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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. Please contact either Phil McCash or Hazel Reid prior to submission to discuss the appropriateness of the proposed article and to 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.

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ARTICLES

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Innovation in theory and practice

This issue is inspired by the Audrey Collin's NICEC Seminar of 24th November, 2011. As is discussed in her article below, the seminar provided the opportunity to outline the assumptions made by systems theory and consider the benefits for practice and how it might be applied. For this journal issue, additional papers were invited on the broad theme of innovation in theory and practice in career education and counselling. I am pleased to report that contributions were received from a range of experienced and newer writers on a number of important topics.

Jim Bright and Robert Pryor write on systems and chaos theory in relation to career. David Winter and Bill Law consider narrative in relation to reflective practice and storyboarding. Rie Thomsen, Paul Davies, Mason Minnitt, Caroline Vernon and Dawn-Marie Walker report on examples of careers work in relation to specific populations, namely: young people in a town in Northern England, factory workers at risk of redundancy in Denmark and individuals with Asperger's and autistic spectrum disorders in higher education.

Audrey Collin identifies the similarities and differences between her own approach to systems thinking and those of others such as Patton and McMahon and Checkland. She argues for a key difference between systems thinking and systems theories of career. It is proposed that the former offers a useful epistemological tool for interpreting career to researchers, practitioners and individuals alike.

Jim Bright and Robert Pryor consider their Chaos Theory of Careers in relation to the practice of career education. They identify a number of criticisms of traditional career education programmes and suggest innovative ways in which career education programmes may be transformed.

David Winter focuses on narrative techniques in reflective practice. He is particularly interested in considering narrative in relation to reflecting on work with clients. He proposes new ways in which narrative theories can be used to shape reflective practice.

Bill Law considers storyboarding in relation to careers work. An example of storyboarding in relation to careers work is provided; and further perspectives from fields such as literary theory and neurology are explored. He proposes that career helpers can model the probing and exploration of stories and thus model the living of an enquiring life to their clients.

Rie Thomsen writes about guidance in communities. A particular feature of this article is the way in which guidance workers, and the communities they work within, can evolve and shape guidance practices to their needs. A process memorably illustrated by the 'Then we took the wall' episode. It is argued that this indicates a way forward for guidance practice more generally.

Paul Davies, Mason Minnitt and Caroline Vernon report on Community Asset-Based Career Guidance and the use of evaluation to assist the development of emerging practices. A particular aspect of their work highlighted is the determination to identify and celebrate the contributions made by young people and their helpers within the community.

Dawn-Marie Walker writes about an Asperger's/Autistic Spectrum Disorder project focused on transition from higher education to the workplace. She discusses the formation of the project, design of the learning outcomes, teaching and participant-informed evaluation. Recommendations are made for education providers concerning the identification of individuals with ASDs and for employers with regard to encouraging acceptance and self-disclosure.

Phil McCash, Co-editor

The systems approach to career

Audrey Collin

Although systems theory has considerable potential to give new understanding of career, it has been given little attention. Its underpinning assumptions about how to interpret the world differ from our everyday linear, cause-and-effect approaches, and so we need to use systems thinking. Rather than taking career to be a system, the concept of system is used as a tool to examine career. This systems model gives views of individual and environmental factors and their dynamic interplay in career which are not open to other theories. I shall show how such a model would contribute to theory, research, and practice.

Introduction

I first encountered systems theory over thirty years ago when it was all but unknown in the career field (see Patton and McMahon, 1999; 2006a). I recognised (Collin, 1984; 1985) that it could be used to make good where the career theories (North American) of the time, with their focus on intra-individual factors, gave insufficient explanations of career, neglecting the individual's context, subjective experience, and the process of change. Although I have remained committed to that view, I developed other interests in the field, and did not pursue the systems approach again until recently (Collin, 2006). Meanwhile, as in other fields such as family therapy (e.g. Kreppner, and Lerner, 1989; Bor, Legg, and Scher, 1996; Street, 1996), its value has gradually become recognised and it has now been taken up in our field, but still not given the wider attention it deserves. So although it is not an 'innovation', I am taking the opportunity presented by this issue dedicated to Innovation in Theory and Practice to draw attention to its potential to help us see more clearly the workings of career, and to address them more effectively in practice. This would be especially valuable now that major contextual changes are shaking some of the traditional foundations of career.

What is systems theory?

Systems theory originated in the work of scientists in several fields, particularly those in cybernetics and biology (e.g. von Bertalanffy, 1968), and has since been developed into a meta-disciplinary approach (Checkland, 1981). It arose through the study of organised complexity like that, for example, of a plant, which cannot be adequately understood by being analysed as one might strip down a machine into its parts. The relationships between the parts of an organism and between the parts of a machine are different. An organism has to be considered as a whole, as a system, which is 'the idea of a set of elements connected together to form a whole' (Checkland, 1981: 3). This whole is greater than the sum of its parts, having emergent properties which cannot be explained in terms of its elements: '[t]he taste of water, for example, is a property of the substance water, not of the hydrogen and oxygen which combine to form it.' (Checkland, 1981: 3)

The system itself is a part (a sub-system) of a superordinate whole; this constitutes its environment, and this is composed of other systems. The system which is open to its environment, like a plant, takes in (inputs) materials, energy and information from the systems in its environment, and converts them into what it needs to sustain itself. The products of that conversion are returned into the environment (outputs); some are used in exchange for new inputs, others are waste products. The system receives feedback upon them. This is not linear and reciprocal, but multidirectional, and there can also be feedforward. Patton and McMahon (1999: 176; 2006a: 221-222) call this 'recursiveness', and explain that the various influences upon a system are 'interrelated and therefore act on each other' in a 'mutuality of influence.' Figure One is a model of the open system with its 'continuous exchanges' (Checkland, 1981: 83), but for the sake of simplicity does not indicate the multidirectionality of feedback.

Figure 1: Model of an open system

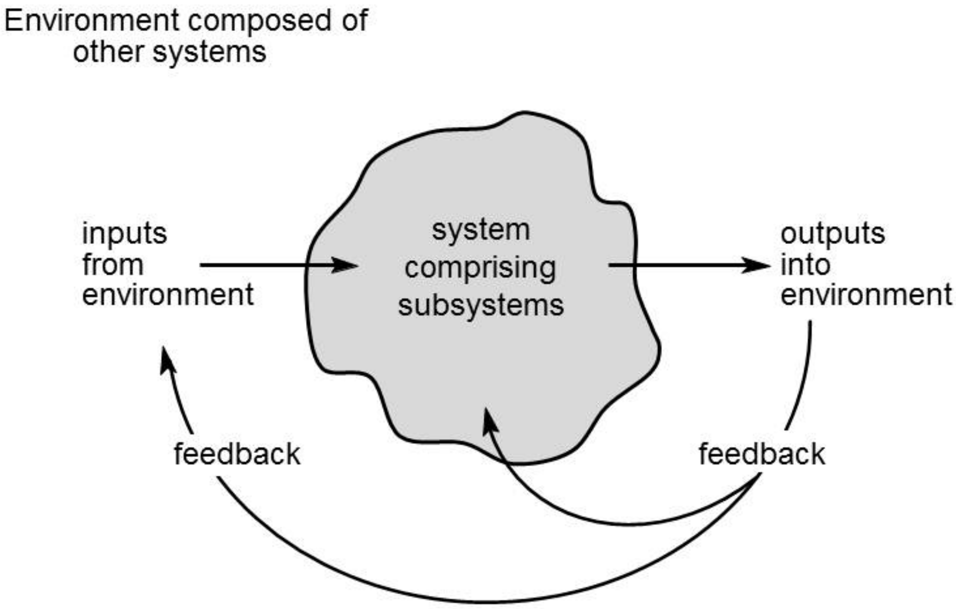
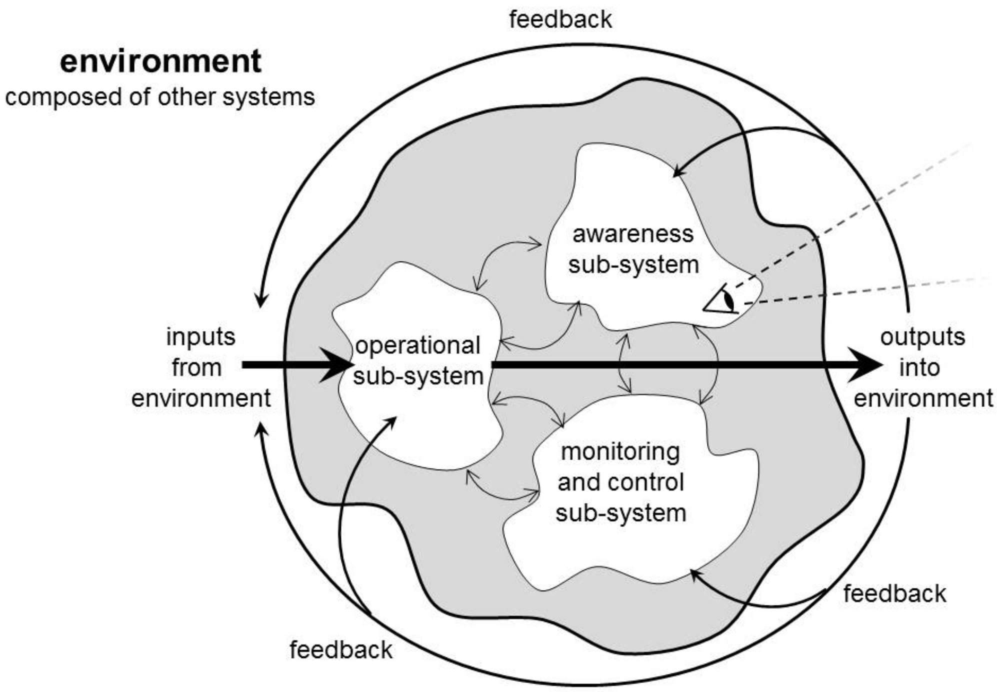


Figure Two elaborates on the functions of the sub-systems and their interactions. One converts the inputs (the operational sub-system); another, as the eye in the diagram indicates, scans the environment for opportunities and threats (the awareness sub-system), and another controls the adjustments the system has to make (monitoring and control subsystem).

Figure 2: The sub-systems of an open system



Thus a system exists in continuous interrelationships with other systems in its environment, and its sub-systems have continuous interactions with one another. These bring about changes in both the environment and the system itself which has to make various adjustments in order to counteract threatened disequilibrium and decay (entropy) and to maintain a steady state. This homoeostatic process modifies the sub-systems, prompting further interactions and coordination between them. As a result, they bring about further changes in the environment which set up new opportunities and threats and so necessitate further adaptations in the system in a dynamic process of change.

Systems thinking

The outline of systems theory above gives a glimpse of how it could be used to help to identify significant aspects of career. As the following section shows, conceiving of career as a system, whether career considered as a general notion or an individual experience, would throw new light on what I referred to as the 'workings of career': the effect of the environment on it, its interactions with other systems in its environment, and its ongoing process of adaptation to them.

It has to be recognised, however, that taking up systems theory is not like choosing to use any of the traditional career theories. First, it is based on very different assumptions from those we customarily make: this difference is as great as that between interpreting the world as though it were an organism or as though it were a machine. Systems theory is holistic: it is concerned with wholes (not, as Checkland (1981: 14) says, 'with *the* whole': [italics in original]) and with the interrelationships, interactions and multidirectional feedback between them. It does not conceive of linear causes-and-effects, and hence it is not possible to gain the same kind of benefits from using it as we derive from our usual analytical and statistical approaches. Secondly, both the notion of career itself and career-as-a-system are conceptual constructions, not empirical realities. A system's boundaries, its sub-systems, environment, feedback to it: these are all constructions. (This is also true of the elements in the traditional theories of career, but we are not accustomed to thinking in that way.)

So I am not suggesting here that career **is** a system, adopting what Checkland (1981: 249) refers to as a 'systemic ontology', but that we use the notion of a system as a 'tool[s] of an epistemological kind which can be used in a *process of exploration* within social reality' [italics in original]. Nor am I proposing that we develop a systems theory of career. There has long been concern about the plethora of career theories and interest in bringing about their convergence (Savickas and Lent, 1994; Patton and McMahon, 1999; 2006a). It is telling that Super (1981: 51) used systems language when he looked forward to a 'synthesising theory' that would 'cement' together existing 'segmental' theories of career development 'to constitute a whole which will be more powerful than the sum of its parts'. He suggested that self concept theory could do that. Commenting on this (Collin, 1984; 1985), I argued not for a systems theory of career, but for systems thinking in which we use the notion of a system as an epistemological tool. Thinking of career as though it were a system, using system as a metaphor for career, we could develop a systems model of career which would enable us to see it afresh and become aware of some of its workings that we generally do not see. For this Checkland (1981) has developed a 'soft systems methodology'. This involves constructing a model which has 'the structured set of activities which logic requires in a notional system' (Checkland, 1981, p. 170). This model is compared with the 'real-life' situation and the differences between them discussed by the actors in and observers of it in order to understand that situation better.

It is for these reasons that I am using the term 'the systems **approach'** to embrace not just the use of systems **theory** but also systems **thinking**.

The contribution of the systems approach to the understanding of career

We are already aware of the many influences on career, such as parents, family, social class, education, employing organisations, government policies, etc., but using a systems model of career makes us recognise they are some of the many other systems of which its environment is composed. A complex picture emerges as we recognise that they interact between themselves as well as with the career system, as Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model shows. The outputs of one are the inputs of others; changes in one can ripple through to others which may have no direct relationship with it.

Among the inputs into the career system are genetic inheritance, sex, race, social class, education, occupational opportunities, etc. A sub-system converts these into whatever is needed to sustain the system, such as health, skills, interests, a job. The sub-systems are notional, not empirical realities; it would require research to identify how their functions are carried out in any given case. In my earlier work (Collin, 1984; 1985; 1986) I suggested that the conversion process was carried out by the self concept, although I was aware that this made me guilty of reification. This conversion generates such outputs as getting a job, progressing in it, changing it, all of which become inputs into other systems. There may also be waste products, such as stress, which becomes an input into the marriage or family systems. The functions of the awareness sub-system could be carried out in various ways by, for example, scanning the environment for changes and opportunities or threats in local employment. The monitoring and control sub-system might include checking progress by comparing self with others or learning from job appraisals. Multidirectional feedback to such outputs from the other systems in the environment might result in promotion or redundancy, which could prompt relocation or the gaining of new skills, which in turn would lead to yet another round of adjustments.

One could continue in this way, through research and collaboration with the career actor, to identify the various interactions with the environment and the multiple adjustments to them. This would trace the dynamic process of change and bring to light some of the inner workings of career not always visible to other career theories. Clearly it would be impossible, and generally unnecessary, to identify all these interactions, but one can focus upon whatever part of the environment and system is relevant to one's interest.

The principle of emergence means that interactions of the parts of a system lead to higher levels of organisation at which properties emerge that do not exist at lower levels. For example, instead of thinking of a dual-career family, a more complex, and perhaps realistic, understanding arises from seeing how the interactions of parental and other systems, such as school, employer, grandparents, produce a new whole: a family career system (Collin, 2006).

There remains one issue which I have not yet resolved. Checkland (1981) developed soft systems methodology explicitly as a phenomenological approach. Because this incorporates an actor's interpretations into the construction of a systems model, I had initially hoped that this would mean that the systems approach would adequately address the subjective as well as the objective career which other theories, in my view, failed to do (Collin, 1984; 1985). However, definition of the subjective career is problematic (Collin, 1990). This methodology can elicit career actors' interpretations of their experiences, but while those are internal cognitive constructions, they are shaped by a model proffered by researcher or counsellor; they are not the actors' unprompted interpretations. This suggests that the methodology does not access subjective experience and so apparently is unable to fulfil my hopes. Nevertheless I remain undecided because if, as social constructionism (Young and Collin, 2004) proposes, individual experience is considered to be constructed through social meanings, then perhaps the systems model could be understood as but one instance of such meanings, one that is formally expressed.

Other applications of systems theory in the career field

Although Osipow (1968; 1973) had referred to systems theory, little was known about it in the career field when I first came across it while studying organisations (e.g. Katz and Kahn, 1978). It was the spread of the influence of ecological ideas that eventually opened the door into the career field. There was increasing recognition of the significance of context and of person/environment interactions in career (e.g. Law, 1981), but under the banner of 'ecology' not 'systems theory' (e.g.Young, 1983). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) conceptualisation of the environment as a nested series of systems, from the microsystem through the meso- and exo- to the macrosystem, proved to be a helpful way of looking at the relationship between individual development and the environment. Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) took these ideas further in their major statement on these interactions and their role in career development in their developmental-contextual theory.

Systems theory was finally fully recognised in the career field when Patton and McMahon (1999: xix; 2006a: xiii) introduced their 'metatheoretical framework for the integration of career theories', thereby addressing, though not referring to, Super's (1981: 51) wish for a synthesising theory. Their systems theory framework for career development (STF) was 'not designed to be a theory of career development' (Patton and McMahon, 1999: 153; Patton and McMahon, 2006a: 193), but to provide an overarching 'metatheoretical framework for integrating existing theories and integrating theory and practice' (1999:178; 2006a: 223). These books provide a valuable introduction to systems theory and a helpful overview of a wide range of career theories. They also cover the application of systems theory to various aspects of career practice such as counselling, counsellor training and supervision.

