGS identity is defined within the family constellation. As a careers guidance practitioner I am assisted in my work if I have some insight into the cultural background of my client. Against this background are transposed the individual values of the client that may or may not fit within any perceived picture of cultural background. However, the danger of any cultural generalisation is that it can stick in the mind of the practitioner and become a cultural stereotype (Bimrose, 1996) e.g. "most Asians are pressurised into particular career roles". The following table shows contrasted values for psychotherapists in the US working with South-east Asian clients (Klinizie, 1985) and offers useful parallels for a career guidance practitioner working with Korean clients and exposes the pitfalls when western and eastern values collide:

Figure 1: Contrasted values

South-east Asian values	US psychotherapist values
Focus on interdependence	Personal choice and independence
Structured and appropriate social relationships (Confucianism and Christianity)	Rejection of authority. Equality of family relationships
Should live in harmony with nature	Nature to be mastered
Little cultural conceptualization of therapy	Strong orientation to values of counselling and personal growth
Guidance should be information-driven	Counselling is a process that may involve interventions over a period of time
As a trained professional should be active and give solutions to problems	Therapist is often more passive. Best solution is one developed by the client
Failure of the individual implies failure of the family	Personal development involves risk-taking and inevitably involves failure along the way

In the light of this, I suggest that assisting a client on their terms may better be facilitated through greater cultural understanding of the client's 'lived experience' (Bradley, 2009).

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et al.,1996) places the individual rather than particular behaviours, at the heart of the guidance process. It acknowledges strong mediating factors such as family, for example, a student with little motivation to study medicine may seek a route into chemical engineering as a culturally acceptable alternative. This may also involve a level of human agency (Chen, 2006) whereby work experience and/or discussion that includes a client's family in the guidance process achieves the desired outcome for the client. Social constructionist theories (Savickas, 2005) focus on the particular narratives students have around their experiences and perspectives. Exploring 'wider life themes' with a client acknowledges the complexity of their lived experience i.e. for Korean boys the likelihood of their sudden return to South Korea where they will need to readapt. Similarly, it is not uncommon for Korean parents to return to South Korea when their children reach 16 and for their children to remain in the UK with guardians to continue their further education and in such circumstances the guidance practitioner relationship may be an important focus of continuity. Brown and Crace (1996) point to values as a crystallising of career choices and guidance as an opportunity for clients to explore their values and how these influence their decision making. STF has been particularly useful as a way of illustrating the dynamic of the themes that have emerged from the research results.

Research method

I conducted a qualitative research project that included some quantitative data collection to assist in the overall preliminary interpretation of results. The initial questionnaire was developed after many drafts and in close consultation with colleagues, fellow researchers and the research supervisor (Flick, 2007; Munn & Drever,1995). Draft questionnaires were piloted at two stages with the assistance of school library staff. 51 potential research respondents of Korean ethnicity were identified using the school database representing 5% of the school cohort. Three recruitment strategies were devised and evaluated. In the final analysis, I decided to invite all Korean students in the school to an informal project briefing during a school lunchtime. At the end of the briefing research questionnaires were distributed to students with a deadline for submission. The questionnaire included an invitation to an optional interview to discuss individual responses. Subsequently, five half hour interviews were recorded and transcribed and the data was included with the responses from the questionnaires.

Every member of teaching and support staff was sent an email questionnaire and four comprehensive responses were returned. The researcher has also relied on secondary literature (Breen, 2004, Putt,

Figure 2: Profile of respondents by age and response rate to initial research questionnaire

Year group	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**Total**
Corresponding age	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Potential respondents	4	8	13	7	3	10	6	51
Percentage of Korean cohort	8%	16%	24%	14%	6%	20%	12%	
Actual responses	0	2	2	3	1	5	2	15
Response rate	0%	15%	15%	43%	33%	50%	33%	29%
Response to interview invitation	0	2	2	1	0	1	0	5

2007, RBK, 2007) and personal immersion in the Korean cultural scene of south west London. It should be noted that I was a participant as well as an observer in this study because I had been working with the Korean students in the school for more than three years.

Results

I developed a thematic analysis (TA) based on the qualitative data collected from questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The process of arriving at the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) involved a period of several weeks colour-coding, recoding and reflecting on data extracts. Nine codes were originally identified. For each code a definition and an example data extract are provided below with the total number of data extracts for each code shown in parenthesis:

Deference (12) – the respondents stated they were doing something because it is required of them or where if they had the opportunity they might choose a different route or approach, e.g. 'It's about family honour that you make the right choice.'

Enlightened (12) – where a respondent seems to have a more pragmatic approach to career, e.g. 'If you choose a career you enjoy and are reasonably good at, your parents won't mind.'

Family coercion (32) - a sense of family putting pressure on a young person to influence career direction, e.g. 'I was encouraged to choose my career during my first years at secondary school and then I worked to study undergraduate material which I am just about coping with.'

Family support (10) – a respondent appears to have the support and encouragement of close family members, e.g. 'They do not force me but they do recommend or advise me about different careers that otherwise I would not know about.'

Korea-centric (52) – implicit or explicit influence of Korean culture, e.g. 'As Korean I have set my career aspirations so much earlier.'

Korea-neutral (5) – Korean culture not influential, e.g. 'I believe Koreans are not that different to the English in how they make choices.'

Non-conventional (6) – indicates comments that may differ from the majority of responses, e.g. 'You should do what you want to do even if you live to regret it.'

External pressure (6) – choices and goals are set to ensure no loss of face, e.g. 'There is an immense pressure from the community even if your family are not so pressurising.'

Non-family support (15) - the influence or perceived usefulness of non-familial sources of support, e.g. 'At my church the minister advises me what careers and jobs I should do'.

For the TA I decided to integrate all but two of the themes choosing to exclude non-family support and non-conventional. I was able to subsume both into the other codes and thus provide a clearer TA.

