Transition from School to Work

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Abstract

The research examined and investigated occupational aspirations, choices and developments of three groups of adolescents: Asians, Afro-Caribbean and White Britons during their immediate periods of transition from school to work. In total, 456 adolescents participated in the research. A questionnaire was employed as the main focus of this study comprising the pupils’ questionnaire and self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The results were analysed using ANOVA. There were no statistically significant differences among the groups on self-esteem; however, there were some statistically significant differences among the groups on their beliefs about the influences on transition from school to work. These findings are discussed in the context of other studies of ethnicity and occupational aspirations. Limitations and implications of the findings are explored. Recommendations for future research are also addressed.

Introduction

Transition is defined as ‘a change or passage from one state or stage to another’ (Collins Concise English Dictionary, 1992, p.1433). This research is concerned with one specific transition that is made by virtually all members of society at some stage in their life cycle: the transition from school to work. The significance of transition from school to work has become increasingly apparent with implications for individuals, families, institutions and the entire country (Verma, 1999). The potential importance of work in the life of each individual makes it imperative that educators, career guidance counsellors and occupational psychologists examine both the process of career and occupational development and the factors that promote or impede its growth (Hodkinson & Bloomer, 2001; Verma, 2001).

The current research examines and investigates occupational aspirations, choices and developments of three groups of adolescent school leavers (Asians, Afro-Caribbean and White Britons) from multicultural inner-city areas of Liverpool and Manchester during their immediate periods of transition from school to work. In addition, the research examines factors that might be related to occupational aspirations, choices and developments such as personal/psychological factors, formal and informal career guidance systems and job search strategies. These factors are unlikely to be divorced from demographic information, ethnic background, situational/environmental influences, and person (for example self-esteem), interests, and occupational knowledge. The factors outlined are all partly moulded by the home and school environment. Throughout the occupational literature, theorists and researchers (see, for example, Bagley et al., 1979) have assumed that Afro-Caribbean adolescents have low self-esteem, external locus of control and consequently negative concepts of work. Very few objective empirical studies have been carried out in this area. New research is needed as there is relatively little published material on inner city adolescents, particularly those young people approaching school leaving age who are now known as ‘Britons’, this includes the 2nd/3rd/4th generations of ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, the field of occupational aspirations/choices/developments has as yet been relatively unexplored in relation to important and diverse factors that might be related to inner city adolescents’ occupational aspirations, choices, and developments. This research aims to fill some of these gaps.

Ethnic minorities

Defining an ethnic minority group is by no means straightforward. In general, the term is used in the U.K. by the Commission for Racial Equality and government agencies to refer rather loosely to groups of individuals who share some or all of the following: a religious affiliation, a linguistic or cultural heritage, a common history and experience, a common geographical origin. They may also share colour of skin, hair type, facial features, personal mannerisms or style of dress.

Many methods of classifying ethnic minority group exist. According to Kendola (1985) the essential ingredient of all the classifications on whatever criterion they are based is that they attempt to reliably identify disadvantaged groups.

Major ethnic minority groups who have settled in the United Kingdom include people of West Indian/Afro-Caribbean/African-Caribbean and Asian descent. Initially, teachers described their children as immigrant (see Ballard, 1985; Walser, 1975). As most of their children were born in United Kingdom, many prefer the term Afro-Caribbean, rather than West Indian or African-Caribbean, as it denotes the full historical origins of this group; others choose to use ‘Black British’
which acknowledges fully their status as British. New terminology such as Asian Britons or Afro-Caribbean Britons or Black Britons might help reflect pupils’ bicultural status. Throughout this paper the terms Black youth/Black or Black Briton are shorthand for all young people of ethnic minority origin, by it West Indian or Afro-Caribbean or Asian. Of course the authors recognize that there are vast differences between these groups, and all the research (see for example, Moodie, et al., 1997; Werner, etal., 1997) shows that disadvantage, discrimination and problems related to occupational issues are to a greater or lesser extent common to all. The term Black is used, where appropriate, to maintain language consistency when citing earlier studies.