At the same time, these books demonstrate that there is no one version of systems theory nor an accepted view of how it could be applied in the career field. For example, Patton and McMahon take a different perspective upon the systems approach from mine in the terminology and treatment of the sub-systems (mine is derived from Checkland, 1981). They regard the various 'intrapersonal factors', such as gender, age, personality, which they label 'influences' (Patton and McMahon (1999: 155; 2006a: 196), as the sub-systems (1999: 158; 2006a: 201) whereas in my systems model those are inputs into the career system from systems in the environment. We may also be differing in what we think systems theory could achieve in the study of career. For me (Collin, 1984; 1985:49), it could be the means of 'generat[ing] a comprehensive, appropriate and grounded … theory', while Patton and McMahon intend their theory-derived STF framework to integrate existing career theories. However, this may not be what their books actually achieve. Like me, they are not proposing STF as a theory of career development, but they go on to write (1999: 154; 2006a: 195) that, as well as 'reflect[ing] a micropicture of career theories', their STF has a second purpose as a framework 'of the influences relevant to an individual's career development'. Perhaps their framework is more effective in integrating, not career theories, but the topics they address. The adoption of the systems approach is in its infancy, and there will undoubtedly be many other instances of differences to be debated.

As the major proponents of systems theory in the career field, Patton and McMahon have opened up a very productive field, and there is much left to explore. They continue their work on STF and how it might be applied in career counselling (e.g. Patton and McMahon, 2006b) and have developed and tested (e.g. McMahon, Watson and Patton, 2005) a reflective activity called My System of Career Influences for clients to use. The CareersGroup blog (2011b) also suggest ways of using systems theory in counselling practice.

Conclusions: The value of the systems approach

The systems approach at first sight might seem off-putting because of its abstract language and unfamiliar assumptions. The CareersGroup blog (2011a) 'struggles' with Patton and McMahon's STF: it 'is a massive beast to try and remember to implement', but this is not necessary. The systems model, as the diagrams show, is very simple and easily grasped, but it can be elaborated to whatever degree of detail is required, and can be used to uncover layer upon layer of interpretation of career. Using this one model, theorists can conceptualise many aspects of career that other theorists have neglected or deal with only 'segmentally': a contextualised individual, the impact of changes in context and the individual's response to them, the dynamic process of change. Researchers can use that model to make an overall map of the territory, and to follow through the various interactions in outline or detail. Similarly, practitioners can use it to work with their clients, and clients can use it for themselves.

There will be some issues to be addressed before these benefits can be gained. What is being stipulated as the system in question? The individual as a system? An individual's career? Career in general? An organisational career? Then, what are its boundaries? Elements? The other systems in its environment? These are questions that I have suggested (Collin, 1984; 2006) that soft systems methodology could help address.

The participants, many of them career professionals, in a 2011 NICEC seminar in which I talked about the systems approach, recognised its value. They saw that it opened up a wide perspective on career, and could be used when working with different cultures. It offered a language to think about career, and a means of foregrounding or backgrounding any part of a career; it allowed the focus to be placed on one part of career where, for example, an individual feels stuck. It could be the means for young people to distance themselves from their history, unpick it and identify how they had processed it. It drew attention to the dynamics of career. These are different benefits from those given by the use of other career theories, and indeed from the mere application of systems theory. They arise from systems thinking and the use of the systems model as a means, a tool, to explore reality. Practitioners could well be more comfortable with that than with having to try to apply theory to the everyday life of their clients.

The systems approach excited me when I was setting out on my career in the study of career and, as I see that career beginning to wind down, I hope that I have done it the justice it deserves.

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The Chaos Theory of Careers in career education

Jim E.H. Bright and Robert G.L. Pryor

Approaches to career education in schools continue to be dominated by a focus on school to work or further or higher education transition planning. It is argued that as a consequence of this, the emphasis is on identifying relatively stable and singular vocational goals or outcomes. Furthermore the theories, techniques and models that support this focus characterise the world as largely stable and predictable. It is argued that these assumptions about the world and careers are increasingly questionable and this calls into question the theories and models used to support the short-term vision of transition. The Chaos Theory of Careers is introduced as a dynamical systems theory alternative and contemporary model of career development that emphasises continual, uncertain and non-linear change, complexity of influences, and emergent fractal patterns in career. The application of this approach to career education is adumbrated challenging traditional notions of career planning and goal setting, and highlighting the importance of creativity, re-invention and resilience as important outcomes of contemporary career education.

Introduction

The world in which today's students are being educated is characterised by continual change and increasing complexity. The inescapable reality of life in the 21st century is that change is being driven at ever greater speed by the forces of technological advances, globalisation and the rise of Asian economies (Pink, 2005). Work and careers are not immune from these global developments. The nature of work, the conditions of work, the place of work in people's lives, the security of work and the promise of work are all changing often in significant and far-reaching ways for both individuals and communities. Cherished notions of secure employment, a guarantee of a job, inexorably being able to climb the corporate ladder to the top, a position for life, or at least the foreseeable future, have been gradually eroded for both blue collar and more recently white collar occupations over the last 30 years (Pink, 2005).

Communications technology has developed to such an extent that world events, apparently infinite amounts of knowledge, and cultural differences, can be accessed, shared and understood almost as soon as they happen and are articulated from almost anywhere in the world. One of the results of this huge increase in real-time global connectivity has been to fundamentally alter the nature of the economic and political systems within which we work and live. The potential for real-time feedback or the promulgation of information through global networks has resulted in these systems resembling complex dynamical systems or chaotic systems where small changes in one part of the system can lead to disproportionately large changes elsewhere (and vice versa) and where it is increasingly difficult or impossible to make long range deterministic predictions about the behaviour of the system.

As Taleb (2007) points out:

> Look into your own existence. Count the significant events, the technological changes, and the inventions that have taken place in our environment since you were born and compare them to what was expected before their advent. How many of them came on schedule? Look into your own personal life, to your choice of profession say, or meeting your mate, your exile from your country of origin,

> the betrayals you faced, your sudden enrichment or impoverishment. How often did these things occur according to plan? (p. xix).

Contemporary challenges for career education

These new realities pose a significant challenge for careers education because these realities challenge many of the traditional and widely applied concepts such as the notion of 'fit' between a student's interests and an occupation (e.g. Parsons, (1909); Holland 1997)); and the effectiveness of a career plan and goal setting (e.g. Zunker, 2006). Career education has implicitly or explicitly been based on a rational process model, the product of which is a career transition plan. Typically these involve the steps of: knowing oneself; knowing about occupations; matching occupations to personal preferences; and setting goals to gain entry into the preferred occupation. Theories of person-environment fit or matching have been challenged in the last decade on a number of grounds (e.g., Amundson, (2003), (2005); Arnold, (2004); Bright, Pryor and Harpham, (2005); Patton and McMahon, (2006); Pryor and Bright, (2003a), (2000b), (2007); Savickas, (1997)). Arnold (2004) reports that the concept of fit and the way that it is measured may be inadequate, highlighting a series of studies showing that fit does not seem to predict important occupational outcomes like job satisfaction. Furthermore, the concept of fit in these theories is of a static match between a person and an occupation; however, it is questionable whether the assumption developed in the first half of the 20th century, that people and jobs do not change over time, is applicable in our 21st century interconnected world. Finally, the widespread adoption of these theories can lead to an over-reliance on interest inventories or other self-exploration activities running the risk of reducing career choice simply to a consideration of measured vocational interests and preferences.

These traditional approaches assume a future that is relatively stable and therefore knowable and predictable. Based on this assumption, traditional planning and goal setting activities make sense. However, it is increasingly questionable whether this assumption is a reasonable one. If the world of work into which students will move is itself moving and moving unpredictably, how do these traditional planning and goal setting processes equip our students to handle change, chance and uncertainty with dexterity, optimism, poise and resilience? Is an over-reliance on goal setting viable in a world where the goal posts move continuously? How useful is a plan in a world where, as Taleb (2007) has observed, 'when I ask people to name three recently implemented technologies that most impact our world today, they usually propose the computer, the Internet and the laser. All three were unplanned, unpredicted and unappreciated' (p. 135).

How do traditional career planning processes equip students with the skills to reinvent themselves to meet changing labour market demands, or to spot opportunities to change the labour market with new products and services, or to re-establish themselves after a career reversal? Savickas and Baker (2005) point out,

> With less stable personalities and occupations, vocational psychology's basic model of person environment fit with its goal of congruence seems less useful and less possible in today's labor market (p. 49).

In short, are we equipping students with the skills to handle ongoing career change, chance and complexity? How would career education look if it were based on more dynamic models of career based upon change, chance and complexity?

The Chaos Theory of Careers

The Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC) (e.g. Pryor & Bright, (2003a), (2003b), (2011); Bright and Pryor, (2005), (2007), (2011a)) was developed to address the perceived shortcomings in traditional approaches, including:

1. Failure to incorporate the range of potential influences on people's careers; 2. Failure to move beyond a narrow sense of matching to the dynamic, interactive and adaptive nature of human functioning in the world and in making career decisions and taking career action; 3. Failure to go beyond acknowledging to incorporating into theory the tendency of humans to

construe and construct experiences and perceptions into meaningful and often unique interpretive structures for understanding themselves, their life experience and their world; 4. Failure to adequately conceptualize unplanned and unpredictable events and experiences which are often crucial and sometimes determinative in the narrative of people's careers. (Pryor and Bright, 2011a, pp. 6-7)

The CTC characterises people and the environments in which they live as complex dynamical open systems. They are complex because they are subject to many different influences. For instance, in career terms, Bright, Pryor, Wilkenfeld and Earl (2005) reported that students' career choices were influenced by parents, geography, friends, teachers, the internet, the media more broadly, politicians, sporting stars and many other factors. This is consistent with the emphasis on a range of career influences identified by Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986), Patton and McMahon (2006). The systems are dynamical and open because they are constantly moving and interacting within themselves and with their environments. These systems exhibit certain characteristics including: complexity; non-linearity; change; chance; emergence; and fractals.

Complexity

Complexity refers to the sheer number of different influences that bear upon people and their careers. For instance, Pryor and Bright list 22 influences that students acknowledge in their career decision-making behaviour (Pryor and Bright, 2011a). Pryor and Bright (2006), (2011) illustrate this point using a parable of puppies and ping pong balls. A career trajectory is like a trajectory of a ping pong ball released into a room containing a litter of playful puppies, some strong cooling fans, and an open window. The trajectory will be influenced by all of these other agents and in ways that rapidly make it impossible to predict precisely where the ball will go. As more influences are considered, the possible number of interactions and outcomes rises exponentially and virtually incalculably. For such reasons, it is simply not possible to make long range deterministic predictions about career paths. It challenges us to encourage students to appreciate the complexity in their lives and to understand that 'keeping things simple' may risk over-simplifying things.

Non-linearity

Another feature of these systems is often referred to as non- linearity, or colloquially as the 'Butterfly effect'. This refers to the famous observation of the chaos theorist and meteorologist Edward Lorenz, that tiny changes in the initial conditions of chaotic systems can result in disproportionate changes in the behaviour of the system over time (and vice versa). This is why, Lorenz argues, we cannot make long range precise weather forecasts, because we can never be precisely sure what the initial conditions of the weather pattern were (e.g. Lorenz, 1993). In the same way, we do not know what the initial conditions of our own systems were, and approximating or taking educated guesses is not going to help, given that sensitivity to tiny changes in initial conditions can change everything. The implication of this is two-fold. Firstly, it challenges the viability of a long term career plan because things may change out of all recognition. Secondly, it demands that we prepare students to expect and be able to handle, to the best of their abilities, unplanned non-linear events in their careers and lives.

Continuous change and chance

It should be obvious that chaotic and complex systems are characterised by continuous change and unpredictable events that are likely to be experienced as chance events. There is now an increasing body of empirical evidence pointing to the centrality and ubiquity of chance events in careers (e.g. Bright, Pryor and Harpham, (2005); Pryor and Bright, (2011a); Hirschi (2010); Krumboltz, (1998); Betsworth and Hanson, (1996); Hart, Rayner and Christensen, (1971); Roe and Baruch, (1967); Williams, Soeprapto, Like, Touradji, Hess and Hill, (1998)). Despite this evidence, chance events are still not well enough acknowledged in career development programs, and often their presence in career development results in a fatalistic and distorted perception of their nature. Bright, Pryor, Chan and Rijanto (2009) demonstrated that people tend to be biased in their recall of chance events, recalling those that were negative, severe and relatively uncontrollable far more than positive and controllable events. In other words, when we think of chance events in careers, we tend to think of dramatic set-backs like being injured in a motor vehicle accident and being unable to work, rather than meeting somebody at a social event who offers us a job. The challenge for career education is to incorporate chance events more centrally into programs, and to emphasise their often positive impact along with strategies to increase luck readiness (Neault, 2002) or opportunity awareness (Pryor and Bright, 2011).

Emergence

Emergence is a feature of chaotic systems that is often overlooked in simplistic treatments of the chaos theory. For example, the CTC is not synonymous with Happenstance Learning Theory (Krumboltz, 2011) although both emphasise unplanned or chance events. CTC also emphasises the emergent order that arises from the complex interplay of the systems' elements both endogenously and exogenously. Over time complex dynamical systems display a form of emergent order – a distinct pattern that is self-similar while also continually changing, and susceptible to phase shift in which the structure and functioning of the system may radically alter. This seemingly paradoxical notion is captured in the concept of a 'fractal' which is a graphical representation of the trajectory of the system.

Fractals

The fractal patterns of most complex dynamical systems are best understood and interpreted by standing back (taking a longer-term perspective or viewpoint) and looking at them as they emerge in all their complexity. Focusing only on one small part of the pattern is likely to be misleading and unrepresentative of the pattern as a whole. Further, relying on the shape of the pattern at one time, does not provide a guarantee it will look the same at a later time. The challenge for career education is to develop methods to assist students in seeing and exploring the fractal patterns (the self-similar but changing patterns) in their lives and careers. This means moving away from linear notions of career paths and timelines and acknowledging and embracing 'messier' more complex and non-linear patterns of life and career. Indeed Bright (2003, p. 20) has described typical career paths as not a straight, ever-upward line, but rather a 'drunken man's stagger through the world of work'.

Challenges for contemporary career education

The CTC challenges traditional career education on a number of different points. In particular, it de-emphasises the importance of being committed to a precise goal or objective, and emphasises the importance of the development of skills to understand complex patterns in their complexity, to understand the nature of change and chance, and the importance of teaching students skills of re-invention, change and resilience. The aim therefore, is to equip students with the skills to meet these new challenges in the 21st century. Some of the implications of the CTC for career development programs were set out in the Shiftwork model (Bright and Pryor, 2008) where 11 essential shifts in career development practice were identified. Shiftwork was defined as 'assisting clients to reinvent themselves continually, to identify opportunities, to recover from setbacks, to find meaningful work that matters to them and to others, and to capitalize on chance' (ibid.).

From plans to plans and planning

Of most immediate relevance to career education was the shift from plans to plans and planning. The emphasis currently in many career education programs is on the outcome, goal or the production of a career transition plan (e.g. Howell and Frese, 1982). However despite their ubiquity, evidence that those with a plan are more 'successful' (whatever that means) than those without, is surprisingly thin on the ground and can conflate measures of expectation or ambition with a career plan. What is lacking in career education is an emphasis on ongoing planning. Typically, students are taken through a series of exploration and goal setting activities to reach a plan. However, there are a series of meta-skills that we term 'Planfulness' that are equally as important to teach. Planfulness refers to the ability to (among other things): devise, revise, abandon, pause, re-launch, finesse, adapt and copy plans. In other words, teaching students not only the fundamentals of a plan, but also how to deploy plans to maximum effect. Thus what is being argued is not an abandonment of career plans, but rather a much stronger emphasis on the process of continually planning in a changing and unpredictable world.

Currently, the usual acknowledgement of the need for contingency planning goes no further than injunctions to develop a 'Plan B'. However this merely reflects further static thinking, and fails to appreciate that the reasons that Plan A failed may also preclude Plan B from succeeding. The recent disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan is a cautionary tale about backup plans failing spectacularly as people were overwhelmed literally and figuratively by a tsunami. In business schools, they often teach an example from the early 1970s. The Dutch oil company Royal Shell deliberately trained their staff at management meetings in how to develop plans by getting them to explore different scenarios. For instance, they explored what could go wrong in their business by developing very detailed scenarios. This benefitted them immensely when they confronted the 1973 oil crisis, because their managers were better able to think on their feet and develop successful plans to navigate through the troubles. The result was that Shell emerged as one of the stronger oil companies and rose to greater market dominance. Similar scenario planning exercises covering a range of different outcomes, including extreme and left-field events, help students to practice their planning skills and to develop a mindset of adaptability as well as an awareness of the changing and unpredictable environment they are moving into.

Teaching creativity

A second major implication of the CTC approach is that students will benefit from being taught how to boost their personal creativity enabling them to be proactive in a changing and uncertain world. Amundson (2003) observed that people with career problems often report being 'stuck', something he characterises as a crisis of imagination. In other words the person, for whatever reason, feels unable to generate creative solutions to their career dilemma. Career education can learn a lot from studies of creativity and teaching students how to think about their careers in creative ways. For instance, teaching students how to creatively combine different transferable skills to increase their options in the marketplace, or to be able to offer a new product or service is likely to be an increasingly valuable life skill.