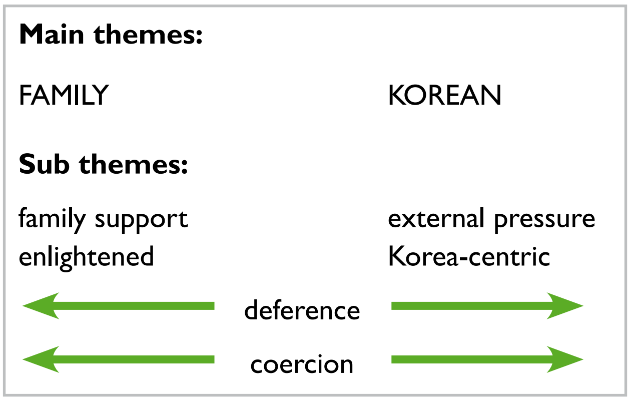

Figure 3: Final TA of career decision making influences on a group of Korean boys – themes and sub themes

The two main themes I identified as influences on the career decision making process of Korean boys are **FAMILY** and **KOREAN** with two sub themes of deference and coercion linked to both. Additional sub themes are linked to **FAMILY**: (i) **enlightened** and (ii) **family support** as well as to **KOREAN**: (i) **external pressure** and (ii) **Korea-centric.** The following discussion considers the meaning behind the themes and sub themes that have been proposed in the light of the research objectives.

The codes after analysis showed that the most informative data related to the themes of **FAMILY** and **KOREAN**. There was evidence that in most cases family influence was overt and that it was either supportive or coercive. In a supportive context, parents may take a keen interest in their son's progression and, he may perceive that he is supported and guided. There is an expectation that he will succeed (Locke, 1992). This cultural self-efficacy (Ali and Saunders, 2009) is illustrated by one respondent, during a recorded interview, who expressed his exasperation with his non-Korean classmates: 'it's not to be mean but my English classmates seem to put everything to chance and hope things will work out whilst putting in almost no effort and they seem happy with whatever they do but that is not how I have been brought up'.

The comment would seem to suggest that strong parental support and guidance may ensure stronger crystallisation of values (Brown and Crace, 1996) but this may only arise if in tune with the personal development of the young person and not merely to meet parental expectation (Chen, 2006; Leong, 1995; Super 1990). Brown & Lent (2005:431) speak of the importance of parental 'warmth, reciprocity, mutual balance of power and attentiveness' as important ways of supporting the career decision making process. Indeed, the sub theme of **enlightened** thinking may be indicative of a nurturing, supportive family influence. Koreans are like anybody else, a point made by one of the respondents.

By contrast, family **coercion** poses a different scenario whereby unrealistic career expectations are set, perhaps without the necessary family support or engagement on the part of the young person. Some 32 codes were identified as coercive confirming strong parental influence does exist. A sense of **coercion** was also alluded to in data collected from school staff: 'Korean parents are pushy to the boy and want teacher to do the same. Positive feedback is met with 'Yes, but what can he do better?'

The wider literature suggests that having made unsuitable option choices a student may, nevertheless, perform well in these subjects because of their work ethic (Breen, 2004; Putt, 2007) but may not be achieving their true potential or laying foundations for vocational fulfilment (Herzberg et al, 1959). Korean boys aspire to Oxbridge and other top ranking universities as offers from high ranking UK universities can be a backdoor entry into the Korean university system (Breen, 2004; Lee, 2006). A vocational study interest in hotel management born of positive work experience and career research may suddenly wane when it is understood that the course, though highly rated at Surrey, is not offered at Oxbridge.

The theme **KOREAN** includes: the influence of Korean culture in terms of the pull to study and live in Korea (**Korea-centric**), the pressure to conform to particular study choices and career routes that emanates from within the community (**external pressure**) and the inclination of young Koreans to strive to meet parental expectation (**deference**). **External pressure** is the influence of people outside the family, presumably from within the UK and home Korean communities and is an indirect influence that should not be underestimated as having an impact on Korean boys (Kim et al., 2001). The concept of losing face (Breen, 2004; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996) is felt in Korean culture and the perceived failure of a son i.e. not achieving sufficient high scoring GCSE results or not gaining a place at a Russell Group university may be perceived as a family failure. It is not just the son but the parents too who are perceived to have failed (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). Korean parents who want to offer more leeway to their son to make option or career choices, ceding to more Western cultural values (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1995), may not actually follow through with it. If parents allow their son to make choices that are atypical for Koreans, such as choosing art or non science subjects over science subjects for GCSE and A level, there may still be the nagging sense that other Koreans will be judging them e.g. 'it is always this comparing of you to others, it's what we do as Koreans' (data extract). Korean parents who have insufficient understanding of the UK education system and elementary English may struggle to support their son's progress (Kim & Dickson, 2007) and, as a result, this may add to the pressure already felt. The sense of **external pressure** from fellow Koreans may be felt more acutely, as Koreans are more co-ethnically reliant than other MEGS (Putt, 2007; Sue and Sue, 1990). The sub theme **Korea-centric** included 52 data extracts and provided the richest strand of data:

> 'The family suggests what roles I should do so they are important.'
>
> 'I would like to work back in Korea.'
>
> 'We have more expectations from our parents and peers because in Korea university and study is even more important than in the UK.'
>
> 'If I made a choice that my parents disapprove of it would mean that it would be bad i.e. like against the law.'
>
> 'I have lived in Korea until the age of 10 my English is not so good as English people so I will look for careers where English is not so taken seriously.'

The final sub theme of **deference** connects with both **FAMILY** and **KOREAN**. In contrast to coercion which entails strong influencing both overtly and covertly, deference, by contrast, is potentially something within the control of the individual. It is an act of complying with or aspiring to parental or community pressure to make particular choices or to take particular career routes. Here are three examples:

> 'It's sad but respect is carved into our backbones.'
>
> 'It's about family honour that you make the right choice.'
>
> 'I want to make sure my job is highly acceptable in society.'

Guidance implications

Five implications for guidance are suggested based on the key findings:

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Guidance needs to be sensitive to the lived experience of Korean boys. A guidance practitioner may well benefit from having some understanding of the Korean immigration story and cultural heritage, the Korean university system and the complex choices that face Korean boys.

CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY

It is important that guidance practitioners who work with Korean students are engaged with an ongoing personal critical reflection on their guidance practice, something they will have committed to during initial guidance training. Guidance practitioners who work with students of Korean heritage might usefully meet to share the process of critical reflection. Bradley, 2009 proposes a three-stage model for challenging our 'whiteness' and 'taken for grantedness'. In adapting this to the Korean guidance context, I maintain that this could involve:

i. Identify emerging critical insights i.e. 'the silence and respectful bowing is difficult to relate to.'

ii. Meet with local practitioners to critically reflect on approaches to working with Korean clients.

iii. Draw on the experience of co-practitioners to refresh one's own guidance approach.

ADVOCACY

A guidance practitioner may see an opportunity to be a 'co-agent' (Chen, 2006) e.g. work with a client to gain parental acceptance of a chosen alternative career / course route or option choice scenario, encourage work experience or assist parents with misconceptions about particular career routes.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE NEED

The potential complexity of the lived experience of Korean boys means that the career guidance process may need to involve more guidance time to explore emerging guidance issues for example: moving suddenly back to Korea and the implications or needing more support because parents have returned to Korea during further education or coaching for the UK university interview process.

COACHING

Guidance practitioners, where appropriate, may assist Korean students to develop interpersonal skills through mock interviews to ensure that they are on a level playing field with other university applicants where selection interviews are involved.

Conclusions

Advocacy, critical reflexivity and cultural sensitivity are key aspects of any initial careers guidance training. However, coaching and additional guidance need may be considered more controversial; the former because it may be deemed counter-cultural to coach someone to achieve a goal or even culturally insensitive, the latter because this may be impractical as it requires more time to build a guidance relationship. Mutual accessibility of the guidance professional and client is a key consideration. Such an approach may be more difficult to implement where a school does not have the guidance resources, where typically a guidance practitioner may spend only one or two days a week in school.

In the course of this study further research opportunities have been identified. Areas of particular interest could include: (i) the community influence on Korean boys and/or girls, (ii) the coping mechanisms of Korean boys and/or girls in a bi-cultural world across a broad range of schools; and (iii) adapting this research design to explore the experience of other MEGS such as those of Chinese, Vietnamese, Tamil Sri Lankan or Somali heritage.

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Careers education for exceptionally able girls

Dorothy Davies

This article focuses on the development of Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) for exceptionally able girls at Newstead Wood School, a state girls' selective school, in Bromley. There are approximately 1000 students aged 11-18, entering via competitive tests from a 9 mile radius in SE London. In league tables the school is usually among the top state schools. For the past decade about 97% of year 13 students have gone into higher education. The average UCAS points total per pupil in 2010 was 470. It has held the Investors in Careers quality award for the past 14 years, with careers being judged 'outstanding' in the last three Ofsted inspections.

I must acknowledge that not all students at the school are equally talented (experience as well as research from the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) (Campbell, et al. 2006) shows a very wide range of abilities, talents and interests), but on a national scale they all have the potential to achieve academically to an extremely high level in single or multiple fields. In spite of the work of NAGTY, and perhaps because of it, there has been the perception especially among those working with exceptionally able young people that we and they are peripheral to the education scene. Even such a well-researched, practical and useful document as *Better Practice* (Donoghue, 2008, pp 50-51) devotes a mere page and a half to CEIAG for gifted and talented students. As far as careers are concerned, as in so many other areas of provision for young people, the general assumption seems to be that 'bright' students can look after themselves and do not need specialist support or adequate funding. I would like to argue that this is not the case. As Donoghue (2008) points out, the multiplicity of choices available to gifted and talented individuals, pressure from high expectations (their own as well as others'), and difficulty in accessing support (especially for non-academic paths or careers) can make decision making and life around transition points particularly stressful.

In considering CEIAG in relation to the exceptionally able student, there are some challenges, not least being the lack of agreed criteria behind the phrase 'exceptionally able'. Since this article is not intending to weigh up the merits of different versions of giftedness, I shall use the conclusions reached in *Understanding the Challenge of the Exceptionally Able Learner* (Lowe, 2006). This research was partially conducted at Newstead Wood to explore issues of exceptional ability.

Exceptional ability

I maintain that it is not possible to separate learning about careers from any other type of learning. Consequently, this article focuses on those cognitive and personal characteristics revealed by Lowe (2006) which are particularly relevant to progression into adult life. Lowe found that exceptionally high-achieving students showed some or many of the following traits:

- Depth, complexity, speed and sophistication in their comprehension and thinking
- Originality, creativity and intellectual curiosity
- Excellent oral ability and advanced vocabulary
- Self-motivation and independence in learning

- Energy, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, occasional perfectionism, sensitivity
- A tendency to be easily bored.

Exceptionally able learners have particularly demanding learning needs which can be very challenging for schools to meet, and I argue that this is just as true for learning in relation to CEIAG as it is in academic subjects. Students need:

- High levels of challenge and pace but time for reflection
- Personalisation of learning, with feedback and flexibility
- A variety of teaching styles, including lots of discussion
- To be developed to the limits of their ability, as a whole person
- To be helped to leave school with confidence in their social skills.

To quote the Head Teacher of one of the schools involved in the study:

> One striking feature of exceptionally able girls is their ability to…recognise the environmental, physical factors conducive to good learning. They understand how and when they need to relate to others to learn well. Most importantly, they are extremely self-aware, knowing the personal conditions that they require in order to learn best…They moved from a personal analysis to strategic thinking with enviable alacrity…Their thinking about solutions was pragmatic yet impressively creative…they demanded outcomes.
>
> (Allen, cited in Lowe, 2006 p.9)

Pedestrian work sheets, tick-box activities and facile career scenarios which do not relate to the career hopes and ambitions or the sophisticated understanding of really able students do nothing to aid their confidence or engage their imagination. Key Skills were too obvious and the ASDAN suite of awards became meaningless as its focus increasingly moved to a paper-based model. Such activities do not enhance the credibility of careers education for very academically able students. Interview training is another case in point. Many scenarios shown in DVDs designed to help year 11students handle interviews are obvious or so extreme as to be laughable. (Able girls do not need to be told not to turn up to an interview breathing curry and beer fumes from the night before over the interviewer, nor do they need to be reminded not to stick their chewing gum under their seat during the interview). I find that exceptionally able students in Year 11 learn far more effectively from discussion and analysis of more subtle scenarios involving graduate recruitment, even though I recognise that these are designed for students who are at a later stage in their education and career development.