Research on factors influencing occupational aspirations/choices

The transition from school in the final year of schooling is regarded as a crucial time in a school-leaver’s educational/occupational career. Smith & Roejewski (1993) claim that the transition from school to work is not a single event in the lives of youth but rather an extended process with several milestones. The transition is influenced by the individuals’ occupational aspirations and choices, which in turn is related to a variety of issues. Roejewski and Yang, (1997). Some decisions will be made relating to whether the individual will continue in formal education system and obtains a job or continues in further education. Whatever transition the school-leaver makes will be difficult for various reasons. At this point of difficulties, parents/teachers/career advisers and other significant others often provide advice on the best options to follow. In the United Kingdom, ethnic minority groups (Asians and Afro-Caribbean) have had bight disadvantaged situations in the occupational field, evidenced not only by lower wages and salaries but also by concentration in less desirable occupations and under-representation in more highly-paid occupations (Brown & Gay 1985; CRE, 1998, 2003; EOC, 1994, 1999, 2004; Penn & Scattogger, 1992; Philips, 2004).

It has been consistently demonstrated that Asians and Afro-Caribbeans suffer from multiple disadvantages (Archer & Y 자신하, 2003; Basit, 1996; CRE, 1978, 1988; Gilborn & Miles 1998; Smith, 1976), and restricted education and employment opportunities (Dooley & Prasse, 1997; Forsyth & Fuulong, 2003; Sby, et al., 1999; Verma, 1981, 1999, 2001). Research studies (see, for example, Mirza, 1992; Taylor, 1981) have shown that Asians and Afro-Caribbean adolescents have ‘over- aspiration’ and ‘under-achievement’. Both these phenomena have been ascribed to cultural factors (Baker, 1978; Beatham, 1967; Dale et al., 2002; Gupta, 1977).

More recent studies (see, for example, Verma, 2001) point out that ethnic minority youths are more ambitious than their counterparts and they desire upward social mobility through education and careers and whilst at school have high self-esteem. (Basit, 1996; Mirza, 1992; Verma, 1984, 1999). However, research (for example, Basit, 1996) shows that the future facing ethnic minority youths does not appear to be much brighter than the situation their parents had to contend with in their search for jobs. (Basit, 1996; Drew et al., 1991). A recent quote by Philips (2004) makes an interesting point: “We have known for some time that whatever class you belong to, your race is an obstacle all by itself.”

There are various factors, however, to be taken into account when one is examining the employment and occupational behaviour or development of ethnic minority pupils. Major issues include the entire concept of career or occupational choices and development, the career maturity of youths, the types of intervention strategies used and the measurement devices to gauge their career progress, interests and choices. What influences personal/psychological factors, background/situational/environmental factors, formal and informal career guidance system/job search strategies assume in an individual’s career or occupational behaviour? To what extent may patterns of employment be explained by occupational values, expectations, aspirations/choices, or by one’s ethnicity?

The relevance of occupational choice theories to the career choices and aspirations of ethnic minorities

Both psychologists and sociologists have for many years studied the individuals which indicate their occupations. The results of these studies have supplied the raw material out of which a variety of theories have been built as well as providing much-needed information for those who advise and guide others through the transition from education to work (Kidder et al., 1994).

Career development theory, research and practice have been severely criticised as inadequate for ethnic minorities. (Brown, 2002; Diamond, 1987; Greenhaus, 1975; McWhirter, 1997; Osiw, 1983; Osiw & Littlejohn, 1995). Despite these criticisms, certain observations about the current state of ethnic minorities strongly support the following observations about the special needs of ethnic minority groups. Firstly, ethnic minorities Gilborn & Miles (1998) show that in the United Kingdom, have significantly different job aspirations (Lerman, 1994; Smith, 1980, 1994; Wentling & Wright 2001), WFM, 2004). Secondly, ethnic minorities face special obstacles in the world of work. Racism is one obvious obstacle, which suggests that there is a need to help ethnic minorities to develop strategies to deal with discrimination. Lower class, inner-city (Black) youth may face increased pressure to enter non-white working stereotypes and job search skills (Lee & Wrench, 1983, 1984). Thirdly, the effect of the barriers on the (individual) ethnic minority group member can be multiple and far reaching. Getfredson (1981) believed that limited opportunities affect aspirations. Smith (1975) asserts that society imposes negative self-images on Blacks, and