Recognising parental influence

Finally, the complexity of influences on students' careers has been shown to be disproportionately influenced by parents. Bright *et al.* (2005) surveyed 651 university and high school students, asking them detailed questions about their occupational preferences, their choices of course, and questions about sources of influence including parents, teachers and friends. Using the data set collected for this study, further evidence of the influence of parents is presented below. Figures 1 and 2 show that students who reported no influence of their parents in career choice were just as likely to select an Investigative (Scientific) career, as they were an Enterprising (Commercial) career. However, the pattern is very different for students reporting the presence of parental influence. These students are significantly more likely to select an Enterprising career over an Investigative career. The pattern is consistent across Paternal and Maternal influence. The mean Holland code (scored 1 = Realistic to 6 = Conventional) was significantly closer to the Enterprising category for both Maternal and Paternal influence ($F=5.55$, $P<0.05$ mothers, and $F=4.95$, $P<0.05$ fathers).

This data could be interpreted to suggest that parents encourage their children to seek work in Business rather than Science. One can speculate as to the reasons for this; however, it seems plausible to suggest that it could reflect a greater personal understanding of commerce careers than science careers, and perhaps also a perception that commerce careers are somehow more attractive. Whatever the reasons may be, educating parents about the new career realities is an essential component of career education. Furthermore, harnessing appropriately trained parents to support career education efforts as 'career helpers' in the classroom, may be a viable strategy to enhance and expand the career education possibilities for both students and parents.

Figure 1:

Comparing students' occupational preferences reporting no influence of father vs students reporting a father's influence in career choice

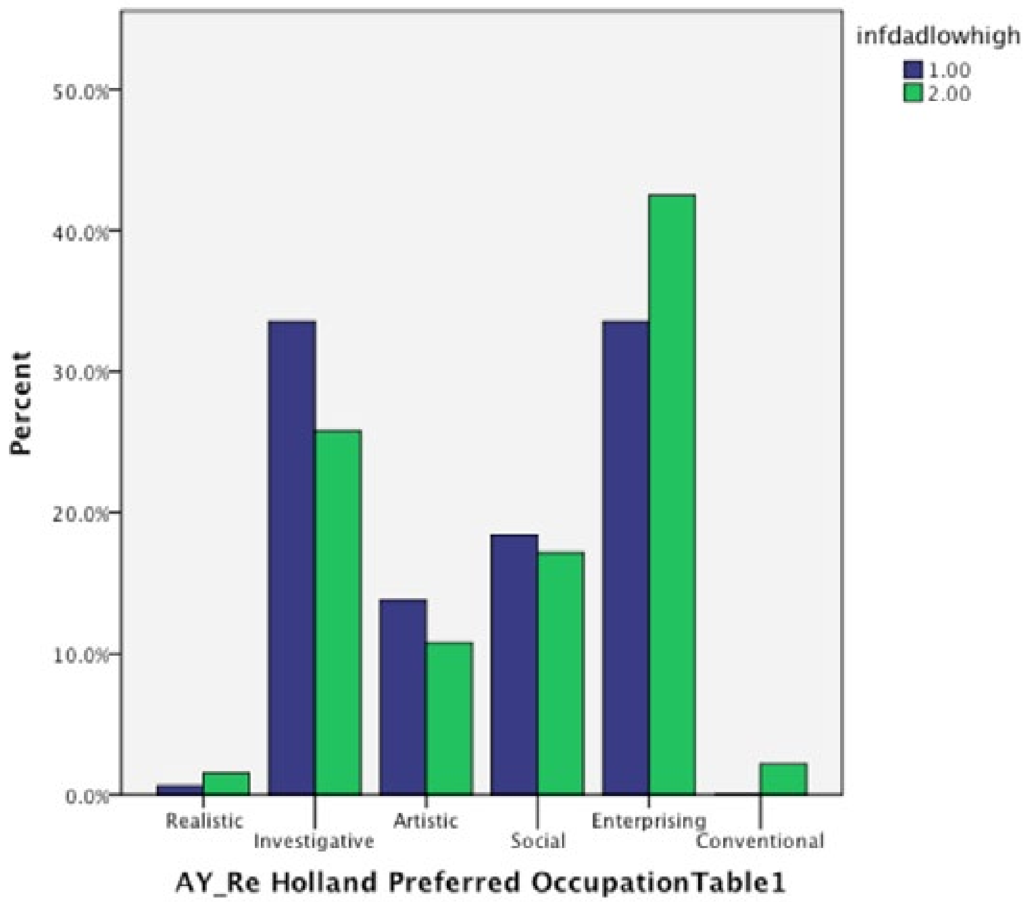
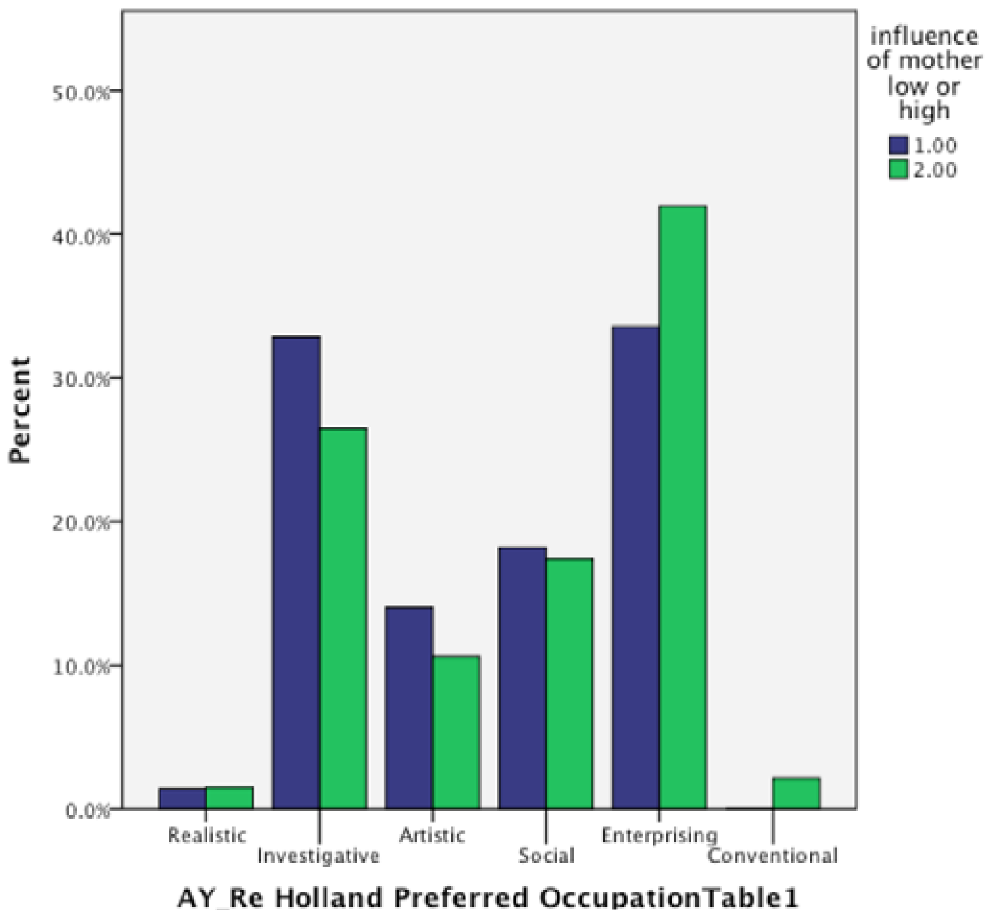


Figure 2:

Comparing students' occupational preferences reporting no influence of mother vs students reporting a mother's influence in career choice



Developing adaptability and resilience

Implicit in the chaos theory analysis of complex dynamical systems are notions of human limitations in terms of knowledge and control over individuals' own lives and the environments in which they may choose to work. Such limitations inevitably lead to not only an acknowledgement of the possibility of failure but an acceptance of its virtual inevitability (Omerod, (2005); Pryor and Bright, (2011b)). Such considerations point to the importance of adaptability and resilience in light of the continuous experience of failure rather than a belief that failure implies unworthiness, recklessness or stupidity. Of course it may, but the challenge for career education is to be able to prepare students to be able to function constructively in a working world in which they will encounter failure and in which they will fail themselves.

Harford (2011) outlined three general aims and five principles for adaptability in a world in which failure is the norm rather than the exception. The general aims were:

1. Keep trying new things while recognising that at least some of them will fail;
2. Make failure survivable so that you still have enough resources to try something else;
3. Ensure that you know when you have failed since it is easy to fool yourself that things will get better and that only a few more resources or time will turn things around.

In light of these general aims, Harford (2011) provides five guiding principles for adaptability which could form the basis of a constructive process-orientated career education programme. These principles are:

1. Be prepared for and ready to accept failure;
2. Experiment and try lots of different possibilities and seek out new ideas in the process – the way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas;
3. Recognise failure, learn what you can from it and move on;
4. Limit the impact of failure so that no one failure prevents you from pursuing other possibilities;
5. Learn and repeat the process in an ongoing way – the changing world will not stop changing simply because you finally made a successful decision.

The emphasis needs to be moved away from failure as disaster to failure as strategy for dealing with a world that is complex, dynamical and sensitively interconnected. However, this is not intended as an agenda to encourage failure and it would be naïve to think that failure is a pleasant experience. Most people, most of the time, want to be successful – we want to achieve our goals and that is why we formulate them; albeit as doubtful as much goal setting necessarily is. However when we experience failure, we need resilience to be able to rebound with renewed effort rather than spiral into despair and self-pity. Siebert (2005) describes resilient people as,

> …those who consciously decide that somehow, some way, they will do the very best they can to survive, cope and make things turn out well. (p.9)

Siebert goes on to outline a programme for building five resiliency skills which could also be incorporated into career education curricula. The five skills are:

1. Optimise your health and well-being;
2. Develop effective problem solving skills including being analytical, creative and practical;
3. Develop 'strong inner gatekeepers'; by which he means positive self-esteem, self-confidence and a self-concept based in moral standards and values;
4. Develop high skills of self-management, curiosity, self-initiated learning and optimism;
5. Discover talents for serendipity; this is similar to the luck readiness dimensions outlined by Pryor and Bright (2005). Siebert describes this as '…the ability to convert accidents and misfortune into lucky accidents and good fortune' (ibid., p. 12).

Some examples of the application of the CTC to career education

CTC approaches are increasingly being used in educational settings. In Canada, Simon Fraser University Career and Volunteer Services use the CTC framework and Luck Readiness Index (a psychometric instrument developed to measure Opportunity Awareness). In the United States, Florida State University, University of Kentucky and Vanderbilt University all teach and/or use the CTC framework and tools in the career education of students. In Australia, several schools and an education department have applied the CTC framework to career education initiatives, and one of the authors has worked with community groups on developing effective parental career helper programs tied to the CTC approach.

One of the challenges in implementing CTC approaches in career education is to overcome the perception that it is a complex and difficult model for students to appreciate. However, Borg, Bright and Pryor (2006) describe how they introduced a 'Butterfly model' of career development based on the CTC in a school in New South Wales. The model depicts a figure of eight rotated ninety degrees. The left hand loop represents planning activities and the right hand loop represents unplanned events. The model also resembles the butterfly pattern generated by Edward Lorenz's meteorological chaos equations. The purpose of the model is to illustrate the close links between planned events and unplanned events and how these mutually interact. Figure 3 illustrates this model. Figure 4 illustrates the model populated with a career example. The introduction of the model was positively received by students, parents and senior staff within the school. It proved to be an effective way of introducing the notion of unplanned change and its

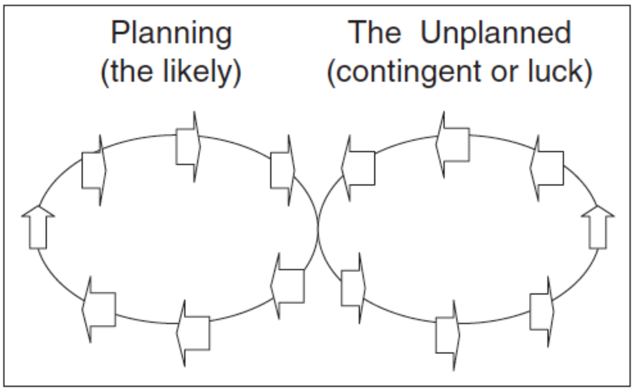


Figure 3: The butterfly model of Careers as used in High Schools

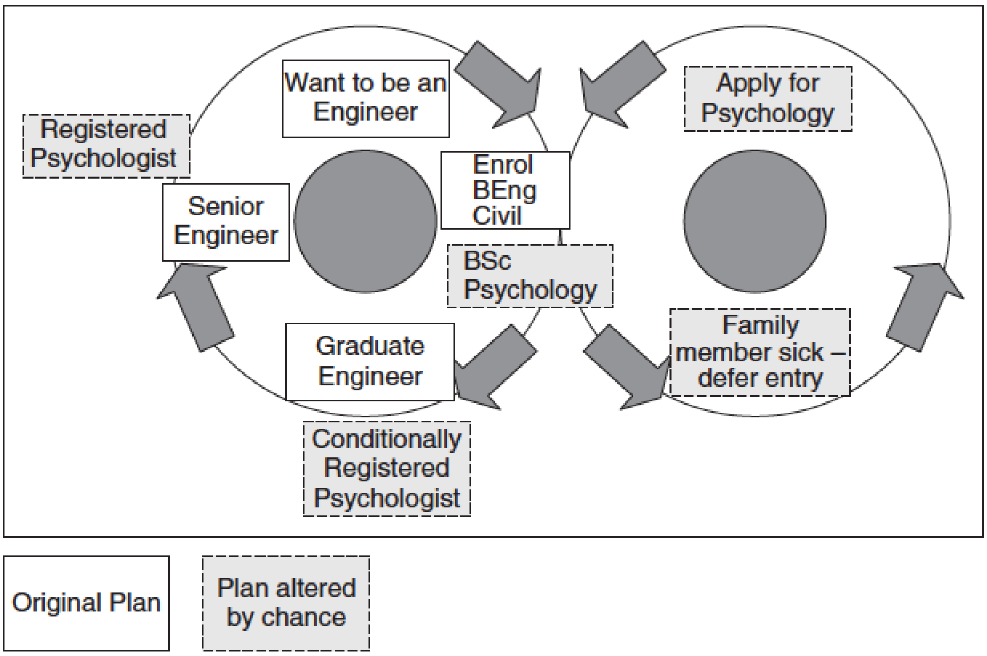


Figure 4: A 'worked' butterfly

inevitability into careers education classes.

Loader (2009, 2011) outlines a career development program based on the CTC introduced at a school in Victoria, Australia. The first lesson introduces the CTC by showing a Youtube video 'Where will you be' (Bright, 2010) that highlights some of the key ideas of the CTC. This is followed by further video presentations of chaos concepts, such as non-linearity, using clips from the films Sliding Doors and The Butterfly Effect. Lesson Two, starts with a recap and then allows students to share their own 'what if' stories about their lives to date. They then complete a Butterfly model for themselves. In Lesson Three, the students complete a Career Collage based on their lives right now and then a second collage based on their lives in 10 years time. They are then asked to consider the themes that emerge from the collages and to write a short summary of them.

The collage exercise, although not new to careers work, can be more powerfully interpreted within the CTC, as a way of considering the emergent and non-linear patterns of a person's life. Collage places no emphasis on students arranging the narrative along linear lines, and often patterns emerge from the interaction of collage elements that are more telling than the sum of the individual components. Thus, collage is a powerful way to holistically capture aspects of a person's emergent patterns. In the final class, students are introduced to the Luck Readiness Index and the Exploring Reality Chaos Checklist – two online inventories developed for use with the CTC framework. This allows a discussion about openness and opportunity awareness – two key concepts in the CTC. Loader's work further highlights the practical possibilities of implementing the CTC in a school environment with positive results.

More recently, one of the authors has been working with a state Department of Education on the development of a school career planning workbook based upon the Beyond Personal Mastery® model of creativity (Bright, 2009). This process model, which was developed from the CTC framework, is designed to teach people how to think creatively in adapting themselves to new situations or how to make the most of opportunities with creative solutions. The pilot workbook for this project encourages students to make creative links between their transferable skills and to develop new insights and experiences. Some of the activities involve designing and inventing new jobs. The aim of the planning book is encourage students to take a multi-dimensional view of themselves and to become adept in making the links between opportunities and their skill-sets.

Finally, in an initiative entitled the Parents as Career Helpers Community Project, parents are given training in the realities of change, chance and complexity, and the need for openness to experience and lifelong learning. These volunteer parents are then involved in a community evening where they hold career conversations with local students, following a semi-structured interview process. This process overcomes one of the biggest problems facing careers educators; namely, that they have insufficient resources to conduct one-on-one career interventions with students. For many students, these sessions are the first time they have had the opportunity to discuss their career thoughts in a focussed and relatively private way. Furthermore, the project provides a good opportunity to engage the parent body and to communicate modern ideas about careers within the CTC framework. The results of this project have been encouraging with positive feedback from students, parent volunteers and the parents of the students. In addition, in one of the schools in which this was run, the volunteer parents have spread their involvement to other career initiatives such as site visits and establishing employer-school relationships that have led to tangible employment outcomes.