These girls, in career terms, are, or could be, the potential leaders of the near future: the business managers, politicians, opinion formers, doctors, judges, scientists, engineers, etc. as well as the parents. I believe that what they make of their lives, and whether they reach their full potential, could have a major impact on society, inside and outside the sphere of employment.

Careers education (CE)

There is no agreed definition for what constitutes 'career'. There is also an active debate about what a CE programme for especially able students should contain, in schools and as a career studies module in higher education, as is clear from the *2009 Reading International Career Studies Symposium* (McCash, 2010). Arthur (2010 p.4) considers five definitions of 'career' and settles on 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' claiming that this definition 'opens up a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives.' As he points out, it can accommodate careers in organisations, occupations, public service, and industry clusters, as well as allowing examination of 'more recent ideas such as career-relevant networks, knowledge-based careers, web-enabled careers, and so on.' To this list, I would add family-based careers, portfolio careers and self-employment or entrepreneurship. This seems to be a practical approach to preparing exceptionally able young people for the challenges of adult life.

Inkson's (2007) view of careers as a variety of metaphors is also useful here. One cannot ignore the interrelationships between personal dynamics, context, and the complexity of social relationships. Possibly because of the large amount of happenstance in my own life, I have never, perhaps ironically, followed a planned career 'path' of my own devising. I tend to see a career as crazy paving with a large area of stonework laid by us, and not as a path with a definite beginning and end. This area does not have to be a specific shape, although it can travel in one direction if we wish, but it is full of different stone fragments held together by our skills and past experiences. Although other people can provide sand, cement and even the stones, we have to lay it ourselves, if it is to be truly ours. The fragmentary nature of careers work is one of the things which makes it so difficult to evaluate because the definition of 'success' will be different for everyone. One of the challenges for career education in schools is to enable students to develop and have confidence in their own career metaphors, according to their own personalities, circumstances and value systems.

The last government's approach to CEIAG was utilitarian, focused on national employment and community cohesion. I maintain that this is a valid set of concerns for a government but it is far from being the,

> …lifelong process of working out a synthesis between individual interests and the opportunities (or limitations) present in the external work-related environment, so that both individual and environmental objectives are fulfilled.
>
> (Van Maanen and Schein (1977) cited in Arthur (2010 p.5)).

I believe it is this latter approach which will maximise the outcomes for exceptionally able students. The former careers companies, having had their funding absorbed, and constrained by the setting up of Connexions, are of limited use to exceptionally able students. In spite of the supposed provision of a universal service, their funding led to a focus on NEET students.

Able students, who arrive in year 7 expecting to go into higher education at 18, will usually achieve well academically. They are convinced both by parental pressure and school ethos of the importance of good qualifications, and they can put themselves under great pressure to achieve the highest grades. For them, the idea that careers is about raising attainment and becoming employable is useful only in general terms. The real question for such students, and their teachers, is whether they will do justice to their abilities and achieve the level of employment and the quality of life that will enable them to fulfil their potential.

In the wider sense of the word, any effective programme should make students aware of the varied interpretations of the word 'career'. In addition, in terms of employability, the challenge is not, 'How do we get our able students to the 'best' universities?' but, 'What does this student need to do to stand out from the graduate crowd and how do we as a school, educate, prepare and support her to do this?' I feel the degree is a fundamental stepping-stone, but is not an end in itself because with a mass higher education market the mere possession of a degree is no guarantee of a graduate-level job. Exceptional personal competencies are all-important at this level, as UCAS's analysis of the employability skills recognises (UCAS 2010). However, the development of high-level skills cannot be left until the student begins year 12 or a degree course. Ideally, an effective CEIAG programme will begin in year 7 and be delivered through a whole-school curriculum and ethos.

I maintain that this programme for exceptionally able students should recognise the complexity of their intellectual needs (while also recognising that emotionally they may not be so advanced). It should provide a learning environment which is challenging, coherent and varied in the form of a spiral curriculum tailored to collective and individual need. It should be explicit about options, occupational information, and the varied nature of work environments and business structures, with students being helped to evaluate, analyse and apply this information. Although a certain amount of reflection is needed, a career is for practical living, and the programme for able students in years 7 – 13 should, above all, be experiential, skill-based, stimulating and confidence-building to enable students to develop high-level career management skills. It should be relevant to rapidly-changing life in the 21st century and provide opportunities for teamwork and leadership, and financial capability practice. I think that such a programme ought to be delivered by all who have the responsibility of educating the exceptionally able including academic, pastoral and support staff. In addition, students who are developing their own skills in extra-curricular activities such as music, sport, volunteering and part-time work, must also be enabled to recognise and build on the personal and career management skills they are sharpening in these contexts, irrespective of the knowledge which may also be acquired.

This is quite a tall order unless the governors, head teacher and senior management of a school provide the time, resources and leadership necessary. I maintain that the programme will only be effective if it is integrated with Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Work Related Learning (WRL) programmes as well as with the academic curriculum and extra-curricular activities. True personalised learning should not carry the labels; 'academic', 'pastoral', 'vocational', etc., because it concerns the whole child. One must, however, be realistic and pragmatic about a school's ability to manage all this amid competing priorities. The CEIAG guidance issued by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009 and 2010a) was very welcome because it was intended to be statutory and placed clear responsibility for resourcing the delivery of CEIAG on Head Teachers and local authorities. It seems that the present Government intends to continue this approach for schools under LEA control, but not for academies.

Another complication for CEIAG planning is that we try to prepare students for adult life without being certain about the component aspects of that life. As we can see from the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, essential human nature has not changed much over the past few centuries. However, society and its working environment have changed out of all recognition and, for able students, the potential working world is now global. The one thing we can be sure of is that the medium-term future will offer opportunities and constraints difficult to imagine. To deal with adult life and work in an unknowable future, the student will have to contextualise her decisions and be prepared to confront what Laws calls this 'protean' question 'manifesting itself differently to each rising generation' (Laws, 1996. p. 95). I believe, however, that the approaches he proposed then are not now adequate for effective career development in the 21st century. They also have the disadvantage that they allow CEIAG to be relegated to the periphery of the curriculum, if a school feels so inclined.