In summary, Baker (1978), Basit (1996), CRE (1988), Gupta (1977), Pfeiffer et al. (1977), Sien and Knox (1992), and Verma (1981, 1994, 2001), have all discussed the relevance of ‘cultural’ influences on occupational aspirations/choices and expectations. The results obtained by these studies are remarkably consistent in that they all conclude that Black youths in particular the Asian youths had higher aims than their White counterparts. Pfeiffer and her colleagues (1977) also reported a stereotyped view about the pupils in Glasgow, where over- aspirations was seen as a barrier to appropriate job choice for Asian youths. These researchers, however, found that this theoretical framework was inadequate to explain disappointment and failure in the labour market. They also produce evidence-showing unfamiliarity on the part of the student conducted with application procedures, educational requirements and job availability.

The general picture, which emerges from various studies conducted in the past, is that there exist differential aspirations. Most of the explanations have concentrated upon cultural and social influences. What has been lacking from most analyses one would argue, has been an adequate treatment of the way in which these aspirations are constructed, both socially and psychologically. Such factors are moderated by personal factors. In addition there is an indication that negative attitudes and discrimination towards specific occupations and occupational fields may negatively affect the Black youth’s self-esteem, academic achievement, occupational aspirations/choices, expectations and employment prospects.

In summary, much of the research findings pertinent to the Black adolescent’s occupational aspirations/choices/ expectations have produced conflicting hypotheses and results. Some questions, among many, that need answering are ‘Are there significant differences in self-esteem, occupational aspirations and choices of Black and White adolescents?’ and ‘What factors influence occupational aspirations/choices/expectations of Black and White adolescents?’? Is it not the intention of this paper to address all the above questions raised. This particular study focuses on two key areas: the self-esteem of groups with different ethnic backgrounds and the factors that they believed exert (positive or negative) influences on their occupational choices.

Method

Participants

In total 456 students took part in the study. All participants were white or ‘school leavers’ by Manchester and Liverpool education authorities. This definition of ‘school leaver’ consisted of males and females aged 15-16 who were finishing compulsory education. The 456 subjects were derived from ten different schools, comprising, five from an inner-city area of Manchester
and five from an inner-city area of Liverpool. The decision to select ten schools from inner-city areas was to ensure ethnic representation. The schools in the inner-city areas of Manchester and Liverpool varied in size, ethnicity and gender. Table 1 provides details of the total number of students in each school.

Table 1: Sample sizes by school location and gender

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<th>SCHOOLS*</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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*1L-5L = schools located in Liverpool area. 6M-10M = schools located in Manchester area.

In total, there were 268 (54%) females and 208 (46%) males. The gender of the students was not controlled. However, social class and ethnicity were controlled to a certain extent due to the fact that schools were selected from as near as possible to the inner-city areas of Liverpool and Manchester in order to obtain a more ethnically diverse sample. Based on participants’ self-classifications and perception of their ethnic origin, they were grouped into Afro-Caribbean (African/West Indian/Caribbean, British Afro-Caribbean, Other Afro-Caribbean), Asians (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani), British Asians, Other Asians, and White (White, White Others). At the time of the study the CRE office in Manchester approved the classifications and terminology used. On the basis of participants’ self-reported information on ethnicity, adolescents (pupils) of three different ethnic groups (Afro-Caribbean, Asian and White) were represented in the sample. The Afro-Caribbean group consisted of 45 (10%) adolescents (24 (53%) female, 21 (47%) male). The Asian group consisted of 98 (22%) adolescents (48 (49%) female, 50 (51%) male). The White group consisted of 313 (68%) adolescents (176 (56%) female, 137 (44%) male). The proportion of participants for each group was a close approximation of their ethnic representation in the schools’ pupil population. The age of students ranged from 15 to 16. The students belonged to diverse socio-economic groups.