Conclusions

Career education programs in schools and other institutions can benefit from a shift away from a focus on a singular plan, goal or vocational outcome, to a more holistic, process-oriented approach that recognises the realities of change, chance and complexity in the modern careers world. The Chaos Theory of Careers is a purpose-designed theoretical framework supported by empirical evidence that emphasises these concepts. In this paper, we have tried to show how some of the cornerstone ideas in CTC provide challenges for traditional career education programs; and finally, we have attempted to illustrate examples of the practical implementation of the CTC in educational settings to demonstrate its practical as well as theoretical worth. The results to date are promising, however there is much more that can be done and needs to be done to harness the full potential of the CTC in career education.

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Narrative techniques in reflective practice

David Winter

This article explores approaches from a number of disciplines which allow for the incorporation of various forms of narrative analysis within reflective practice. For careers practitioners, structured narrative techniques can allow for creative applications of career theory to interactions with clients. In addition, the strong link between narrative and meaning making has the potential to extend the impact of reflective practice beyond the development of practical skills and knowledge into a deeper examination of professional purpose and identity.

The benefits of narrative are not just for clients

Much attention has been focused in recent years on the use of narrative within careers guidance and counselling (see for example Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1997; Collin, 2007). The case for incorporating a narrative approach is made on the basis that individual career decision making is a multi-faceted, non-linear process which takes place within the context of the individual's developing personal history and within a constantly changing social, cultural and economic environment. Unravelling the web of complex interactions which contribute to career decisions is too demanding a task for reductionist analytical approaches alone, especially when career decisions and actions are usually formulated on the basis of personal and social constructions of reality. According to Reid and West (2011, p. 4), guidance and career counselling necessitates an understanding of 'the role and nature of narrative in processes of meaning making'. Rawlinson and Hooley (2011, p. 4) challenge careers practitioners to 'look around and see what can be borrowed from others who create and/or study stories' in order to 'develop understanding and spark individuals in their explorations of their own career narratives'.

The arguments that are put forward for the applicability of narrative to the understanding and facilitation of career decision making could equally be applied to the task of examining and improving the process of career guidance and counselling itself. In this article I would like to take up Rawlinson and Hooley's challenge to borrow from others, but to apply these borrowings to the practitioner's reflective process. More specifically, I wish to explore ways in which the synergistic relationship between reflective practice and narratology can be used to build stronger links between theory and practice and to facilitate an exploration of the meaning and purpose of careers work. My intention in collecting together these borrowings is both to expand the purpose of existing reflective practices in careers guidance and counselling by relating them to ideas from narratology and to provide ideas for novel approaches for reflective practice. In reviewing the literature, I will seek not only to highlight examples of how narrative has been applied to reflective practice in careers guidance and other fields, but also to show how narrative techniques currently applied to clients could also be utilised to enable a greater depth of reflective learning for practitioners.

Synergy between narrative analysis and reflective practice

Schön (1983) championed the idea of reflective practice as an approach which allowed the practitioner to navigate between the 'high ground' of an academic knowledge base and the 'swampy lowlands' which represent the complex demands of everyday practice. In a similar way, Collin (2007) has argued that the discipline of narratology may provide a bridge to span the epistemological differences between post-modern narrative approaches to the study of career and the more 'scientific' traditional approaches to vocational psychology. Within career guidance, practice often exists in isolation from theory and research. An expanded approach to reflective practice which incorporates ideas from narratology may help to narrow that divide.

Mulvey (2011) has argued that continuing professional development for career practitioners should be existential in nature. Rather than just addressing factual knowledge or know-how, our professional development activities should also help us to examine 'knowing how to be'. According to Eby (2000, p. 52), 'reflection enables individuals to make sense of their lived experiences through examining such experiences in context'. Narrative, too, is strongly linked with meaning making and identity formation (Singer, 2004). A narrative approach allows for the extension of reflective practice beyond an examination of the 'how' of improving guidance competence to a deeper exploration of 'why', the meaning and purpose of guidance, as well as the 'who' of a practitioner's professional identity.

In gathering together a collection of narrative tools and approaches for this article I have attempted to focus on those which appear to provide the most potential for application at the interface between theory and practice. In addition I have picked techniques which encourage practitioners to ask questions about their self-defining choices and to explore their assumptions about the purpose and meaning of their work.

Different types of narrative analysis

Although Collin (2007) has described four levels of analysis in narratology which could be applied to career research, for this article I will use a slightly broader typology proposed by Riessman (2005), also consisting of four types of narrative analysis.

1. Thematic analysis — focusing on the content of narratives to identify common themes and concepts.
2. Structural analysis — focusing on the way the story is told and the choices a narrator makes in constructing a persuasive account.
3. Interactional analysis — focusing on the dialogical process of co-construction between teller and listener.
4. Performative analysis — focusing on the embodied process of narration.

My reason for favouring Riessman's structure is that, whilst thematic and structural analysis may be of more interest to career researchers and theoreticians, the interactional and performative elements of narrative are especially relevant to the exploration of practice. Not only is careers guidance and counselling an interactive process between client and practitioner, it can also be seen as an improvised performance in which the practitioner could be called upon to inhabit a number of different roles in the unfolding story of the guidance interaction. Similarly, practitioners frequently engage in reflective activities through interaction with peers and mentors. This can often take the form of role play. An understanding of narrative analysis at the interactional and performative levels could be beneficial for enhancing such reflective activities.

Many traditional approaches to reflective practice within guidance concentrate on exploring what happened within an interaction and trying to identify particular themes and issues for discussion and development. As such, they are only addressing thematic analysis. I will start by looking at techniques that operate at this level and I will then examine the potential for using further levels of narrative analysis.

Themes and intentions

An approach to reflective practice which operates at the thematic level of analysis is the self-confrontation procedure (Young, *et al.*, 1994). Based on contextual action theory, this involves asking the practitioner and the client to provide a commentary to a recording of an interaction. Within that commentary, participants are asked to identify and label particular 'projects' that they were working on consciously or unconsciously during the discussion. These projects could be thought of as sub-plots within the overarching narrative of the discussion. For each individual, these projects may relate to the immediate concerns of the interview, but they may also relate to longer-term individual projects beyond the scope of the interaction. Each action within the discussion is analysed to evaluate the extent to which it contributed to the progression of the various projects. This analysis encourages an exploration of the interaction between the framed narrative of the guidance discussion and the wider narrative streams within the lives of the participants. The process allows the practitioner to understand and take responsibility for the choices they made within the context of the interaction. As a result, this may increase the likelihood that they will be aware of their freedom of choice in subsequent discussions. Dyer *et al.* (2010) use this approach to account for 'counterproductive, paradoxical actions within the counselling process by addressing unconscious processes as links between immediate actions and larger projects' (p. 1). To increase the chances of identifying the authentic goals and intentions of client and practitioner during an interaction, it may be helpful to focus attention on projects driven by both approach and avoidance motivations (Higgins, 1997). For example, a practitioner's in-discussion aim to achieve the most positive outcomes for the client may come into conflict with motivations linked to a wider narrative of avoiding appearing or feeling ill-informed about particular occupational areas.

One way to investigate the possible meaning and purpose of these wider narratives is the use of archetypal plot structures and themes. Pryor and Bright (2008, p. 73) argue that 'while each individual's experience (and therefore narrative) is unique, we all have to negotiate a common range of developmental challenges as part of living'. Because of this, it might be possible to identify certain archetypal narrative themes which represent recurring issues in our developmental experience. These themes can be seen as 'systems of meaning' which may 'provide insight into how individuals interpret their experience and the degree to which they believe they have control over their circumstances' (Pryor and Bright, 2008, p. 74). Brooker (2004, cited in Pryor and Bright, 2008) has proposed seven archetypal plot structures ('overcoming the monster', 'rags to riches', 'quest', 'voyage and return', 'comedy', 'tragedy' and 'rebirth' related to the themes of fear and challenge, opportunities and potential, purpose and achievement, exploration and transformation, misunderstanding and harmony, vulnerability and failure, and tribulation and insight). Asking both the client and practitioner to identify which archetypal plot best fits their perception of the client's story and of the practitioner–client interaction could provide an insight into their respective world-views and self-perceptions. If, for example, the client envisaged the guidance process as a quest in search of a magical positive outcome and the practitioner was more inclined to see it as a struggle against the monstrous obstacles conjured up by the client in order to hinder progress, there would be potential difficulties in forming a coherent working alliance. Having brought to light possible conflicts between client and practitioner systems of meaning, the extent to which they represent wider themes in the participants' lives which influence their respective interpretations of the meaning and purpose of the careers discussion can be examined.

Many developmental career theories contain narrative themes or sub-plots in the form of tasks and goals associated with common stages of personal development. Instead of looking for these themes in the life-story of a client, it could be instructive to conscript this thematic structure in the service of analysing the unfolding practitioner–client interaction. The interaction could itself be viewed as a developmental process which may demonstrate these same stages. It may be possible to gain a greater understanding of difficulties encountered in an interaction by exploring the extent to which preceding developmental tasks had been successfully completed. Taking for example the developmental goals of Erikson (Stevens, 1983), one could examine the retrospective satisfaction with the process of a career interaction on behalf of either client or practitioner (Ego Integrity) by first looking for acceptable and sustainable outcomes (Generativity) for both parties. Working backwards, one could then examine the building of an effective practitioner–client relationship (Intimacy) by asking whether sufficient attention had been paid beforehand to establishing a clear understanding of the relevant roles of the participants (Identity) or whether both parties had taken explicit responsibility for their respective actions and established their levels of competency (Industry, Initiative and Autonomy).

By viewing the guidance interaction as a narrative, one could use the reflective process as a way of revealing more than just the helpful or unhelpful actions of the participants. Thematic analysis helps us to explore the wider motivations and archetypal schemas of the participants. It also provides an opportunity to use existing career theory in a novel way: to identify themes within the narrative of the discussion itself rather than just in the client's story.

Construction and construing

One of the choices a narrator makes in constructing a story is how to portray the characters and their relationships with each other. Vilhjálmsdóttir and Tulinius (2009) describe a framework which defines a set of universal narrative 'actants'. These actants may be real people or they may be anthropomorphised objects, abstract concepts or aspects of the narrator's own personality, each of which can play the part of a character within the construction of the narrative. They may take on more than one actant role at the same time or change roles during the course of the story. Three related pairs of actants are identified. The Subject is the main protagonist in the narrative, pursuing or attempting to dispose of the Object. Thus Subject and Object interact on an axis of desire. Interacting on an axis of power, a Helper attempts to facilitate the Subject's goal pursuit, whilst an Opponent represents the forces of obstruction or resistance. The Sender provides a sense of purpose to the Subject by initiating the pursuit of the Object; the Receiver is the ultimate beneficiary of this quest. Sender and Receiver interact on an axis of knowledge or transmission. Using these actants, Vilhjálmsdóttir and Tulinius analyse the narratives of four career counselling interviews, placing both the client and the counsellor as the Subject and examining what other roles they and other people play, either consciously or unconsciously, during the course of the discussion. Examining any conflicts between how the client construes the role the practitioner is playing and the practitioner's own construal of their role could lead to enhanced understanding of the dynamics of the guidance interaction. With an increased awareness of the role in which practitioner and client may be casting each other comes the freedom to accept that role or reject it in favour of a more suitable or authentic role. For example, a practitioner might attempt to fulfil the role of Helper by challenging a client's possible misconceptions about their career goals. However, this might be interpreted by the client as putting obstacles between themselves as Subject and their Object of desire. The practitioner could then be perceived by the client as an Opponent. If, through reflection on previous interactions, the practitioner is aware of this possibility, they have the option to stay in the role of Opponent (which might be appropriate if it was beneficial for the client to face up to the challenge) or switch to an alternative role.

The choice of narrative perspective can have a profound impact on the potential meaning derived from the story. Action Identification Theory (Vallacher and Wegner, 1985) considers how individuals construe actions on a continuum from 'lower-level identities', describing concrete processes, to 'higher-level identities', which are more abstract and tend to involve ascription of causal effects, social meaning and self-descriptive implications. A greater level of competence and experience with a particular task tends to lead to higher-level action-identification, whereas inexperience or failure tends to result in the use of the lower-level action-identities. Less experienced or less confident practitioners may focus on the practical aspects of narrative reflection and may need support from more experienced colleagues to direct their attention to the higher-level interpretations. The level of construal used can also be affected by the perspective we take when recalling an event. Libby, *et al.* (2009) found that visualising actions from a third-person perspective was linked to a more abstract construal (understanding *why*), whereas a first-person perspective was associated with a more concrete construal (understanding *how*). It seems likely, therefore, that thematic exploration could be enhanced by experimenting with reflection techniques that encourage the practitioner to re-construct the narrative of the interaction from different perspectives. One way of doing this might be for the practitioner to construct three different accounts of an interaction (one from their own perspective, one from the perspective of the client and one from the perspective of an independent observer) and then compare the possible interpretations of the participants' actions from each perspective. If practitioners regularly use video recordings of interactions as part of their reflective practice, they could try varying the position of the camera to record their own subjective viewpoint or that of the client, as well as the more common third-party perspective. This may influence the construal level of their own reflections and that of any feedback received from peers or mentors.

Telling and listening

The act of telling someone your story can affect the level of construal. According to Vallacher *et al.* (1987, p. 317), when describing an unsuccessful action in a social context 'low-level identification effectively removes the self from the action and thus minimizes the damage to one's self-image that would otherwise be associated with failure' Thus, reflection on a less-than-perfect client interaction might lead a practitioner to emphasise the lower-level of actions in search of a better *how* and to shy away from higher-level identifications linked to intentions and identity. However, Vallacher *et al.* found that social pressures to present oneself as either boastful or modest can override these considerations of performance. A fellow practitioner listening to a narrative may influence the level of learning by expressing an explicit or implicit preference for self-enhancement to produce higher-level interpretations or self-deprecation to produce lower-level interpretations.

Valuation theory (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 1995) has three main assumptions: (1) that when people recount events in their lives to another person they organise those events in terms of units of meaning ('valuations'), (2) that two overarching motives drive this construction (namely, self-enhancement and contact/union with others), and (3) that these motives are linked to the emotional content of the valuations. Based on this, their self-confrontation method involves analysing the separate valuations of an individual's self-narrative with respect to key emotions linked to the success or failure of the overarching motives. Valuations with similar emotional profiles are compared in order to identify underlying themes within a particular self-narrative. This approach is particularly interesting as it explicitly addresses the emotional content of meaning within narratives in a structured way.

In an extension of this method based on the notion of the dialogical self (Hermans, *et al.*, 1992), the individual is encouraged to construct and analyse their narrative from different positions in the self or 'I-positions' (Hermans, 1999). For example, one could retell one's story taking the I-position of a professional helper or a continuing learner or a fellow seeker after truth. As well as identifying personal 'I-positions' from which to construct a narrative reflection, one way to apply this dialogical approach to reflective practice might be to take the perspective of particular theoretical or ideological approaches. To give an impression of how this approach could be used to apply a familiar idea in a new way, one could reflect on a client encounter by constructing a commentary (much like the commentaries that appear as special features on DVDs) in the form of a conversation between four people. Each commentator could represent one of Watts' (1996) socio-political ideologies (liberal, progressive, radical and conservative), arguing the case for their particular interpretation of the practitioner's actions and motivations.

Performing and inhabiting

Sometimes just telling the story and analysing the narrative is not enough. Jordi (2011, p. 193) has suggested that the 'calling of reflective practice' is 'a dialogue between bodily felt experiencing and cognitive formulation and expression of that experience'. He highlights the concept of 'focusing' developed by psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin, which draws attention to moment-by-moment experiencing in order to increase awareness of a bodily 'felt-sense' of something outside conscious awareness struggling for expression. The aim is to dwell with this embodied sensation until one is able to 'formulate and make explicit this implicit and vague felt-sense of experience' (p. 192).

A reflective process which has the potential to access this unconscious source of learning is described by Andersson *et al.* (2010). Mindfulness-based role-play integrates a gestalt 'empty chair' technique with dialogical mindfulness. The practitioner re-enacts or improvises an encounter with a client, playing both roles in turn. During this dramatisation the practitioner is encouraged to be particularly aware of the 'phenomenological experience in each of the respective roles' (p. 289) — words, gestures, posture, sensations, thoughts and feelings — without engaging in conscious evaluation of these phenomena. As well as increasing empathy with a client, it seems likely that this non-judgemental approach could elicit a certain amount of emotional authenticity from practitioners when reflecting on their reactions to guidance situations.

Conclusion

In my experience of training and mentoring other guidance practitioners, I have observed that many of them have found it hard to engage with reflective practice on a consistent basis. Often, the introduction of systematic methods based on models or theories enables the practitioner to have more confidence in undertaking reflection and achieving usable outcomes. In examining the interplay between narratology and reflective practice, I have attempted to identify a number of tools and methods that could expand the repertoire of structured approaches available to guidance practitioners when reflecting on their work. In addition, I have tried to show how these techniques go beyond the honing of practical skills and knowledge. Combining narrative with reflective practice can facilitate a greater understanding of the, sometimes veiled, motives and intentions of both client and practitioner. It can also help practitioners to gain a greater appreciation of the meaning and significance of their work and can lead to a stronger sense of professional identity. It is my hope that room can be made for the inclusion of a broader understanding of reflective practice within the training and continuing professional development of guidance practitioners.