Most schools claim to educate the whole child. Nevertheless, with the present focus on league tables, there is a tendency to equate 'education' with 'high exam grades' and this can be especially true of schools with academically able students where high grades can become an end in themselves. It is very difficult, for example, to measure numerically how successful a school has been in helping a student achieve her ambition of becoming a doctor or a successful entrepreneur. In the first case, academic ability by itself is no guarantee of a place at medical school, and in the second example, one could argue that a high grades are not as important as the development of superb people and organisational skills. Although Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999) is controversial, from a practical careers perspective, it has much to recommend it as we try to help students develop self-understanding. Psychometric career tests such as those developed by the Morrisby Organisation measure intellectual talents and abstract reasoning. However, the Morrisby Profile also assesses: spatial and mechanical aptitudes; planning style; preferred learning style; awareness and flexibility; commitment and confidence; team and leadership style; and manual speed and skill. The lack or possession of these attributes will have a major impact on career development.

I maintain, then, that careers work needs to be embedded in a school ethos which focuses on the development of the whole young person as she moves towards adulthood. CEIAG thus becomes a core activity. In the rest of this article I would like to focus on some relevant aspects of the whole-school CEIAG provision at Newstead Wood School to very able students from years 7 - 13.

The CEIAG programme at Newstead Wood in brief

In addition to a biennial Careers Convention and termly Careers Seminars, largely organised by the Parents' Careers Committee, activities delivered or overseen directly by the Careers Department include:

Year 7

- The Real Game (WRL, careers concepts, financial awareness)

Year 8

- Group work on career concepts (Connexions advisor)

Year 9

- Group work continues
- Options advice (individual if required)
- Carousel of CE lessons delivered by Form Tutors, including careers library, Fast Tomato IT program, and web sites.
- Enterprise activity

Year 10

- Work related learning lessons
- Work experience preparation delivered by form tutors
- CV preparation
- 2 weeks work experience with briefing and debriefing in relation to the CBI's employment skills (CBI 2007)
- Morrisby Psychometric Testing
- Enterprise activities
- Be Real Game

Year 11

- A 13 week CE programme (delivered in general education lessons) which covers options at 16, mock interview preparation and practice, CV updating, personal skill assessment, job application, use of the UCAS and other web sites and understanding graduate career skills (AGCAS 1995). This programme also enables students to reflect on how their work experience has altered their perceptions of 'work' and 'career' as they make decisions about their futures.
- Nine week Institute of Financial Services Level 2 financial capability qualification
- Individual interviews with the Director of Careers and Guidance

Year 12

- Five days self-negotiated work shadowing, to help with decision-making, career management and presentation skill development
- Group sessions on higher education and gap year options.
- Individual counselling on UCAS decisions

Year 13

- Continuation of group and individual UCAS support
- Individual support for students wishing to go straight to work

Post school

- Individual support as required

I would now like to explain six activities in more detail to illustrate how Newstead Wood provides an appropriate CEIAG programme for its exceptionally able students. The first two relate directly to the CE programme but the others come from the wider curriculum and illustrate how the ethos of the school fosters careers skills while emphasising effective learning.

Experience of work

Parents sometimes ask why work experience takes two weeks out of the academic curriculum, especially if the tasks appear mundane and are not at graduate level. But the work experience programme at Newstead Wood is designed to develop and enhance the employability skills as defined by the CBI (2007) rather than as a career tasting exercise. This 'organizational socialization process' (Maanen and Schien 1979 p. 211) was deliberately placed in the summer of year 10 in the teeth of initial staff opposition to the loss of academic teaching time. Placing it there, rather than tacking it on to the end of year 11, as happens for academically able students in many schools, enables proper briefing, debriefing and evaluation. Maanen and Schien suggest, 'individuals undergoing any organizational transition are in an anxiety-producing situation. They try to reduce this anxiety by learning function and social requirements as quickly as possible. … They feel isolated, lonely, and have performance anxieties', (1979 p.214). On work experience, students aged 14 or 15 have to function in an adult context about which they initially feel some trepidation. Nevertheless, at this stage they are mature enough to cope with a working environment and with commuting, but they are still sufficiently young for the challenge to boost their confidence if they cope successfully, which most of them do.

Students gain and share experiences of the wider working world, and staff visiting them in their work placements which have 'distinct way[s] of life, complete with [their] own rhythms, rewards, relationships, demands, and potentials', (Maanen and Schien 1979. p. 210) often gain valuable new insights into the capabilities of the students.

Feedback from employers after the year 10 Work Experience is usually positive. The following voluntary additional comments, selected from 120 2010 tick-box evaluation forms, are typical and reflect the exceptional level of maturity, skills and enthusiasm shown by most of the students as they rise to the new challenge of a working environment:

> We were particularly impressed with her mini-project presentation during our group meeting. Her presentation was well structured and with the right level of content. Her delivery was awe inspiring, very professional and full of confidence, not expected from someone in her age group. (Global financial services firm)
>
> She quickly overcame her unfamiliarity with the work environment and was very helpful, professional and enthusiastic in everything she did – especially her significant contribution to a business presentation. (Dental practice)
>
> She was of help to me by explaining how to use Excel correctly. (Dental studio)
>
> She showed strong communication skills and great maturity, matched with attention to detail and eager enthusiasm. (International news agency)
>
> Within a few days she was able to take on the role as junior photographer and do some of our pack shots. And within a week she was one of the team. (International magazine publisher)
>
> She was a highly valued member of a very busy team (Barristers' chambers)
>
> The highlight was a piece of insight she provided into her own media consumption – it was funny, insightful and very entertaining. We put it on our blog to share with clients. (Global cosmetics firm)
>
> It was good to see her grow in confidence over the week. (Accountancy firm)
>
> She produced a briefing for a meeting that one of the Assembly Members was attending; her work was used as the final briefing. (Greater London Authority)

If able students can generate this type of feedback at the age of 14 or 15, it is not surprising that many graduates are dissatisfied with the lack of challenge and stimulation in their jobs and training schemes. In their own evaluations, students who were least happy with their placements were those who felt that their skills had not been utilised or that they had contributed little to their organisation. In work, as in academic studies, the opportunity to achieve is vital, and our experience over the past 20 years underlines the value of appropriate work experience for the development of the students' self-confidence, understanding of and preparation for the work environment, career management and employability skills. By the start of year 11, students have internalised their experiences and can use them in their future career planning.