Measures/Instruments

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item Guttman scale designed to measure self-esteem. Two-week test-retest reliability studies indicate coefficients of 0.85 and 0.88. The RSE also has a 0.92 Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility (Fischer & Corcoran, 1994). Concurrent construct, and predictive validity have been well documented (Rosenberg, 1979). Construct validity has been demonstrated by significant correlation with theoretically similar measures (e.g., CooperSmith Self-Esteem Inventory) and by lack of correlation with dissimilar measures. The self-esteem scale by Rosenberg was designed to measure attitudes towards the self along a favourable-unfavourable dimension. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy. Rosenberg (1965) designed the self-esteem scale with several criteria in mind. One was his conception of self-esteem: ‘When we speak of high self-esteem... we shall simply mean that individual respects himself, considers himself worthy, he does not necessarily consider himself better than others, but he definitely does not consider himself worse, he does not feel that he is the ultimate in perfection, but, on the contrary, recognizes his limitations and expects to grow and improve.’

The RSE has been widely used in the United Kingdom and the United States and claims to be a reliable and valid measure of self-esteem (Robinson and Shaver, 1973).

The pupils’ questionnaire was validated to ensure construct validity. As well as collecting demographic information on such variables such as age and race/ ethnicity, the questionnaire investigated three main areas that might be related to occupational aspiration/choice: a) personal/psychological factors, b) background situational/environmental factors and c) formal and informal career guidance and job search strategies. The questionnaire was divided into 11 subscales utilising factor analyses. These subscales measured respondents’ beliefs about the influence they exerted on their lives. The coefficients and subscales’ reliability coefficients (Alpha) range from 0.65 to 0.87 and the subscales overall contained 32 items. The subscales are:

a. Importance of background factors in getting a job. (Sample item: ‘when discussing my choice of career, the teachers make assumptions according to my race’).

b. Negative influences on school performance - self. (Sample item: ‘the following people have prevented me from doing well in school, for example – myself’).

c. Negative influences on school performance- others. (Sample item: ‘the following people have prevented me from doing well at school, for example – friends, parents, teachers/career advisers’).

d. Factors believed to influence job prospects. (Sample item: ‘I believe that the following are important in getting a job – good career advice, good school record, help from parents/teachers’).

e. Negative influences on job prospects. (Sample item: ‘the school career adviser has not been interested in my feelings’).

f. Do well in school - friends. (Sample item: ‘the following people have helped me to do well at school, for example - friends’).

g. Do well in school - parents. (Sample item: ‘the following people have helped me to do well in school, for example - parents’).

h. Do well in school - career advisers. (Sample item: ‘the following people have helped me to do well in school, for example - career advisers’).

i. Job information - parents/family. (Sample item: ‘the following people have already given me information about jobs, for example - parents/family’).

j. Job information - friends. (Sample item: ‘the following people/places have already given me information about jobs, for example - friends’).

k. Job information - career centre. (Sample item: ‘the following people/places have already given me information about jobs, for example - career advisers’).

Procedure

Pupils from 10 different schools took part in this study. They were invited to participate in a study investigating influences on school to further education/work and in particular occupational aspirations/choices of school leavers. Before the study took place permission from the education authorities both at Liverpool and Manchester was sought. A letter explaining the purpose of the study was sent to the education authorities. Follow-up contact (i.e., phone calls, visits, individual meetings) was made to answer any appropriate questions regarding the research. Permission was granted by the chief education officers to carry out the study in any schools within Manchester and Liverpool via formal letters. A list of all of the secondary schools in Liverpool (L) and Manchester (M) was obtained from the education authorities. Five schools from each city were chosen by random selection. The schools were chosen by their proximity to the city centre. Schools closest to the city centre were chosen because of their higher ethnic diversity in comparison to schools on the outskirts of a city centre. After discussion with either the head-teacher, the head of careers or the head of Year 11, five schools in each city agreed to participate in the study (see Table 1). Once all of the ten schools had agreed to co-operate with the research, dates and times were arranged to visit the school and administer the questionnaire. Once at the schools, the questionnaire was administered randomly to appropriate year groups at each school. The questionnaire was handed out to every individual in random and a simple set of instructions was stated as follows:

‘Please complete the whole of the questionnaire on your own as honestly as possible. It is not a test or exam. Your answers will be kept confidential. No teacher or head-teacher from your school will view your answers.’
The findings on beliefs about influences on transition from school to work are summarised below under appropriate sub-sections:

a) Importance of background factors in getting a job: Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths compared to White youths appeared to regard background factors as more important in getting a job. This result was statistically significant. Mean scores for Afro-Caribbean, Asian, and White were 2.09, 2.09, and 1.76 respectively. Comparisons between all three ethnic groups showed statistically significant differences in their mean scores.

b) Negative influences on school performance – self: This result was statistically significant. Asian compared to Afro-Caribbean and White youths did not see themselves as negative influences on school performance. They appeared more positive. Mean scores for Asians, Afro-Caribbean, and White youths were 2.67, 2.92, and 3.00 respectively.

c) Negative influences on school performance – others: This result was statistically significant. Asians were more likely than Afro-Caribbean and White youths to claim that others were not negative influences on their school performance.

Other noticeable statistically significant results were:

d) Factors believed to influence job prospects: Asians and Afro-Caribbean youths appeared to see the role of parents, race, skin colour, ethnic group, and gender in getting a job compared to White youths.

d) Do well in school – career advisers: Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths believed that career advisers were more influential in helping them to do well in school compared to their White counterparts who saw career advisers as not influential.

Discussion and conclusions

This study was conducted to investigate transition from school to work.

The present study aimed to examine three ethnic group transitions from school to work by raising a number of questions. The results regarding self-esteem (see section 2) indicated no statistically significant differences between the three ethnic groups. All ethnic groups in our sample had high self-esteem. This result may be cautiously interpreted to agree with the conclusion that ethnic minorities, in particular Afro-Caribbean in our sample, do not have low self-esteem. This finding is consistent with most previous research carried out, particularly those carried out in the USA (e.g. Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Gray-Little & Hafdia, 2000; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Phelps, et al., 2001; Triangle & Crocker, 2002) where the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy resulted in programmes aimed at reversing negative attitudes and low self-esteem.

There are some minority findings in the UK (e.g. Sone, 1982; Verma, 1999) that have found similarity in the level of self-esteem of ethnic groups which have been attributed to cultural values, perceptions, attitudes towards education and the nature of schooling. Whilst at school it was argued (e.g. Verma, 2001) that these youths had high levels of self-esteem as some had not yet been relatively exposed to the wider world of work and employment where racism is seen as norm for ethnic minorities in Britain. (CRE, 1998; CRE, 2003; Verma, 2001). It is possible to suggest that despite differences in life experiences and group experiences in relation to widely held view of discrimination in British society that high self-esteem is maintained whilst still at school for some ethnic groups.

Some writers (see Bagley et al., 1979; Verma, 1999) have suggested that ethnic minority youths are more likely to experience discrimination when applying for a job. The consequences of this is low self-esteem and negative attitudes towards work. However, there is little systematic research to support this assumption. The label that is often given to Black youth is one of low self-esteem and low self-empirical. It is quite clear from empirical research that the participants in this study do not fall in to the mode of ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’. Researchers must further seek to understand the current results as they relate to the Black-Britons. Researchers also need to continue to examine and ascertain whether the current results are applicable generalisable and in particular the exact meaning in the light of the current situation in transition from school to work in multicultural Britain.