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Three-scene storyboarding: how narrative enlarges careers-work

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This article examines the uses of narrative in careers work. It illustrates story-telling with three-scene storyboarding – a method for linking remembered experience to useful reflection as a basis for action. It is introduced here to probe the uses of narrative in careers work – the possibilities and the problems.

Narrative thinking draws on a range of perspectives. The article examines philosophical issues and their practical implications. It shows how literary theory gives us a useful distinction between a case-study and a narrative. It probes how narrative is rooted in the way neurological states link to cultural experience. All help us to understand how a story can find meaning in experience and purpose in response.

Introduction

Inspiring stories, we are told, have the power to change lives; and so they do. They also have the power to confuse, mislead and deceive. Yet story-telling is a prototypical teaching-and-learning method – from the earliest times we have learned from narratives – in art, myth, legend, saga, fable, parable and gossip. They reach from the walls of our caves to the displays on our on-line devices.

Issues

The most distinctive feature of all storytelling is sequence in time: stories rely on saying what comes 'before', 'between' and 'after'. Ricoeur (1988) is among the most influential commentators on time and narrative. He tracks centuries of thinking, leading to a distinction between analytic and existential philosophy. Analytic philosophy speaks of what can be expertly observed, deduced and quantified. Existential philosophy, speaks of how meaning, purpose and value in experience can be inferred. Ricoeur concludes that the inscrutability of analytic accounts of time causes us to turn to narrative – and, in particular, 'before', 'between' and 'after' metaphors. We speak of time as if it were a movement – from past memories, through present experience, towards future anticipations. We can get 'ahead', and put things 'behind' us. We can be 'overtaken', and need to 'catch up'. Actually we do none of these things – this is metaphorical image not cosmological reality. And Ricoeur claims that getting this wrong explains an endemic dissonance in the human condition. This article shows that careers work is caught up in that condition, and that Ricoeur does not exaggerate about it.

Bruner (1985) distils it: narrative credibility appeals to believability and meaning, while paradigmatic credibility is logically and scientifically validated by verification and falsifiability. We all do both: trying to find out how things really are, and – at the same time – trying to make useable sense of them.

Between them Ricoeur and Bruner explain a repertoire for enabling career learning. Career workers know that two things are going on in that work. The words 'paradigmatic' and 'narrative' speak of them. Paradigmatically, we use analytic diagnosis of abilities and motivations, and call on research-based labour-market information. We collect and collate the facts into correlation-based quantifications of explanatory factors. And all of this is incorporated into learning activities – interview schedules, worksheets, psychometrics and data-bases all rely on this kind of thinking.

Narrative invites people to voice experience and how they feel about it – calling on constructs, preferences, and anticipations. It sees things as belonging, and not belonging, to each other in experience. Mind-maps express some of this (Cregeen-Cook, 2011). Narrative adds a sequencing dimension – showing one thing leading to another, hinting at explanations of what happens, and anticipations of what might be done about it. Learning activities include creative writing, role-play, simulation and open conversation (Simpson, 2011).

Philosopher Strawson (2004) will have none of it, arguing that narration sets a self-deceiving self in a falsely-coherent situation. Better, he says, to treat each event as a fact – a separate and bounded reality. Narrative is not just unnecessary, it is undesirable: it is not how to find the truth but how to mistake it. Stories might inspire but, for Strawson, they definitely mislead.

He has a point: narrative is anecdote, not the same-for-everybody truth. But Strawson misses the point: to understand existence only in terms of scientific analysis is to misunderstand humanity. We act less in response to verifiable facts, more to the meaning we attribute to experience. Epistemologists may shudder, but careers work cannot afford to overlook the species-wide tendency to attribute meaning to experience.

And so Strawson's forced-choice thinking forces out too much. So here's the challenge: how do we know when to call on any part of our paradigmatic-to-narrative repertoire. And how can we avoid using one part of the repertoire to do what another can do better? Storyboarding is a test-bed for that task.

Three-scene storyboarding

Storyboarding cannot supplant fact-and-factor paradigmatic methods. It is designed to be used when analytic methods cannot reach what is going on in people's lives.

There is evidence to guide us on this (Hughes and Gration, 2009; Bimrose and Barnes, 2008): careers workers are trusted for the facts and factors useful to immediate moving on. But when it comes to finding meaning and purpose, people are more likely to turn to those they know and who know them. While they trust us on the 'what shall I do?' questions, they tend to turn to direct-and-personal experience for the 'why would I bother?' issues.

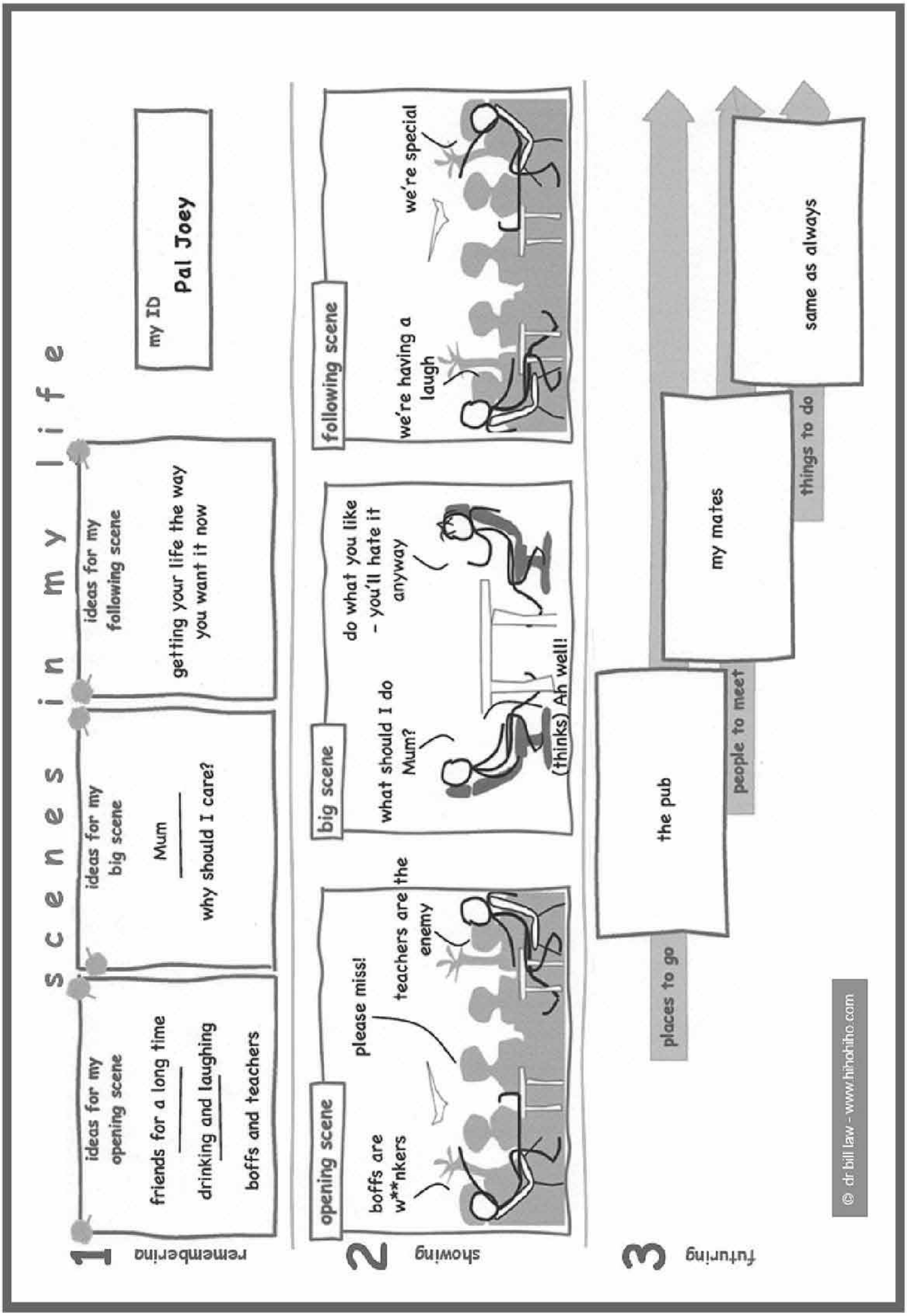
Three-scene storyboarding is designed to enable people's reflection on the 'why?' issues. People work with significant episodes in their own experience. The method comprises a format for setting down what is found in experience, and a procedure for examining it…[1]

1. linking reflective talk to remembered experience
2. using a combination of words and images
3. seeing self both as individual and with others
4. interweaving thoughts and feelings
5. inviting a person to be a witness to his or her own life
6. anticipating action.

Among the distinctive processes are looking for a turning-point and representing it in filmic images. The figure (Figure 1 overleaf) shows a paper-and-pencil version of the format.[2]

1 Find a detailed account of design, format and procedure at Law (2012).
2 For illustrative purposes this is a simple portrayal – based on Paul Willis's (1971, 2001) account of 'Joey'.

Figure 1: Paper-and-pencil storyboard



The focus is on an episode where there is a possibility of a change of direction in life (Joey wanted to change things, but he didn't). That is a turning-point. It is the middle scene in the three-scene format – left-to-right in the figure…

a. opening scene – before – the way things were
b. big scene – between – when things might be changed
c. following scene – after – how things became different [or didn't].

The opening and following scenes are the immediate before-and-after contrasts – how the person came into, and out of, the big scene. The idea of a turning-point means that the future need not be like the past – necessary to any pursuit of career flexibility.

The process runs top-to-bottom in the figure…

1. remembering – gathering memories and sorting them into three scenes
2. showing – selecting and assembling elements into a graphic portrayal
3. futuring – anticipating the where, who and what of future action.

A person might helpfully do this working with others.

Ideas for storyboarding action

Literary commentators Wood and Byatt (2008) conclude that the brain is as much for forgetting as remembering. Storyboarding's remembering process needs, then, to move back-and-forth between the scenes, allowing one significant memory to call up another until a basis for attributing meaning is found.

Storyboarding must also be able to deal with often unrecognised social influences on what people do (Schwartz, Barry, Ben-Haim, Yakov and Dacso, Cliff, 2011). And philosopher Dennett (2003) outflanks that issue. His modelling shows that organisms increase their repertoire by evolving complex ways of dealing with environments, and that enlarged capacity – mentally to re-organise what we find – gives humanity its claim to independence. The more ways-of-seeing, the more ways of understanding what is going on and what to do about it. It makes for what literary commentators call rounded stories (Abbott, 2002) Such narratives suggest that there is more than one possible resolution that can come out of this. Storyboarding is designed to take on that complexity (Table 1).

Table 1: Elements in rounded stories

people:	protagonist – antagonists – other people – groups – on-going relationships – new encounters
places:	familiar – unfamiliar – feeling 'at home' – seeing different ways of doing things
talk:	soliloquy – conversation – thoughts-and-feelings – exchange – agreement – argument – conflict
events:	routine – continuation – luck – loss – gain – surprise – shock – 'eye-openers'
meanings:	beliefs – values – expectations – what seems worth doing and possessing – who seems worth listening to

In narrative thinking, a rounded story invites you to look beneath the surface. It is intriguing and never entirely exhausted of meaning. That means, says Dennett, that nothing is inevitable – he calls it 'evitability'. There is more in Joey's experience than might be recognised by measured facts and quantifiable factors. Socio-political researchers (Lexmond and Reeves, 2009) refer to the search as mindfulness – stop-and-think attention which resists distraction, focusses concentration and sees things to completion. They see it as supported by significant others. Storyboarding is designed to enlist that support from educators – including careers workers.

There is also a need to engage with the self-justification that disguises how things are (Tavris and Aronson, 2007). Storyboarding's filmic method allows for such then-and-now probing. When Joey has made his film he can watch it – while, then, he was the protagonist, now he is the audience. The protagonist was subjectively engaged in the there-and-then of the episode. But in the audience Joey becomes a witness to what is, here-and-now, a predicated life. Three-scene storyboarding can engage a person both as a subjective 'I am', and as a predicated 'is that really me?'.

All of this is contributes to anticipated action. Wood and Byatt also show the converse of memory is anticipation – the same neurological areas are activated in both. Storyboarding can be extended into a deeper account of how things got this way and what can be done about them (Law, 2007).

Narrative in research

There are wider narrative implications in Clegg's (2005) proposals for research. She argues for 'critical realism' – bridging existential experience to paradigmatic expertise. It interposes between evidence and findings an account of what might be going on – not as an hypothesis to be retained or annulled, but as a possibility to be entertained. It is a clear case of the absence of evidence not being evidence of absence, but as – itself – evidence worth scrutinising.

Scrutiny in ethnography comes later in the process from Willis (1977); Williamson (2004) allows ethnography to speak for itself. Nonetheless, the narrative element in both has significantly expanded understanding of career. While paradigmatic method can identify and quantify factors for career development, narration sets out accounts of career management. Between them number and narrative make us strong on the facts of career and strong on the ascribed causes of career. Willis and Williamson find those ascriptions in background, shaped by attachments and moved on by encounter.

Critical realism allows for expanded thinking, by wondering 'what else might be going on here?'. It is a storyboarding question – with research potential (Law, 2010a).

Literary theory

Eagleton (2003) finds enlarging features in narrative. He richly illustrates how the roughness of narrative's unfinished nature makes it more than a fact-by-fact chronicle. An example of a chronicle would be a case-study or report, assembled to inform professional interests. He mentions class, race and gender interests; and he urges a contemporary need for new narratives.

Hooley and Rawlinson (2011) illustrate how literary studies over time helps an understanding of narrative in careers work. And Booker (2004) disentangles recurring plot-lines – some with career-management resonances…

quest: the protagonist, with distinctive abilities, takes on a challenging task – resisting all diversionary enticements and invitations

voyage and return: events move the protagonist into unfamiliar places – exciting but threatening – perpetual reminders of origins

divided self: a many-talented protagonist takes on a risky task – that obsession separates from all familiar contacts – with tragic consequences

comedy:[3] many characters variously encounter each other – from different points-of-view – causing misunderstanding and needing resolution

3 A comedy is, like an Italian commedia, a theatrical form – and not necessarily funny, though Shakespeare's 'comedies' have amusing scenes.

What Booker calls plot a movie-goer might call genre. It gives us filmic terms which people might find in their story – and want to change.

> *what genre you would say this episode is in – 'action?', 'chase?', 'thriller?', 'soap?', or 'noir?'*

Although Booker sees plot lines as carrying necessary meanings, others point to reform possibilities – in the way a story can evoke new ways forward. The claim is made for Shakespeare (Bloom, 1999) and Dickens (Lodge, 2011). An updated claim applauds the writing in the tv-series *The Wire*, noting its ethnographic authenticity (Penfold-Mounce, Ruth, Beer, Favid and Burrows, Roger, 2011).

Oatley (2011) argues that we learn from storytelling in child's-play, by drawing on metaphorical images which equip people to make sense of their lives. No narrative tells one truth, each tells a version of a truth. And narrative invites the search for meaning. Where one thing can mean another the possibilities for interpretation and re-interpretation are inexhaustible. Oatley also shows that the narrative we run through our minds, in our retelling of the story, serves as a rehearsal for the action that we take in life.

The search for hidden truth, the appeal to abstractions, the use of language to mean something other – all of this features in religious texts. Kermode (1979) shows that the interpretive process is intended to subvert dominant conventions – they equip the weak to upset the apple-cart of the powerful. More than one parable does that. To interpret is to arrest attention, and the surprise completes the story[4]. All of this is attractive, says Kermode, because the call for our response is stronger than the call for our compliance. Ready-made interpretations, seeking compliance, tell us most about the interests the story is made to serve.

Storyboarding can illustrate much of what literary theory shows. It can pose questions, open perspectives, suggest meaning and rehearse action. But Kermode is signposting the possibility of capture. In careers work it happens where 'inspiring stories' shut out bad news, and 'labour-market experience' pretends to be generalisable information. Interpretation is taken away from narrator-and-audience and corralled behind ready-made boundaries set up by other interests. It would be rash to assume that storyboarding will readily evade such capture – resistance calls for an alert and independent professionalism (Law, 2011).

Neuro-science and culture

The value of a meaningful narrative is found, claims Kermode, in what we do rather than in what we know. That distinction is a reflection of Ricoeurean dissonance between experience and reality. For Kermode the tension is between 'volitional' and 'representational'. He writes in accord with neuro-science: there is no great survival value in being able to represent the truth, our hope is in being able to work out what to do. Educators might speak of this in terms of skill rather than knowledge. Students recognise its relevance to their lives.

Boyd (2009) develops the idea: living organisms need survival strategies; and, in mammals, they are practised in play. In humans that play is an originator of creative activity – including storytelling. Drawing on a wide range of narratives Boyd illustrates how our interest in stories is culturally acquired and innately inbred – both are about what to expect in life.

Storytelling is a shared activity. A good yarn must be able to recount what is in the characters' minds and appreciate what is in the audience's. Audience attentiveness – mindfulness – is critical. But, both Kermode and Boyd agree, we attend because no interpretation is fixed or predictable. The story may be simple, but the telling and re-telling suggests more resolutions than, at first sight, seem obvious.