Financial capability

Sessions on financial capability follow logically in year 11. Some time ago, it became clear that the financial implications of attending university meant that students could find themselves deep in debt if they could not manage their adult personal finances effectively. The problem was how to provide for this need within the curriculum since the school does not have a business studies department or the requisite expertise. Nor was there time in the timetable for another teaching subject. The Personal Finance Education Group (PFEG), an independent charity helping schools to plan and teach personal finance relevant to students' lives and needs, provided some useful support, but again we ran into the usual problem of simplistic scenarios and superficial information in many of the off-the-shelf products. Three years ago we decided to offer the Institute of Financial Services' Level 2 Certificate in Personal Finance which has a suggested 115 hours of guided learning time. Nine hours of support are given within the general education programme in year 11, with the students doing the rest via self-directed study, since all materials are on-line. The course is optional but 80% of the year group took the award in 2010 with a pass rate of over 95%, most being at the top grades. This evidence suggests to me that: these students have gained a much greater awareness and knowledge of the adult financial world and its pitfalls; they have added a GCSE level qualification to the 11 or 12 gained by the end of year 11; and they have improved their ability to self-direct their own studies. This approach is only possible because the school takes advantage of the students' exceptional ability and their need for 'high level of challenge, freedom and flexibility' (Lowe 2006 p.4). It is encouraging that the head of years 8 and 9 has now decided to put teaching for the IFS Level 1 Award in Personal Finance into the PSHE programme to replace the ASDAN Gold Award which both students and staff had come to dislike.

Emotional intelligence

As I assert above, CEIAG must also be delivered on a whole-school basis. Separate from the specific careers programme, PSHE, amongst other initiatives, clearly has a major role to play in the personal and career development of all students, and the school pays much attention to the development of the students' emotional intelligence. From a careers point of view this is vital, as Lunha et al. assert:

> Surveys of employers have for many years shown that non-cognitive or social and emotional skills are the qualities they most want from young people coming out of the education system, and employers increasingly use these characteristics, rather than qualifications, to screen applicants. …. In fact research has shown that non-cognitive skills had more correlation with success in the labour market than cognitive skills, IQ and formal qualifications.
>
> (Lunha et al., (2005) in DCSF 2010b)

To help develop the emotional intelligence (EQ) of its students, Newstead Wood uses Goleman's (1996) five domains of emotional intelligence: the ability to know and manage your own emotions, self-motivation, empathy and managing relationships with others.

These domains are incorporated into the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme delivered to students by Form Tutors in Key Stage 3 PSHE (DCSF 2010b). One example of this is the 'buddying' system whereby year 8 students help new year 7 students settle in during the Christmas term. A programme of peer mentoring for all year groups is also in place, along with external training to support it. From the career skills development viewpoint, this emphasis is important because EQ provides alternative ways of understanding people's behaviours, attitudes, motivations, interpersonal skills, possible management styles and overall potential. It follows, therefore, that human resources departments can find EQ a useful tool in recruitment assessment. The development of these non-cognitive skills is critical if students are to realise their potential in the adult world.

Deep support

Central to the school ethos, is student learning in the fundamental sense of the word. To personalise the learning of its students, Newstead Wood has worked closely with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) to apply the thinking of David Hargreaves and his design of a 21st century model of education. His vision involved nine 'gateways' which have now been clustered into four 'Deeps': Deep Learning; Deep Support; Deep Experience and Deep Leadership. (SSAT 2010b: p.1)

Part, but not all, of Deep Support involves both advice and guidance and mentoring and coaching.

> Ideally, personalising learning will lead to each student choosing a pathway at school that enables them to meet their aspirations …. the advice and guidance system is crucial, and needs to be offered to younger students than has traditionally been the case. Professor David Hargreaves suggests that this process should begin at the age of 12 as 'deep learning requires deep support'. Deep support may mean more than simply advice and guidance; it also overlaps with the gateways of mentoring and coaching, the new technologies and student voice. … The whole system must be carefully integrated and starts from an assumption that the aims of guidance are the same as those of teaching and learning.
>
> (SSAT 2010a p.1)

Van Der Stuyf (2002), among many others, summarises the value of scaffolding, and its development from Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development', in the support of academic learning. At Newstead Wood it is a widely used teaching technique. I suggest, however, that can be just as powerful as a tool to support career development skills. For example, year 10 work experience, is scaffolded by the students' preparation and supporting staff visits. In turn, work experience and its debriefing, together with research skills acquired during general education in year 11, scaffold and support the students' attempts to negotiate for themselves a week of higher-level work shadowing in year 12. This learning experience can, in turn, support application for higher education or employment, and aid the formation of graduate career skills. In this way, the learners' development is consistently supported via a coherent spiral curriculum.

Deep leadership

If our students are truly to become the leaders of tomorrow, the sooner they start developing the necessary experience, skills and vision, the more effective they will become. As Digby Jones says about leadership for business:

> Business management has changed. The contemporary marketplace demands that leaders of today are visionary, ethical and innovative. This requires a new approach to management training and leadership development … [Leaders] must possess the traits that motivate others to follow them in new directions; traits such as emotional stability, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, and social boldness.
>
> (Jones, 2009: p.1)

Three years ago a senior teacher was appointed to the management team at Newstead Wood to develop Student Voice and increase the focus on student leadership throughout the school. Now, apart from having a myriad of leadership opportunities, students' views are consulted through and with elected year representatives, and they have genuine responsibility for school projects, such as the workshop delivered in July 2010 by year 12 students at a Learning Plus UK Practitioners' Conference (Baldwin, et al. 2010). Students are now involved in strategic school development planning through the school parliament and discussions with the leadership management group and governors.