Existing reviews also seems to indicate that ethnicity and self-esteem have implications for a wide range of situations, for example, psychological functioning, occupational aspirations/choices, and career guidance. These variables according to researchers (Bhagat et al., 1990; Gottfredson & Becker, 1981; Verma, 2001) can have a significant impact on the personal lives of Blacks.

Researchers (see Louden, 1983; Verma, 1999) have consistently maintained that individuals with high self-esteem are psychologically better adjusted, internally controlled, achieve better academically, better adjusted emotionally, and are not easily influenced by others. (Louden, 1983; Maqsud, 1983; Rosenberg, 1978; Spring & Khanna, 1982; Verma, 1999). Furthermore, research (see Bagley et al., 1979; Manfield (1975) evidence has demonstrated that self-esteem plays a major role/part in predicting occupational aspirations/choices. Manfield (1975) indicated that individuals high in self-esteem seek occupational roles which are congruent with their self-perceived characteristics, and are more adept at making a better fit. Other previous researchers (see Hughes & Demo, 1989; Louden, 1983; Verma, 2001) have consistently identified that individuals with higher self-esteem were more likely to have higher educational, occupational aspirations/choices. It is clear from the present study that in all ethnic groups in this sample had high self-esteem despite negative stereotypes pertaining to Black youths. Self-esteem as a variable clearly needs to be taken into account when one is analysing factors believed to influence transition from school to work.

In addition to self-esteem, the study was done to explore any ethnic group differences in relation to beliefs about factors that influence transition from school to work. These findings are discussed below.

The findings from this study suggests that Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths compared to White youths regards background factors as more important in getting a job. This result was statistically significant (see (a), table 3). What this finding suggests is that at this early stage of transition, Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths received disadvantages in the job market which the White youths did not. Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths perceived background factors such as race, skin colour, ethnic group, gender, being born in Britain, family background, and perception of teachers in relation to race and career choice, as important in getting a job. Based on our current findings, White youths clearly disagree with this. Other findings (CRE, 1998, 2003; Drew, et al., 1992) support this result, in that Black youths feel disadvantaged in the labour market due to perceived discrimination in the world of work. This perception often means that the youths are defeated. The current results suggest that there is a need to help ethnic minorities, particularly Asian and Afro-Caribbean youths to develop strategies to deal with issues of discrimination and prevent lack of aspirations. Researchers such as Gottfredson & Becker (1981) and Verma (2001) have argued that discrimination and limited opportunities affect educational, occupational aspirations/choices. It is vital that prevention becomes the basis for recommendations.

The result on perceived negative influences (self) on school performance was statistically significant (see (b) table 3). This result indicated that Asians compared to Afro-Caribbean and White youths did not see themselves as negative influences on school performance. Asian youths appeared more positive about their transition from school to work and seemed to be taking some form of responsibility in attributing blame on themselves if they were unable to secure a job or do well in school.

Results and findings, relating to negative influences
Further interesting findings from this study relate to sources of job information. Evidently, from our current study, it was discovered that Asian youths believed that job information from their parents was not influential compared to their Afro-Caribbean and White counterparts. Again this result was statistically significant (see (ii) table 3). This result does not necessarily contradict previous findings (see Allen, 1998; Kalra et al., 1999). Asian parents may have high aspirations for their children, however, they may not be knowledgeable about how to obtain relevant job information. These parents may lack knowledge of criteria needed to attain appropriate jobs. Research (see Allen, 1998; Verma, 2005) has consistently shown parental influence to be the single most important factor for youths in their transition from school to work (Arnold et al., 1984; Lightbody et al., 1997). However it has been claimed that parents from an ethnic minority background who may not have been educated in the UK may lack relevant information regarding jobs. Arguably, this finding may suggest that Asian parents are likely to be ill-equipped, and may be attributing unrealistic aspirations due to lack of knowledge in the area of job information. It is difficult to compare findings of other researchers in this area as methods varied enormously. However, in earlier research findings, see for example, Arnold, et al., 1998; Allen 1998; Kalra et al., 1999) in nearly all the studies the influence of parents plays a bigger part than that of formal influence such as teachers and career advisers. More recent studies (Archer & Gadd, 2005; Dale et al., 2002; Johnson, 2004) have outlined some positive formal influences depending on resources available and the provision of career guidance. In view of our findings, the importance of involving parents in career education, information, and guidance programmes cannot be over-stressed, and clearly this has implication for career guidance and counselling.