Literary theory comprehensively elaborates those possibilities: scene-setting offers clues that engage curiosity (Wood, 2008); plot complexity expands unexpected meanings and options for action (Jackson, 2007); on a wider scale and free of clichés, a story can inter-connect levels of experience, where an audience might even reach for a personal cosmology (McKee,

4 Kermode identifies story elements similar to turning-points: a moment which gives sense and structure to the whole; a fixed point requiring movement back-and-forth in the story; and a pressure point giving a clue to meaning.

1999)[5]; nonetheless different points-of-view provoke surprising reversals, disruptions and twists (Edgar, 2009)[6]; and much of what is needed to be known can be part-hidden, waiting to be discovered (Costa, 2010).

The search for meaningful narrative is embedded in genetics and culture. Storyboarding is useful when it finds that life-relevant meaning – however hidden it might at first have been, and however simply the story is told.

Neurology

Neurologist Damasio (1999) shares Boyd's starting point: living organisms need to survive. He characterises survival responses as sometimes opening up to stimulus, and sometimes closing down. He finds a number of levels at which people respond. The most-basic is core consciousness, avoiding pain and approaching pleasure. He shows how people incorporate this into a deeper and wider account of how things are, in what he calls autobiographical consciousness. Damasio uses the metaphor of 'a movie in the brain'[7]. It images how we each construct sequences of scenes, assembling significant impressions into an account of what is going on. He suggests more: we have the additional potential for being able to locate ourselves in that account, observing ourselves as part of the story. We are, then, witnesses to our own lives – in what storyboarding might make visible as predicated self.

Damasio's use of narrative imagery conceives a single account, unifying what paradigmatic thinking fragments. A movie shows self-with-others, and sets out a thought-and-feeling account, which scene-by-scene suggests action. Storyboarding's procedure – remembering, showing and futuring – are useful where it can represent this.

Iain McGilchrist (2009) further extends the thinking. He shows that the brain's network of systems is by no means in agreement with itself. For while the left brain has evolved to work with clear, convincing and unitary accounts of the way things are, the right brain is fitted to develop broad, subtle and empathetic accounts of the experience of those realities. Calling on history, he finds recent western cultures favouring left-brain ways-of-seeing. He dismisses 'male' and 'female' brain-hemispheres; but he sees finding meaning as at least as important as knowing fact. It implies the need for a radical correction in the way western cultures enable people to learn.

McGilchrist adopts a metaphor, where a 'master' has a right-brain commitment to beliefs that he can only partially demonstrate. That master has an 'emissary', driven by a left-brain commitment only to what can be demonstrated. But, in the west, the emissary over-enthusiastically betrays the master. The result is a lop-sided edifice in which the dynamics of belief are thwarted by the futility of knowing. McGilchrist speaks of Ricoeurean dissonance.

While McGilchrist finds dissonance between left-and-right brain, Blakemore and Frith (2005) work on higher-and-lower locations. Brain-imaging finds three important learning areas. Semantic memory, centred high in the cortex, assembles facts-and-factors – such as needed for 'academic' success. Procedural memory, activated at a deeper level, holds how-to-do processes and rehearsals – such as craft and technical skills. Episodic memory draws on the deepest levels of the brain, retaining our most significant memories[8].

Damasio is among the many behavioural investigators to conclude that memory is integral to identity. At the extreme, a person who is unable to remember a friend, exercise a skill, re-experience family-feeling – that person has lost contact with self. A corollary is that neglected memory curtails identity. And the reciprocal is that recovering memory is enlarging[9]. Yet, in formal education, episodic memory is neglected by a

5 McKee guides screen writers through a storyboarding-like beginning-middle-and-end format, characterising narrative as a mirror of memory.
6 Reversals, disruptions and twists can be turning-points.
7 Damasio's phrase sparked my first thoughts on three-scene storyboarding.
8 Our developing understanding of higher and lower brain function promises to be useful in discriminating recurring intuition from instinctive impulse – both best expressed in narrative terms.
9 That learning-for-living is enlarged through expanded community interactions has a substantial literature (Law, 2009).

programme devoted to facts-and-factors[10].

Storyboarding is designed to counter that trend. To be useful it must engage a network of different, and sometimes dissonant, learning: thinking and feeling in the same scene, habitual and challenging in the same episode, remembered and acted-upon in the same life.

What careers workers do

A story has the power to change lives; but it can also confuse, mislead and deceive. Yet storyboarding invites people to ascribe meaning and to find a purpose in stories. But it is the sense they make for themselves: meaning is not some other person's say-so, it is ascribed by a student or client for her or his purposes.

And, in that way, no worthwhile story represents a same-for-everybody 'truth'. It needs work, and that work is what the best of educators do best – asking questions. If storyboarding is any good it sets off a scrutinising conversation. And that questioning is effective when it is…

- enabling grasp –
  looking finds something worth seeing
- extending reach –
  seeing discovers learning-for-living
- becoming embodied –
  earning-for-living is embedded in identity

On enabling grasp: finding sustainable meaning is not quick-and-easy. It calls for mindfulness – not just looking and finding but considering until you are seeing meaning and purpose. Jean Piaget's research-based account of the construction of meaning is designed to enable this. It has been repeatedly applied to curriculum and is now supported by neurology (Law, 2010b). It can be set out as open questioning:

finding out: have you recalled enough to go on?…

sorting out: so that you can put what you remember into a useful story?…

checking out: where you can you get to what you need to probe?…

figuring out: so you see how things got this way and what you can do about them?

It is a process – not setting out information but inviting people to learn for themselves. It is critical thinking – probing that affects life-chances. It is germinal – ready to be voiced in different ways. It is progressive – each step relying on a preceding step. It is a two-way conversation – questions shaped by answers, answers by questions. It is interactive – between educators and students and others. It is doubly interactive – positioning the person both as a protagonist and witness. Its endpoint is action, part of our grasp on survival – on the savannah, at work and life-wide. Storyboarding needs no assumption that memories are accurate, only that they have been probed enough to lay hold of such sense-making.

On extending reach. Career learning needs to be taken from where it is found to where it is applied. It is not 'academic' learning, where application is contained in assessment settings. Career management needs more: if career learning is not yon-and-hither transferable, then it is not working. The requirement is that it reminds people of their lives so that their lives remind them of their learning. The evidence (Meadows, 1993; Maclure and Davies, 1991) is that transfer needs markers, signalling where in life it can be used. Useful markers come from role thinking, which positions a person in a location, with other people, and taking on tasks (Law, 2006). That extension can reach beyond narrowly defined work roles – its coding can include domestic, neighbourhood, citizen, and activist roles. And those interests can extend from the personal to the planetary. This is learning for life-wide living. And the image of 'career' not just as a race but also a journey (Law and Stanbury, 2009) needs that extent of reach. Careers workers looking for storyboarding partners must look for that breadth-of-mind in all parts of the curriculum, because it will only be possible to find it in some.

Such breadth of learning means taking one thing with another – opening up rather than closing down. Storyboarding encodes the futuring of learning as

10 We have more ways of engaging that learning-for-living than a subject-by-subject curriculum allows (Law, 2006).

'places to go', 'people to meet', and 'things to do'. Extended reach will enlarge possibilities – 'new places to go', 'surprising people to meet', 'unexpected things to do'.

On becoming embodied: However much a person might diversify the presentation of self, the storyboarding hypothesis is that some part of that person's inheritance and experience remains recognisable: we can change life-roles; but we cannot discard identity. Not that anything is fixed: neurology is plastic and learning can be re-learned. But all is embodied – not worn like a garment, attached like a brand, or purchased like a product, but existential.

We do not yet know whether using the physical imagery of drawing in storyboarding is significantly tactile: its movement, its surface, its feel. While drawing, are enfolding arms, hunched shoulders, poked-out tongues or screwed-up eyes evidence of embodiment? Maybe. But re-drawing until ready to be seen? Maybe as much an embodiment of identity as a fingerprint.

Asking 'why storyboard like this?' is useful student-helper conversation. But the most telling embodiment is in the careers worker's questioning. By seeing how an educator probes a story, students learning how to do it for themselves – the process is modelling. Bodily presence connects identity to identity – in tone, posture and expression. It is a two-way connection: the educator modelling an enquiring life, the student becoming disposed to question, to be curious about surprises, to take one thing with another, and – in finding a way forward – to take nothing for granted.

There is exponential growth in what there is to learn, and in the means to learn it. Anything remotely resembling a classroom is accordingly argued to be out-of-date. But, whatever classroom or consulting room can no longer be, each locates people and helpers in direct-and-personal connectedness. Storyboarding helps where it makes that shared presence an occasion for reflection on experience, questioning in disposition, and embodied for response. Would that be enlarging?: life-wide learning-for-living – life-long.

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Guidance in communities – a way forward?

Rie Thomsen

Qualitative research in career guidance has largely focused on how participants in guidance change due to their participation in different guidance or counselling interventions or activities. This article, conversely, describes how young people and adults seek to change and modify the guidance, and consequently how this changes the possibilities for participating in guidance for themselves and for others. This article presents data from a qualitative and explorative study of guidance in communities. One case study about career guidance in a factory setting is presented. The interplay between the participants' (non-) participating and the career guidance practitioners response is analysed. The article describes how new opportunities for guidance emerge through changing the practice. The study suggests that participants try to change the delivery of guidance from individual interventions to more collective forms/ modes of delivery.

Introduction

For many years, individual guidance has been the dominant or preferred mode of delivery in Danish guidance. This is now contested in various ways: it is resource heavy (Plant 2011); it is criticised for contributing to individualisation of societal problems resulting in feelings of guilt and failure for those who do not succeed in education (Krøjer and Hutters 2008) or in the labour market; and finally, many of those considered most in need of guidance are the most unlikely to participate in an individual session (EVA 2007). An emerging interest in collective forms, group guidance and integrative approaches is evident in Denmark. This change has been characterised as part of a collective turn in Danish guidance (Thomsen and Plant 2012 forthcoming). The study presented in this article is fuelled by and fuelling this collective turn in Danish guidance. One aim of the study was to investigate whether and how participants in guidance practices seek to change and modify the guidance offered to make it more relevant in their everyday life, and consequently what could be learned from this.

Methodology and analysis

The theoretical basis for the study drew from the critical psychological perspectives of Dreier (2008), Holzkamp (1983) and Thomsen (2009). The methodology adopted was based on practice research (Højholt 2006). Critical psychological perspectives are based on a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the individual and the society. People act in accordance with their conditions and the meaning they ascribe to these conditions. Through their actions, they modify, change and create the conditions for themselves and for each other and the new conditions once again change the possibilities for action. In a critical psychological tradition, practice research is based on the ideal of a dialectical and democratic research process in which participants act as co-researchers on a common problem, which for me/us was how to organize a guidance practice they and others will find useful and relevant. The guidance practitioners and the participants in the case studies therefore had to commit to a long term research project. A folk high school[1] and a factory

1 A folk high school is a form of liberal adult education based on the ideas of Grundtvig. If the folk high schools accepts students between 16 and 25, the school is obliged to offer career guidance as part of its curricula.
Please see www.ffd.dk/the-folk-high-school.

that was in the process of shutting down production met those criteria. In both cases, the career guidance interventions were practiced in the existing communities.

Participants

In this study, two cases of career guidance were studied intensively through participant observation (Spradley 1980) over a period of time. Five students at the folk high school, five workers in the factory and the guidance practitioners or teachers at the folk high school and factory were each observed over a two day period. These participatory observations were then supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Interviews were held with management at the factory and the school principal at the folk high school. Both interviews and observations were based on a 'decentred approach' to the investigation of social phenomenon. A decentred approach means to study how participants come to make sense of that participation within their everyday life in psychological interventions (Dreier 2008; Mackrill 2008), guidance and counselling interventions (Thomsen 2012 forthcoming) or learning interventions (Kousholt 2011; Kousholt and Thomsen 2012 forthcoming). The observations took place over a two year period from 2006 to 2008.

Data and analysis

Data consists of field notes and interviews. The interviews were transcribed in full length and altered to protect participant anonymity. The analysis involved a number of steps. The interviews were coded using Atlas 10. A set of preliminary codes were derived from a reading of the interviews and the field notes. The codes were further developed through a theoretically informed analysis based on central concepts from critical psychology such as the personal conduct of everyday life, the context of action, participation and self-understanding. The analysis was conducted on each case separately and resulted in the formulation of the following dialectical categories. In the factory, the categories were: a) to be made redundant, b) career guidance in the factory, c) guidance corners, and d) new educational opportunities. In the folk high school, the categories were: a) the situation for the pupils, b) career guidance at the folk high school, c) room for guidance, and d) the importance of community. The two cases are reported in Thomsen (2012 forthcoming) and contain detailed references and quotations from the interview material and the field notes.

A second analysis was done on the two cases, and with the analytical categories from the two cases in conjunction, to identify possible paradoxes and dilemmas related to career guidance in the participants' everyday life. The analysis of the two cases in conjunction resulted in the following new categories: a) guidance in communities, b) seeing other people's experiences as resources, c) the importance/meaning of ethics and confidentiality, d) motivation and realism, e) the consequences of conceptualising desires as an inner process, f) how does guidance become relevant and g) the meaning of place.

Results

The full results are reported in Guidance in Communities (Thomsen 2012, forthcoming). In the following, I will present a central theme from the analysis of career guidance in the factory, and use this theme to frame a central finding from the study.

'Then we took the wall'

Ulla was a career guidance practitioner in a publicly financed career guidance unit called 'VUS-kontakt'. VUS-kontakt specialised in offering career guidance and competence development to employed adults with little formal education. A paint factory was shutting down its production unit and the managers commissioned VUS-kontakt to set up a Guidance Corner to help their employees find new jobs.

Ulla arrived at the factory and was assigned a corner in an office building for a Guidance Corner to be established. She installed a table, a bookshelf, a noticeboard, two chairs and a computer. She set up the computer and two chairs side by side. The Guidance Corner was on the ground floor in a building separate from the production and the administration. This building also housed the logistics offices and the director of production. Actual production took place in a separate building adjacent to this one. In that second building was located the production, the foremen's office, showering facilities and a lunchroom for the workers. Another building housed the reception, the human resources (HR) department, the public relations department and cafeteria. Ulla began to post job advertisements and flyers about training and education on the noticeboard outside her office. Very few of the workers came to see Ulla, so she faced a choice; either to go to the HR department and tell them it was not working, or to try to get in touch with the workers in a different way. After carrying out my observations, I interviewed Ulla about the situation:

> Rie: You said earlier that it should have been a Guidance Corner, what happened?
>
> Ulla: Well the Guidance Corner was set up in a corner in this very office and I got a desk and a chair in here right? And then the folks were over there in the production halls. Some of them came over…when Tonny, the foreman, sent them. I started to find job ads and posted them on the noticeboard here outside the office. A few came and looked at them, but it seemed like unemployment was very far in the future. Then Tonny said: Why don't you come over? So I moved over there, into the production. And then I used the wall in the lunch room (as a noticeboard) and I started to move around in the production halls.
>
> First they look at you, you are a stranger and you are a woman. This is men's work; I mean, there are women in the office building, but not many. And then it becomes obvious that this is a situation that not everybody likes. I mean my presence reminds them that soon we will all get 'sacked' or we will stop working here. We know this already, we have been notified right? It is a very emotional situation. First, I try to make myself invisible; I tried to look them up without being presumptuous. But then we 'took the wall' in the lunch room and they cleared it for me so that I could post job ads and information about training and education there and then we had something to talk about.
>
> (Interview with Ulla)

The field notes reflect that when the workers now went on lunch break, they would gather around the wall in the lunch room to look at the job advertisements and information and to talk to each other about openings, difficulties and opportunities. I saw Ulla stand among them; sometimes they asked her questions and sometimes they did not. Sometimes she would address them, sometimes they would answer and sometimes they would just pretend that a question was not addressed to them in the first place. Later, in the same interview, Ulla described this as 'non-threatening: 'They can just pretend that they don't hear me or that the question was meant for someone else. It is a very informal situation.'(Interview with Ulla). When I interviewed the workers and asked them to describe the guidance activities they had participated in, most of them would answer 'none'. But they all told me that they had talked to Ulla about their situation.

The interview with Ulla revealed that she made the decision to change the location of the guidance corner to 'make it work'. The interview also revealed that the decision was not entirely her own. The foreman, Tonny, made an invitation that Ulla accepted and this transformed the guidance practice in a series of ways. Ulla spoke of trying to make herself invisible when she changed location. When she moved into the production hall she tried to make herself invisible; she was in the workers' territory, and the invisibility seemed like a precondition to get to talk to the workers. When she was in the first building, it was the individual workers who were singled out and 'made visible' to the others if they decided to go for a guidance session with Ulla. Ulla informed me that the workers approached her at lunch, not because they were very interested in the advertisements, but more to ask her questions. She said: 'It is a 'not dangerous' situation'. They can have an informal talk with me even though it is about something formal, right. If I get too close and say: Have you sent that application? Well, then, they can just pretend they don't listen, there is someone else there, right? But it is true, it is not dangerous. They have each other and I think that is important.'