These leadership roles are not sinecures. They have real expectations and responsibilities attached to them. For example, in July 2010 the head girl team, supported by the senior teacher, attended the Asia Pacific Young Leaders Summit in Singapore. There, as UK representatives, they debated global issues with teachers and students from several Far and Middle East countries, listened to eminent speakers and met the President of Singapore. However, able students thrive on real-world challenge. The most powerful experiences of Newstead Wood student leaders have often been the ones which are the most difficult, organisationally complex, and politically challenging. These are the experiences which strongly support their development into sophisticated, empathetic leaders of tomorrow.

Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)

A recent whole-school initiative which could have a major impact on the effectiveness of CEIAG is called Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) (QCDA 2010). These skills are designed to enable students to be successful in learning, work and life and have the potential to unify the whole-school curriculum through the use of a shared language. It is argued that students should be:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participants.

First introduced at Newstead Wood in 2008 to year 7 students to develop academic skills outside the constraints of the National Curriculum, PLTS is taught in a cross-curricular approach called Journeys of a Lifetime. One example of this is the *Space Travel and Discovery* module which takes place in the summer term of year 7. Here students are challenged to investigate a 'planetary problem', designing a model to solve it, as well as giving a presentation to engineering expert 'dragons'. Science, Maths and D&T departments provide input as do Year 10 students working on a Philosophy for Children course (Philosophy for Children 2010). The PLTS academic focus is on creative thinking and team working, but the students are also developing career-based skills such as: team working; time-management; presentation; interpersonal: action-planning; decision making; and thinking 'outside the box'.

Although PLTS have been applied in an academic context so far, their relevance to career decision making is clear. Expressed in a slightly different vocabulary, they are the same as the CBI's employability skills (CBI 2007) and, at a higher level, AGCAS's account of competencies valued by graduate employers (AGCAS, 1995). Now that the first cohort of students has reached year 9 option choices, it is to be hoped that PLTS will be applied in this context too, and subsequently in all aspects of WRL and decision making. In this way, students will see the integral nature of their learning.

The above examples show the indivisibility of 'career' and 'learning'. They also emphasise the importance of allowing students to reflect on both their intellectual and practical learning. I believe it is important that they, and the staff supporting them, also recognise the connection. The future is uncertain for schools as well as for individuals. Newstead Wood has moved a good distance towards providing a careers education curriculum to meet the needs of its exceptionally able students, but as circumstances change around us, there will be the need for constant evaluation and change. Lack of time, for both students and staff, is a major constraint. The 2011 reorganisation of the Newstead Wood KS 4 curriculum, to personalise it, and to help students focus on the interrelatedness of all aspects of their learning, will be a positive development. The appointment of a full-time Director of Careers and Guidance (rather than a teacher 'delivering' careers on a part-time basis) is also a major step forward. With the new curriculum in place it may then be possible to explore in more depth with students their own concepts of 'career'. To return to my personal metaphor of careers as crazy paving, I have tried to show some of the building materials provided for the exceptionally able students at Newstead Wood. As educators, I believe we should enable the students to understand the component parts and realise that they can shape their own careers. In this way, in their careers and their lives, they will become 'confident, mature, autonomous, compassionate, resilient, optimistic leaders with the vision, integrity and courage to make a difference.' (Newstead Wood 2009). We ignore their needs at our peril.

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Using metaphors in theory and teaching: as useful as a chocolate teapot?

Laura Dean

There is good news: career studies is a banner under which interdiscliplinary work on career is being performed. There is bad news: the benefits of metaphor are being promoted without reference to their disadvantages.

The opening paragraph may appear familiar to readers of *Career Research and Development*, as it mirrors the opening lines of Inkson's (2010) article in issue 23. I have been moved to respond to that piece not because I disagree with the content in relation to interdiscliplinary working but because of my concern over the uncritical acceptance of the benefits of using metaphors to aid understanding. I draw here from a paper originally published in the Leeds Met *Journal of Assessment Learning and Teaching* in response to Inkson's work (Dean 2009).

In Inkson's article, metaphor is promoted as a mechanism for generating integration between disparate disciplinary approaches (p.9) and he provides a range of examples of metaphor use in career thinking. I propose that in career terms many commonly used metaphors serve to reduce rather than enhance clarity and may confuse students and academics alike. For example, in my title the term chocolate teapot is used: what understanding would others have of that title, if they, for example, came from the USA where tea is drunk cold. Would it carry the same associations of uselessness? Whilst metaphor can be extremely powerful where there is common understanding, for example, it can provide short cuts by stimulating the use of particular schemata. It can also be problematic where the common knowledge base is small, and, in particular, metaphors can cause difficulties when communicating between cultures and between disciplines.

Metaphors are already used in face-to-face interactions and, along with similes, can be highly effective in stimulating mental representations of complex or abstract concepts. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal book describes how they can be used to extrapolate from our existing knowledge to understand new subjects and as a tool to structure our thoughts and deepen understanding. To link with career management theory we need to look at how this operates in the face to face situation of guidance. It is possible to use feedback to establish whether the recipient understands the key similarities being drawn and can move on from that to grasp something new about the concept or idea the teacher is expounding. In this way, metaphors can be highly effective tools in assisting understanding and embedding new concepts. However they also have the potential to be misleading, inappropriate and confusing, particularly when interacting with someone with a different knowledge base from one's own.

The main danger with their use is that learners may make links between inappropriate aspects of the comparison object, for example, let us take a well-known metaphor.

> All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players
>
> (Shakespeare 1623/2007)

I think this metaphor is effective to English speakers in rapidly portraying a complex series of ideas: people are not in control of their destinies; they may 'act' in different roles throughout their lives; people are the same across the world.

In comparison let us take the simile from the film Forrest Gump:

> Life is like a box of chocolates
>
> (Zemeckis 1994)

Without the subsequent clarification ("You never know what you're going to get") this simile is less effective for learning. How is the learner to know which aspect of a box of chocolates is to be compared? There are many aspects of chocolates: Are they similar in that both are fattening? In that both can be presents? That neither lasts long? Each individual may focus on a different property to compare the two objects or ideas and not necessarily the one the user intended.