It is imperative that more thought is given to the education of parents, careers teachers, and careers advisers in the area of career guidance and counselling as the nature of career advice and guidance can change to meet the needs of a growing number of ethnic minorities in Britain.

The available evidence from this study clearly indicates that the actions and attitudes of young people themselves must be considered in any exploration of causal factors in the association between occupational aspiration/choices, attainment and labour-market outcome.

It is likely that the occupational aspirations of youths will be affected by combinations of personal/psychological factors, environmental influences, ethnic background, family, schools, career guidance systems and significant others. This research area could be improved by more replication of studies and by publications and dialogue between researchers, participants, teachers, career advisers and parents.

The present study certainly paves the way for future investigations into transition from school to work. Future research should consider a longitudinal study and a larger sample size covering a wider location beyond the North-West of England. More research of this type is needed in continually address issues raised in this research particularly with references to ethnic minority youths in Britain.

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References


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NICEC News

Personnel changes
Congratulations to Jeffrey Defries on his appointment as Chief Executive of CRAC and Director of NICEC starting in April 2006. Jeffrey has experience as a freelance consultant and facilitator, working primarily for the European Foundation for Management Development and as a lecturer for the Civil Service College. Prior to this, Jeffrey held a number of directorships including Director of Corporate Affairs at the NHSU (the corporate university of the NHS), Deputy Dean at the London Business School and Assistant Director at the Science Museum.

NICEC also has a new ‘Chair’. David Andrews, an existing fellow of NICEC, has agreed to take on the role of chairing the network. David Andrews has been a Fellow of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) since 1992. He works as an independent education consultant and trainer, specialising in careers education and guidance and in the Queen's New Year's Honours List 2003 he was awarded an OBE for services to careers education. David thanked Ruth Hawthorn for her achievements in leading the network over the last year. Ruth has stepped down from the role of Acting Director but will serve as Deputy chairperson.

NICEC would like to welcome its two new overseas fellows: Professor R. Sullana of the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, and Dr Gideon Arulmani of the The Pramsey Foundation in Bangalore.

It will be of interest to:
- careers practitioners in schools, colleges and HEIs
- academics
- independent and private sector careers advisers
- employers who inform the careers guidance agenda
- public policy makers
- Connexions Service advisers
- Learning and Skills Councils staff.

As a result of attending this conference, participants should:
- have a clearer understanding of current and emerging policy and strategy, recognising the factors that influencing its formation and the impact on practice that will result
- be better informed about recent and current research in the field of career guidance
- be more aware of the respective roles of policy makers, researchers and consumers
- be more confident about your role in contributing to, using, disseminating or doing relevant research
- have developed a greater understanding of definitions of concepts such as ‘guidance’, ‘careers’ and ‘occupation’
- have some insight into the different systems in place in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- have had the opportunity to explore the role and contribution of other academic disciplines, such as psychology and economics, in guidance research and practice

For further information, please contact Julia Jones (Email: Julia.jones@crac.org.uk Tel: 01223 460277).

At the Cutting Edge of Careers Education and Guidance
Swanwick, Derbyshire 11-13 December 2006

The National Institute of Careers Education and Counselling’s ‘At the Cutting Edge’ event is a three-day residential conference which aims to push forward the careers education and guidance agenda through discussion and debate amongst practitioners, researchers and policy makers. The 2006 event will focus on the reciprocal relationship between research, policy and practice taking in issues from all age careers guidance, the growth of independent and private sector guidance and the differences in provision between nations.