In the interview, Ulla spoke of a formal/informal dichotomy. Ulla emphasised the informality of the lunch room situation, which indicated that she and the workers regarded conversation in the Guidance Corner in the office building as more formal. It seemed that the relocated career guidance dialogue became less formal through the everyday lunchroom setting. Furthermore, Ulla drew attention to the collective aspect of the situation by emphasising the importance for the workers in having each other nearby. The placement of the Guidance Corner in the office building singled out the individual worker and individualised the problem of unemployment, but the lunch room did the opposite. In the second setting, the workers were no longer singled out and any question one might ask could interest the others. This decentred approach, with a focus on how guidance can make sense in the everyday life of the participants, shows how the workers sought to modify the guidance to suit their own needs. The analysis enables me to frame the following changes: a change in location; a change from formal to informal; and a change from individual and private to shared and collective.

Discussion

The analysis of a guidance practice in a factory that was shutting down production revealed the following changes: 1) a physical movement from an office in one building to the workers lunch room where they would talk to each other on a daily basis; 2) a change from what was experienced by the guidance practitioner from formal to informal and from a potentially dangerous situation to a safe situation; and 3) a transformation from an individual approach where the workers left the others to receive guidance to a collective approach where the guidance practitioner approached the community of workers on their own turf.

This study supports the view that there are benefits to be had by focusing on guidance as *part of a community* and not as an activity *separate from the community*. One of these benefits is that, by being practised in the community amongst the workers with little knowledge of and experience with participating in career guidance, those who do not see the relevance of career guidance in their lives can listen in without appearing to do so. By listening, they get inspired to form questions of their own. In other words, the shift from individual to collective supports listening to others and the possibility for members of the community to become resources for each other.

This has implications for career guidance practice and policy. 'Guidance in communities' can be considered as a social practice theory which advocates changes in perspective from the individual to the collective as the starting point for guidance. The change in perspective brings attention to the local practice. One conventional question might be: when, where and for whom is guidance present and available? In 'Guidance in communities' this question will be supplemented with other questions: What characterises the community around the local guidance practice? How does the guidance practitioner approach a community rather than the individual? How can guidance become a meaningful activity in the everyday life in this community? Instead of waiting for participants to seek guidance, the guidance professionals can make themselves available to the people in the community by becoming visible.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition states that guidance consists of many different activities, but also stresses that activities may be delivered 'on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services)' (OECD 2004: 10). The Council of the European Union uses a different definition: '…the definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competence and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counseling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills' (Council of the European Union 2008). This research on guidance in communities suggests that we could add that activities may be delivered in communities, amongst the participants, and in ways that can be adjusted to suit the participants. This would be in line with recommendations from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) regarding quality assurance in guidance. Within the publication *Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems,* it is emphasised that quality assurance systems should '…ensure that individual users are regularly consulted on their satisfaction with, and experience of, the service; require service providers to make systematic use of the findings from such consultations; involve the user in the design, management and evaluation of guidance services and products (Cedefop 2005: 18). One way of involving users could be to practice guidance in communities as a flexible form of delivery which allows for changes in order to meet the differing needs of different communities.

I opened this article by pointing out that guidance in communities is fuelled by and fuelling a change towards the collective. As guidance becomes more prominent in European policy making and in educational and labour market policies all over the world (Zelloth 2009), discussions on how to invest resources become increasingly important. Danish policy makers have chosen to prioritise and target individuals most in need of an intensified guidance effort (UVM 2011). This revolves around the individual at the outset. The research on guidance in communities suggests that new policy strategies can be developed on the basis of the collective. By engaging existing communities in creating flexible modes of delivery, new resources can be activated. By allowing the participants to influence the guidance process, they, together with the guidance professional, set the stage for new collaborative modes of delivery.

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Community Asset-Based Career Guidance: using evaluation to assist the development of emerging practices

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An evaluation of a community learning programme targeting young people found that people within local organisations (hereafter Community Assets) who were primarily responsible for providing learning opportunities, were also offering career guidance, although they did not wish to describe their activities as such. Through discussions with these Assets, it became clear that their career guidance practices could be related to the theory of identity capital. Although the programme finished at a time when the future of career guidance in England was uncertain, the Community Assets' enthusiasm for this practice, and the support of local schools, indicated that this was an approach which could be developed further.

Introduction

This article discusses two issues arising from an evaluation of a community learning programme targeted at disadvantaged young people. The first points to new types of informal career guidance practices emerging amongst organisations delivering the programme. The second is that evaluation can contribute to the development of these new career guidance practices by offering the organisations being evaluated theoretical perspectives which enable them to more fully understand the significance of these evolving practices. This is a form of evaluation as dialogue. Greene (2001) and Abma and Widdershoven (2008) have argued that this approach can promote programme development by encouraging the exchange and discussion of ideas during the course of an evaluation.

The programme evaluated by Lancaster University during 2010 and 2011 was based in a town in the north of England and formed part of the Inspiring Communities initiative funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Inspiring Communities targeted disadvantaged neighbourhoods where low aspirations were considered to be a major barrier to young people achieving their potential. It sought to broaden their horizons and develop community networks which would support young people in moving on to better futures. Essentially, it was an initiative designed to aid social mobility by empowering 'local communities to take action to help young people raise their ambitions and achievement' (DCLG, 2011: 4). Inspiring Communities was designed to stimulate new thinking on how disadvantaged young people might be supported as they developed ideas about future education and careers. The Lancaster evaluation showed that a number of community organisations, originally brought into the programme to provide young people with learning activities, were also beginning to offer them a form of career guidance.

Organisations and partnerships interested in bidding to run an Inspiring Communities programme in their locality were provided with a general framework around which to construct their bids. However, they were also encouraged to suggest specific elements that would give their proposals a distinctive local flavour. The local programme evaluated by Lancaster University chose to emphasis the role which out-of-school learning can play in supporting school-based learning, especially for those young people whose previous experiences of school might have prevented them from forming positive identities as successful learners. A local head teacher, who acted as one of the bid 'community champions', had noted how students' performance in tests and exams was linked to the success they were experiencing in sport, performing arts and other out-of-hours activities. Hence, the programme was designed to enable young people, aged 10-14 within two disadvantaged wards in the town, to have access to a wide range of sporting, cultural and volunteering opportunities.

Inspiring Communities was targeted at disadvantaged communities, and although such communities are often depicted as having many features in common, recent studies (for example, St Clair, Kintea and Houston (2011)) have shown they also possess distinct characteristics. Therefore, it is increasingly recognised that interventions constructed to national frameworks also need to take account of specific local characteristics and requirements. The Lancaster evaluation showed that local knowledge ran throughout the design of the programme. Interviews with teachers, Connexions personal advisers, community spokespeople, and others who knew the two wards, indicated that these respondents felt that many of the young people had limited ambitions because the town had lost much of its traditional industries and seemed to offer them very little. Consequently, there was a prevailing attitude in the town that there was little purpose to school work since it would provide few rewards. In the light of this, the two main aims of this programme were to challenge this viewpoint by highlighting the positive rather than the negative features of the local area, and to show that learning could provide a route to more successful and satisfying futures by helping young people to develop both themselves and the communities in which they lived.

The local bid was designed around the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) which argues that communities need to be regenerated from the 'inside-out' by using the assets they already possess. One reason argued for this approach is that local people often have a better understanding of what their community already has, and a deeper sense of what it needs, than ideas and proposals introduced from outside by external agencies. Although the use of local assets was suggested in the official Inspiring Community programme guidelines, the examples provided tended to be physical assets such as buildings. The ABCD approach, however, places particular emphasis on human assets such as the quality of the links which have resulted in the formation of local community and voluntary groups. In the case of these two wards, a variety of valuable Community Assets was present, including providers of opportunities in dance, sport, carnival arts, film making, music, and environmental volunteering. In addition to these, there were representatives of the local police and fire and rescue service who were committed to a community development role and who already had links with some of the Community Assets.

Emerging career guidance practices

The local Community Assets who provided the young people with the out-of-school learning opportunities did not have backgrounds in professional career guidance. They undertook training in coaching and mentoring at the start of the programme, but they were uncertain about what was expected of them in this respect as the first cohorts of young people were recruited. At first, they tended to restrict their coaching and mentoring role to general statements encouraging young people to enjoy participating in new activities and learn from doing so. However, as the programme developed, the Assets expanded this role and deliberately began to encourage their young people to set goals and be more ambitious. Yet, during the evaluation interviews, they were hesitant about employing any particular form of words to describe the encouragement and support they provided, and intentionally avoided using terms such as guidance or career advice because they lacked professional backgrounds in this area. Although they were comfortable describing how they used their contacts with the young people to provide them with 'inspiration', 'advice on entry to courses', and 'encouragement to broaden horizons', they were reluctant to attach a particular label to this activity.

The evaluation team sought a better understanding of the emergence of these career guidance practices amongst the Community Assets, and the extent to which an embryonic guidance network was developing. Barker et al (2005) have drawn attention to the potential contribution community organisations can make to guidance provision in a locality, so we were interested in examining the relationship between these new practices and official providers of career guidance in the Connexions Service and local schools. An element of career guidance was built into the programme by having representatives of the Connexions Service on the programme's steering group. Moreover, Connexions supported fully the programme's aims and objectives and made links with some of the Assets to develop particular programme strands. However, it was also apparent that there were career guidance practices emerging amongst Assets who were not working directly with Connexions, and there appeared to be two main reasons for this. The first was the community regeneration philosophy upon which the programme was constructed, the ABCD approach, which had affected the whole ethos of the programme. The second was the reaction of local schools.

The ABCD approach is based on the premise that local communities often have solutions to their own problems and only require some assistance to bring these to the surface and articulate them in policy and programme terms. The initial phase of the evaluation showed that community leaders and the Assets had a deep understanding of the wards from which the young people came and arrived at an early consensus about what was needed to help them. Following extensive consultation with young people they agreed that the most important task was to provide a programme of out-of-school activities which would help young people learn new skills in informal environments so they could form identities as successful learners. They believed that, having developed such positive identities, the young people would be better placed to raise their educational and occupational aspirations. Consequently, the Assets understood that, in addition to helping the young people learn new skills in the performing arts or volunteering, part of their role was to help the students to begin to transform their lives. They did this by encouraging young people to take stock of their circumstances, acknowledge the challenges they faced, and plan for the education and job market. One of the Assets stated that although she was 'reluctant to give a name to what I do, I am very committed to it'.

These emerging practices were supported by the atmosphere in which the overall programme evolved. In particular, the evaluation highlighted the importance of a management ethos which encouraged the development and sharing of new ideas and approaches. Several of those interviewed during the evaluation reported how their experience of this programme was very different from other multi-agency projects where there had been a greater degree of rivalry between people from different professional backgrounds. In this more supportive climate, the Assets, who were mainly small organisations with an expertise in a specific skill area, felt confident that if they developed a role which was in some respects close to career guidance, they would be supported for doing this rather than being criticised for trespassing into another agency's territory.

Although the reaction of schools to the Inspiring Communities programme was initially mixed, it soon became more positive. The Assets reported some early difficulties in recruiting young people to the programme through local schools. However, subsequent evaluation showed that as the programme unfolded, more schools began to embrace the programme as they and the Assets learned how to work together. For example, the Assets became skilled in working with schools by aligning their activities more closely with curriculum learning objectives. They also became more aware of the operation of the school calendar and the need for relatively long lag times between suggesting an idea to a school and the school being able to adopt it. Schools began to acknowledge and value the contribution of the Assets, viewing them as useful partners, particularly for motivating those young people who did not have a history of academic success. Schools were also attracted to the fact that participants in the programme were able to obtain ASDAN accreditation. ASDAN is a portfolio-based award which requires students to record and analyse practical learning experiences. This was valued by schools because it enabled many of their unmotivated and unconfident learners to make progress in learning which could then be transferred into schools. ASDAN performed a second function too. It enabled the Assets to offer advice and guidance, as the time they set aside to allow their young people to complete their ASDAN portfolios provided a natural opportunity for discussions about their learning and future plans. For instance, the director of a carnival arts group explained how she had interpreted part of her role in the programme as helping young people to capture the sense of achievement gained from a successful performance, before using this as the platform for the next phase of their learning and future planning. It became apparent that ASDAN was the mechanism which linked informal learning to formal learning, and learning to career guidance.

Theoretical support for the new practices

The Inspiring Communities programme lasted twelve months, and the guidance practices discussed above are best described as emerging rather than established. Indeed, a representative of one of the Assets described them as just 'a glimpse of what might be possible' if the approach continued. The Assets became particularly interested in developing their role when, during the course of the evaluation, they were introduced to the theoretical perspective provided by the concept of identity capital which helped them more fully appreciate the significance of the practices which were emerging. They were both intrigued and reassured to learn that the support they were providing had much in common with career development theories and, as mentioned at the start of this article, they appreciated the opportunity to enter into a dialogue about this with the evaluators.

Career guidance practices which are theoretically supported enjoy several advantages. Theory can be explanatory because it can explain why the practices are likely to be effective in fulfilling their aims and objectives. Furthermore, it can help organise thoughts and arrange them in a logical sequence, and it can be especially useful for enabling those immersed in an activity to stand back and take a wider perspective. The evaluation showed that many of the Assets were endeavouring to change behaviours and aspirations by providing young people with opportunities and interventions so they became more confident in their ability to make future plans and execute these successfully. This was being achieved by helping them obtain skills and qualifications, exposing them to new experiences, and introducing them to a wider range of contacts. Such an approach is closely aligned to the theory of identity capital (Côté 1996). Identity capital refers to the stock of personal resources, such as abilities, self-confidence and social networks, which make individuals feel they are capable of formulating plans and carrying them out. Bynner and Parsons (2002) understood identity capital as a composite term covering cultural, human and social capital, and argued that those with larger stocks of this resource were more likely to be ambitious than those with smaller stocks. They suggested that young people growing up in disadvantaged communities, such as those targeted by the Inspiring Communities programme, tended to have smaller stocks of identity capital and, consequently, were more likely to have limited aspirations and be deterred by obstacles.

In related work, Schuller, Bynner and Feinstein (2004) have argued that the metaphor of capital, taken and adapted from economics, is extremely useful when discussing how intervention programmes might tackle disadvantage and inequality, since helping people to accumulate stocks of useful resources is an easily grasped idea with clear links to practice. Children from more advantaged backgrounds are often helped to accumulate identity capital by families who provide them with both the encouragement and the practical support to take part in out-of-school sporting and cultural activities. However, Coleman (1998) has argued that, when the process of capital formation is not generated by the family, formal organisations and projects may need to perform this function.

The Lancaster evaluation showed that building up capital was precisely what the Community Assets were trying to achieve through the many different ways they were supporting the young people. For example, two of the Assets decided that an effective way of raising young people's career aspirations was through introductions to successful role models. One used a personal contact who now held a senior managerial post after starting life in a very disadvantaged part of the town, whilst the other linked her dance project to a group based elsewhere in the country so that the young people were able to meet others with similar interests but from different backgrounds. Through their practices the Assets were equipping young people with additional skills, qualifications and links to people outside their communities. These all enabled the students to develop identities as people capable of aspiring, goal setting and achieving. Owing to their familiarity with the circumstances of people living in the two wards, the Assets believed that greater stocks of identity capital were exactly what many of the young people needed. As the Assets developed their role they reached out to agencies such as Connexions in order to strengthen links and create transitions routes for the young people. These routes were not part of the original projects, but were inserted into the programme as the Assets gained a better understanding of what was most likely to help the young people achieve their goals.

School support for the new practices

The evaluation team detected an encouraging amount of support from schools. This is particularly significant since it appears likely that the 2011 Education Act will shift a major share of the responsibility for career guidance away from local authorities and into schools. Local head teachers played an important role in designing the Inspiring Communities programme and, although schools embraced the programme in different ways and at different rates, there was strong evidence that many schools were convinced of its value. They recognised that their own aim of motivating reluctant learners to aspire and achieve was being supported through their contacts with the Community Assets. For example, one school appointed a senior teacher to liaise with the programme, and he gradually became one of the most active participants through the organisation of its celebration events. Furthermore, other educational projects in the town, instigated by primary school teachers, were also amending their curriculum and pedagogy to make young people more aware of the links between learning, aspirations and improved employment prospects. The primary teachers had started to bring business and Community Assets into primary school, and were examining ways of using these to develop joint projects which would equip their pupils with identities which would enable them to feel confident about making more ambitious educational and occupational plans. Indeed, a considerable amount of new thinking about work-related and career learning was being generated by these teachers.

Conclusions

Due to its focus on promoting social mobility, and the central role played by ASDAN within it, contributors to the Inspiring Communities programme provided the young people with opportunities to reflect on their current circumstances and achievements and plan for the next phase of their lives. The Community Assets took their responsibility for this very seriously, and in addition to providing general inspiration and encouragement, they deliberately introduced the young people to courses and career opportunities linked to their areas of expertise. They also made links with the local Connexions Office, which enabled Connexions to have different forms of contact with a wider range of community groups and cohorts of younger students. However, the Assets did not view themselves as an alternative source of career guidance. They believed their role was to help young people accumulate greater stocks of the resources which would place them in a better position to receive professional career guidance and act upon it. This is a practice that might be described as career guidance preparation, and which is likely to be particularly beneficial for those growing up in disadvantaged communities.