In teaching, the purpose of metaphor is to increase understanding. Schiff described this as "a bridge enabling passage from one world to another" (1979: 106). If a metaphor does not work for one learner, the educator can adapt. However, when using metaphors in theory or with large groups there is less flexibility to switch if it is not effective. Therefore users should be highly cognizant of their own cultural interpretations embedded within a metaphor and how that translates to others. To be effective, Ortony (1993) argued that metaphor must be vivid, compact and also expressible. Halsasz and Moran (1982) argue that it is also vital that, if metaphors are used, they do not cause 'overlearning.' They warn of the dangers of overlearning, i.e. carrying more information from the comparison item than is required. For example, if we return to the metaphor "All the world's a stage", a learner may transfer across from it the idea that the world is like a stage in other ways: made of wood; surrounded by lights; or relatively small. We would not want our learners to get mixed up and have to begin to unlearn these aspects of the metaphor.

Anderson et al. (1994) have developed a step by step method to assess whether one should use a metaphor to aid teaching. Firstly, assess what mental effort is saved by the use of metaphor. Secondly, identify the conceptual baggage associated with the metaphor i.e. elements that are not relevant and need disassociating. Thirdly, compare the two elements to decide if effort is saved or not. Finally, users should consider whether the metaphor can be extended to support other aspects of learning in the future.

Having chosen one of the world's best writers and best metaphors, it is hard to see how one could really confuse the relevant aspects of stage and world. Let us consider a metaphor which is used in career discussions and assess the potential problems. The idea of a career ladder is well established in the UK and yet is one which causes 'overlearning' difficulties. Using Anderson et al.'s method I have analysed this term in figure 1.

I have shown that some of the 'effort saved' associations are also represented as 'effort wasted' associations. This is because, for many people, careers are diverse and they might question some of the associations. Based on this analysis, I maintain that use of the metaphor causes more work than

Figure 1

Metaphor	Associations/Effort Saved	Conceptual Baggage/ Effort Wasted	Potential Extensions for Future
Career as Ladder	1. Over time you advance higher. 2. You can only be on one route at a time. 3. The aim is to reach the top.	1. The aim is to reach the top 2. You cannot step to the side without going down to the bottom again. 3. You cannot be on different routes at one time. 4. You are alone on your career. 5. Others are either above or below you. 6. Each rung is the same.	Looking at the concept of the 'top', what are you aiming to reach?

Figure 2

Metaphor	Associations/Effort Saved	Conceptual Baggage/ Effort Wasted	Potential Extensions for Future
Removal of documents function as a recycle bin	1. Things can be retrieved from this area if done quickly (before it is emptied) 2. After a time things are irretrievable. 3. It is not immediately removed so not appropriate for confidential documents.	1. For people who don't empty their own bins they may expect this to be automatic. 2. For people who do empty their own bins they may expect to be able to retrieve documents unless they have emptied the bin.	

not using the metaphor and so it is not a helpful concept. In comparison, an effective metaphor, assessed by Anderson et al's method, is the recycle bin in Microsoft applications. A similar assessment is made in figure 2.

I suggest that the metaphor of an electronic recycle bin is effective because it has been accepted by users across the globe; however, even with this metaphor, some elements do not match. Some users expect the bin to be emptied automatically (as their own recycle bin is) and others expect to have to empty the bin (as they do their own recycle bin). The user's current associations with the comparison object are likely to be different from other users and so it is likely that learning from the metaphor will be different as a result. This is potentially of greatest difficulty to those learners coming from different cultural backgrounds.

So does this mean metaphors are too difficult to use? I hope not, for using a metaphor allows users to shortcut into ideas, imagine difficult concepts and structure their thoughts. They should not, however, be used uncritically. Hopefully, by assessing the metaphors used, one will be able to assess what is and is not effective in increasing learning for the widest group of students.

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A reply to Laura Dean

Kerr Inkson

So: Metaphors used in education have disadvantages. Did Laura Dean imagine that I was unaware of that fact?

In my book *Understanding Careers: The Metaphors of Working Lives* (Sage, 2007), which is referenced in my NICEC article, I state: "Metaphors can be used to induce us to see things that aren't there and to force other views into the background. Philosopher John Locke railed against metaphor as 'the artificial and figurative application of words ... for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move passions, and thereby mislead the judgement...' In considering metaphors, retain some scepticism, seek evidence to support the metaphor, and recognise that every metaphor has its limitations" (page 13). In relation to each of the eight core career metaphors that constitute the body of the book, some of which are included in the NICEC article, I constantly draw attention to their weaknesses as well as their strengths. Notwithstanding this, my experience in research and education continues to persuade me that the advantages of using metaphor outweigh the disadvantages, provided attention is drawn to the limitations.

In relation to the cross-cultural limitations of metaphor mentioned by Laura Dean, it is not so much metaphor as the notion of career itself which may be flawed. On page 5-6 of my book I note that the concept of career explored by the metaphors I use is that of an individual long-term project, and that this may make the notion of "career," let alone "metaphors for career," inappropriate in collectivist cultures. I also list a wide range of political and economic factors which are taken for granted as a backdrop to career studies in Western democracies but may not apply elsewhere. In such cases, not just my metaphors but much of career studies may be rendered irrelevant. For elaboration of this view, see David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson, 'Careers across Cultures' in H. Gunz and M. Peiperl, *Handbook of Career Studies*, pp. 451-470. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.

I am sorry if I did not make these caveats explicit in the short space accorded to me by the editors of my NICEC article. I suppose my contacts with careers educators and indeed many students have persuaded me that the limitations of metaphor, and of each specific career metaphor, quickly become self-evident in any discussion. Laura Dean's method of metaphor analysis based on Anderson et al. strikes me as of use not so much, as she says, "to assess whether you should use a metaphor to aid teaching," but as a classroom tool to assist students to see the strengths and weaknesses of each metaphor, and thereby to gain insight into the nature of careers. Her own analysis of the familiar but nowadays largely discarded "career ladder" metaphor, for example, would provide an excellent basis for classroom discussion of career forms, especially if accompanied by an equivalent analysis of another metaphor, that of the child's climbing frame, as discussed on page 131 of my book.

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