The Inspiring Communities funding ceased at the end of March 2011. This was unfortunately at a time when the future of professional guidance services in England was unclear in the transition from Connexions to the National Careers Service. Whereas both primary and secondary schools in the town anticipated forging closer links with the Assets, it was far from clear how the career guidance preparation supplied by the Assets would be connected to sources of professional career guidance in the future. Consequently, although a strong theoretical and strategic case can be made for developing these new practices, it is likely that these will need to be placed on hold until there is more clarity about the provision of career guidance in England. As one secondary teacher commented during the evaluation, 'these good ideas must not go away'. It is vital that, when the new career guidance service is in place, the contribution that could be made by Community Assets is fully utilised.

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Asperger's/Autistic Spectrum Disorder project: transition from higher education to the workplace

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The main diagnostic criteria for autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are communication and social interaction difficulties, which can make the transition from education to the workplace traumatic. A course was organised to help with this transition; with four learning outcomes: i) Knowing oneself: ASD inherent traits and the work setting; ii) Career research: mapping ASD traits onto careers; iii) Workplace issues; and iv) Developing an action plan. Qualitative interviews were conducted. All respondents agreed that the course was useful with two main themes arising: confidence building and identifying with having ASD.

Introduction

> We can see in the autistic person, far more clearly than with any normal child, predestination for a particular profession from earliest youth. A particular line of work often grows naturally out of their special abilities.
>
> (Asperger, 1944)

The rising prevalence of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (including Aspergers, Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder) has corresponded with an increase in educational programmes for students with ASD outside higher education (HE) (Kerr et al., 2003). HE establishments, on the other hand, appear less prepared for teaching these students (Taylor, 2005). There is also a lack of research regarding HE-attending students with ASD due to the widespread but mistaken assumption that ASD will preclude study at degree level and beyond (Powell, 2003). However, with the advent of UK Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (2005), and a heightened awareness of ASD, including better diagnosis, there are a growing number of students with ASD attending HE. In 2002, UK HE establishments accepted 68,000 students with disabilities and of these 3,700 were classified as having mental health difficulties, including ASD (Department of Education and Skills, 2010). In 2003, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) added ASD as a criterion in the disability section on their application form. That year, 165 applicants disclosed as having ASD, of whom 139 were offered places. By 2008, this figure had risen to 851 applicants disclosing, with 706 being offered places (Deacy, 2009).

The main diagnostic criteria for ASD are communication and social interaction difficulties. People with ASD may have difficulty turn-taking in conversations and may be verbose in their dialogue as well as having reserved body language and lack of eye contact. These specific difficulties may affect their performance in the job interview or work place. It is estimated that there are about 332,600 people of working age in the UK with an ASD and 259,506 are thought to be of average intelligence or above; however, only 6% of these individuals are in full-time, paid employment (Barnard et al., 2001). This is lower than the percentage for the 7 million people of working age with disabilities; 49% of the latter were in employment in 2003, compared with 81% of people who are not disabled (Office for National Statistics, 2004). Employment for people with ASD is particularly important as unemployment can further compound social isolation and marginalisation and can trigger psychological problems such as depression, low self-esteem, stress and anxiety (Attwood, 2003; Ghaziuddin, 2005).

To help with the transition between education and employment, the Centre for Career Development at the University of Nottingham piloted a course for students with ASD. The course was designed to help guide them through thinking about needs, impairments and issues, about how these can map to workplace scenarios and to make the transition from education into work as smooth as possible. The course was open to all University of Nottingham students with ASD, whether they were undergraduates or postgraduates and regardless of year of study. The course consisted of informal workshops that provided opportunity for dialogue between teacher and students. The four main learning outcomes and associated activities are summarised below.

i) Knowing oneself: the traits inherent with ASD and how they could impact on work.

A short overview of ASD was provided with a discussion about associated traits, what they mean and how they can impact on individuals, colleagues and the workplace. The attendees completed the Myers-Briggs personality assessment to enable a more customised identification of their own profile, rather than a generic ASD one. This helped to ensure that career options were explored fully, rather than following a predestined course as argued by Asperger (1944). The students were also encouraged to gain a wider range of career experiences in order to develop a portfolio of skills.

ii) Career research: mapping ASD traits onto careers.

The attendees explored the different issues impacting on career decision making, including planning how to reach goals, and the steps needed. They considered the data from the Myers-Briggs assessment, together with their personal requirements, such as financial rewards, interests, etc., and worked with career advisors to ascertain and discuss appropriate options. Over-reliance on matching approaches can neglect other factors such as the job market (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1996), personality development over time (Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996), cultural specific determinants (Leong et al., 1998), the influence of gender (Farmer et al., 1998), and sexual orientation (Mobley and Slaney, 1998). To reflect this, the course incorporated not only a matching exercise but some consideration of developmental career theory (Super, 1957) i.e. the attendees were enabled to understand themselves, their role in work, and variations across the lifespan.

iii) Workplace issues.

The attendees were enabled to identify workplace issues that influence the transition into work for people with ASD and any needs that should be addressed prior to starting in a new role. Topics covered included interpersonal relationships, disclosure, ergonomics, communication, and handling change.

iv) Action plan: planning for the personal transition.

Incorporating the information learnt from the previous sessions, the attendees were supported in writing their own personal development plan. This included the details and timing of the steps needed to build their personal pathway. The attendees were given one-to-one support from a careers advisor for this. Ongoing support to further develop the personal development plan, or revise it if necessary, was offered either via meetings with a career advisor or the University of Nottingham Careers' online portal.

The achievement of the learning outcomes was not formally assessed. The production of a detailed personal development plan was the main form of informal assessment. As the course was voluntary, it was thought that having a more formalised assessment scheme would prevent some students attending.

Aim

This study aimed to evaluate the Asperger's transition course within an HE setting from the participants' perspectives.

Method

Ethics

This project adhered to the principles proposed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004). All participants gave informed, signed consent prior to inclusion.

Participants

Recruitment for the course took place via agreement with the Student Services department at Nottingham University who identified four students who had either identified as having ASD on their UCAS form, or who had disclosed post-registration. The true number of students who have disclosed with ASD at Nottingham may be under-represented because common practices within HE do not routinely capture code B from the UCAS form which includes ASD. The referred sample consisted of one female and three males of whom one had just graduated. One participant was a research postgraduate and the remaining students were undergraduates, three with science backgrounds and one with arts. There was a range of ages, educational levels, and backgrounds in the sample. Two students chose to be interviewed face to face; the remaining two students chose Skype chat.

The course

The taught sessions took place between October 2008 and March 2009. The course was designed to be delivered by a consultant with experience of Asperger's in a business context (MJ) and who has Asperger's himself, together with a careers advisor (PK). The course was split into four, 3 hour sessions and was designed to be delivered within one academic year.

Data collection methods

After the last session, students were interviewed to evaluate the course. Prior to the interview, the questionnaire was emailed to the participants. It was recognised that people might have difficulty giving negative feedback person to person, due to the lack of anonymity. Also, due to the nature of ASD with its associated deficits in social functioning, great thought was given to the data collection process, as it was understood that an interview situation may be an intimidating situation. A recent study has been conducted that evaluated the internet as a communication medium for people with ASD which found that the internet lessened the emotional, social and time pressures which the participants experienced during offline situations (Benford, 2008). Therefore it was proposed that participants would be offered an interview in-person or using computer-mediated communication (Skype). For the face-to-face interview, data would be recorded using a digital voice recorder which was then transcribed verbatim. The Skype chat was a typed conversation and thus did not require transcribing.

The interviews

Questions were formulated in collaboration with MJ and PK. Semi-structured interviews were selected which allowed enough flexibility within the questioning to explore the issues highlighted by the participants (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The survey was piloted and designed to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questions asked were:

1. What was the most useful thing you learnt during this programme?
2. What was the least useful thing you learnt during this programme?
3. What did you enjoy about the programme?
4. What did you dislike about the programme?

5. Has the programme helped you identify an appropriate career? If 'yes' how?

6. How do you think the programme could be improved?

7. Are you more confident about explaining your condition to employers?

8. Are you more confident about adapting your work practice, e.g. environment, seeking clarification of tasks to be completed, etc.?

Reflection diaries

The participants were also given a reflection diary each with instructions: to make notes after each session about how it went; to include comments about any feelings or reactions to any of the taught material; to note what was enjoyable and not enjoyable about that session; and to record the main learning outcomes achieved. They were also encouraged to note any reflections they had between sessions, e.g. using a technique learnt in class when faced with a difficult situation. All data obtained from the interviews and reflection diaries were analysed together. The research method sought to obtain different perspectives by using more than one method of data collection. This constituted a form of triangulation via data (Denzin, 2006). The researcher also kept field notes of the sessions and a personal reflective diary research diary.

Analysis

The process of analysis was inductive to allow the most important themes and comments from the participants to be highlighted.

Results from the interviews and diaries

Using the data obtained from the four interviews and the two reflection diaries submitted, the following themes were derived from searching systematically to identify any recurrent patterns and clusters of data with similar meaning.

Confidence building

All participants stated that the course enabled them to develop the confidence to disclose their disorder to any prospective employers.

> I think it's always going to be quite hard to ask for adaptations because you don't want other people to be thinking you're strange, or being too demanding. But I think if you can help them understand that small changes could help you, then that's good.
>
> [Participant 1]

The course also gave students some useful insights as to what may be expected from them and the techniques to manage these situations.

> …being confident in knowing what the workplace would be like and how you can manage having Asperger's in it.
>
> [Participant 1]

Identifying with having Asperger's

The students stated that the course gave them time, and the ability, to think about the general traits of ASD and how one can turn these unique traits into positive ones in the correct environment.

> …they're trying to get us to think a bit more about the general traits of people with Asperger's and how you can quite easily turn those [negatives] perhaps into a positive, and show the ease with which someone has actually managed to [do so].
>
> [Participant 3]

One of the positive aspects of the course for the majority of the students was having the teaching delivered by someone with ASD. They felt that the teacher had first-hand knowledge of appropriate and successful techniques to deal with difficult workplace situations, and had proved this by achieving success.

> …it was useful having someone [teaching the course] with Asperger's because they had personal experience they could draw on…
>
> [Participant 1]

As the teacher had Asperger's, he also had insight into the most appropriate teaching approaches to suit the learning styles of people with Asperger's. This was appreciated by the students as it ensured that the course was delivered at the right level and was structured correctly. However, although all students thought it was useful to have a tutor with personal experience of the disorder, the general consensus was that it need not be taught by someone with Asperger's all of the time.

> …I don't think empathy is sort of a monopoly of someone with the exact same shared experiences.
>
> [Participant 3]

Meeting others who shared the same disorder allowed the students to self-identify with the disorder and this was appreciated:

> …listening to the actual students was one of the most rewarding aspects for me…it allows you to understand what is personally you, and what is actually part of the condition.
>
> [Participant 4]

It also helped prevent a feeling of isolation, as there is a lack of disclosure to the university and peers about having this disorder.

> I think it's useful meeting other students with similar conditions because it makes you feel less isolated.
>
> [Participant 1]

However, even though they enjoyed the group situation, and appeared to gain a great deal from it, perhaps due to the nature of the disorder, the group had difficulty in developing a group identity and none of the group met up between sessions or subsequently.

Improving the course

When the students were asked for detailed feedback regarding what aspects of the course they felt could be improved, all of the students mentioned the timing of the course. Although they recognised that the timetable may be due to external influences such as lecturer availability, they thought the spread over the full year was too long.

> I think the sessions were quite a long way apart, sometimes it made it quite hard to remember from one session to the next.
>
> [Participant 1]

The students suggested that, instead of having the course spread over a full academic year, the course could take place on a monthly basis instead. They thought that the number of sessions, i.e. 4, was suitable. Even though it was felt by the course leaders that the size of the class was small and therefore problematic, all students agreed that 4-5 students in the class would a good number but that it should not be less than that.

> …potentially you could have one or two more [students] but the more people you have, the more processing everyone with Asperger's is doing, which can potentially slow down response times.
>
> [Participant 1]

When asked how the course could be improved, three of the students mentioned splitting the course, and delivering it separately to postgraduates and undergraduates, due to the different types students requiring different careers advice.

> …there's quite a distinction, people starting out on their undergrad and people who are undertaking postgraduate study.
>
> [Participant 3]

Personal reflections and field notes

From my field notes, I observed that PK interacted well with MJ and the course was well-presented with supporting PowerPoint presentations. There was plenty of interaction between the leaders and the students, and between the students themselves. In the first session, it was noticeable that one of the students was very quiet with a passive body posture, eyes cast down and not laughing at jokes. However, the student did attend the following sessions, and gradually got to know the group and gained a voice. Another member of the group, who needed quite firm handling during the sessions, had little concept of 'turn taking' and was a dominant character. From my more personal reflections, although I attended the sessions, I took no part in the teaching or discussions; however, the students were aware of the project and my role in the group. The students knew I was an academic member of staff. The relationship I developed with them over the course was beneficial to the quality of the data as they knew me. They also knew that the data would be kept confidential, including from the Careers Centre. I believe this encouraged openness in the range of opinions expressed about the value of the course.

Learning outcomes

As stated above, the main form of assessment was the personal development plan. This reflected the knowledge gained throughout the course. The structure of each plan stemmed from the participants' interpretations of the material and the key issues they took from it.

i) Knowing oneself

The plans revealed that the students had considered and reflected on: the key traits of ASD and whether or not they had an effect; the traits that exerted the most impact; and the potential effect on different work roles. They also used their Myers-Briggs profile to develop further understanding.

ii) Career research

The plans showed that students had thought about what jobs they may find interesting and suitable for their needs, including not only ASD traits but also financial, time and geographical aspects, etc. In their plans, they had outlined the techniques which would be useful for their career research such as job vacancy or company web sites, job advertisements in relevant publications, and how to use the careers centre or networks.

iii) Workplace issues and requirements

The plans revealed that the students had considered their personal ASD traits and whether the role they hoped for would suit these. Other workplace issues had been considered by all students, e.g. levels of socialisation required; working environment (such as office based, or outdoors); and levels of communication required.

iv) Action plans

Some students had taken the issues outlined above to the next stage by using these for career search, and developing any further steps required in their personal development plans.

Discussion

The evaluation suggests that the course was well-received and valued by the participants. It enabled the students to have confidence in their abilities and to adapt their unique traits into positive ones. It also gave students space to think and plan for the future.

> …it was good to challenge and get you thinking and perhaps re-confirm in your mind that the ideas you've got may, or may not, be compatible [with ASD].
>
> [Participant 3]

Although the students appeared to learn a lot from this course and the feedback was generally good, the main limitation was not the subject matter or the delivery, it lay in identifying students who could benefit. Ascertaining who these students were was extremely difficult. This was partly because the Student Support Services department at the University of Nottingham does not keep easily accessible records of the registered students who have ASD. Therefore, although there were four participants identified for this course, there may have been many other students who could have benefited but who were not identified. This issue was compounded by the fact that students with ASD may not self-disclose either because they feel they do not require any extra support or because they fear stigma or rejection. It may be because of the high/normal intelligence associated with people with ASD, and their ability to develop coping strategies which mask impairments, that the needs of people with high-functioning ASD may not receive sufficient recognition by HE or work establishments (Frith, 2004).

Recommendations regarding enhancement of the course

It is proposed that a member of the Student Support Service liaises with the Career Development Centre in order to access data regarding new students with ASD. It is recommended to circulate details regarding the course on the Intranet, and to email undergraduate Schools and the Graduate School in order to increase intake. It is suggested, numbers permitting, to run two courses, one for postgraduates and one for undergraduates. It is also recommended to have groups of between five and eight students per intake.

Conclusion

The course was well received and the students thought it was useful with good feedback given. Although this course developed good outcomes for a group of marginalised students, this will only fully benefit them if employers are educated also. Employers need to be educated in order to combat fear of mental illness and encourage self-disclosure. A combination of self-disclosure and wider societal acceptance will lead to the adoption of a more widespread, social model of disability.

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Forthcoming public NICEC events

Monday, 26th March 2012	2pm – 5pm

Network meeting: **The National Careers Service and its relationship with the evolving market for career guidance**

Tony Watts, with contributions from Verity Bullough (Skills Funding Agency), Stephen McNair and David Andrews

Location: London South Bank University (Room BR310, Borough Road Building)

Wednesday, 9th May	5pm – 6.30pm

Seminar: **'Networking: vulgar and scary?' Insights from a study of how university research staff manage their careers**

John Arnold, Laurie Cohen and Rebecca Harpley

Location: Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London

Tuesday, 26th June	5pm – 6.30pm

Seminar: **Re-thinking work-related learning in higher education**

Phil McCash and Richard Mendez

Location: Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London

Wednesday, 19th September	2pm – 5pm

Network meeting: **The growing private sector and independent career development practitioners**

Location: TBA

Tuesday, 27th November	5pm – 6.30pm

Seminar: **Developments in the UK labour market: myths versus evidence**

Nigel Meager (IES)

Location: Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London

News

The next issue of the Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

The focus of the October 2012 issue will be on digital technologies in relation to career education and guidance.

The timeline for submissions is as follows:

1st draft	Monday 30th April 2012
2nd draft	Wednesday 6th June 2012
Final article	Monday 23rd July 2012
Proofs to check	September 2012

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