Career Research & Development

NICEC
National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling

Career Research
& Development

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Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation.

Contents

Guidelines for contributors
Contributions are welcomed. Main articles should normally be 1,000-3,000 words in length. They should be submitted to the editor by post or email at the above address. Taped contributions are welcomed.

Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation, an independent educational charity founded in 1964. CRAC aims to promote the importance of and encourage active career development and career-related learning for the benefit of individuals, the economy and society.

Aims and scope
Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published for:
- Career practitioners working in schools, colleges, Connexions/IAG services, higher education careers services, adult guidance agencies, companies, community organisations, etc.
- Trainers, lecturers, advisers and consultants working with career practitioners.
- Individuals working towards qualifications in career education, career guidance and career management.
- Government departments and business and community organisations with an interest in the work of career practitioners.

It sets out to:
- Promote evidence-based practice by making theory, policy and the results of research and development more accessible to career practitioners in their day-to-day work.
- Encourage discussion and debate of current issues in career research and development.
- Disseminate good practice.
- Support continuing professional development for career practitioners.
- Help practitioners to develop and manage career education and guidance provision in the organisations in which they work.

Editorial

The aim of this issue is to 'showcase' the work of a number of writers who are engaged with research at post-graduate level, beyond any initial professional education. As will become evident some of this work is completed, or near to completion, whilst other work is at the start of the research process. All of the writers are experienced practitioners and/or academics who have sought to expand their knowledge in an area of professional interest and to disseminate this to others. The research presented in this issue also represents different sectors within career education and guidance.

In the first article Liz Bradley reports on the early stages of her research and provides an example of reflexive research into the impact of 'whiteness' and unexplored attitudes towards clients who present with a different world view. The article suggests the need for practitioners to engage in deeper reflection of these issues to develop culturally attuned practice. Liz uses narrative excerpts in her work to illustrate and explain the impact of her experience and the development of her thinking. The struggle to make sense of the experience and to understand the context of the client is shown in the narrative and reflections on the narrative. This format, dealing with illuminative particularities, can help us to understand macro issues on a micro scale. A focus on context and the power imbalance in such exchanges acted as the impetus and desire to name a problem and research it further. A problem in practice that worries us, at the same time as inspiring interest, is a good place to start with a postgraduate research study.

Writing about the career aspirations of older professional workers, Ian King also takes a narrative and auto/biographical approach. Ian writes, 'In contemporary society the concept of retirement is being challenged as the population ages and the government reviews their social strategies'. The article not only pays attention to this often neglected sector, but also illustrates some of the main issues that face a researcher working at doctoral level. The third study also describes work at doctoral level and investigates whether the pathway planning process for children leaving care could improve the life chances of female care leavers who are teenage parents. Michelle Stewart states, 'Central to the process are the young person's aspirations and sense of identity, both fundamental to career planning.'

The next two articles are from colleagues undertaking doctoral research in New Zealand. Taking a critical and reflexive approach, Barrie Irving writes about how the researcher needs to position themselves in their research. In his study he is exploring 'whether career education policy and practice is socially inclusive, culturally sensitive, critically informed and politically dynamic'. The work aims to provide a framework for career education in New Zealand; in order to offer a critical understanding of 'good practice' that can incorporate social justice. Also researching a subject that can have implications for services in other countries, Fiona Douglas is examining how career practitioners' views of their professional identity are affected by their environment. Like the previous writers, Fiona is interested in how her research participants construct meaning in their lives within particular contexts. Professional identity is a topic that will be of interest to many practitioners in the UK and elsewhere.

Returning to the UK, Douglas Govan reports on a study that is exploring the helping skills used by career advisers in Scotland. Douglas is interested in the 'active ingredients' of interviews, seeking to understand the advisers' inputs and the use of particular skills. In the article we are presented with a particular system that is used to investigate and categorise those skills. In the discussion section of the article, Douglas states that many advisers are not aware of the skills they use and he writes: 'The data captured in this study has for some stimulated a deep reflection on practice that helps to bring to life the impact of theory on their work with clients'.

Finally, Christopoulos *et al.* report on a study evaluating a Postgraduate Certificate in Telephone Guidance. The paper is written by five Quality Coaches who gained the certificate and a tutor from the University of Derby. The Quality Coaches work for the Careers Advice Service (previously Ufi/learndirect). The article reports on activities that work toward quality assurance for telephone guidance: these include reflective practice, mentoring, skills/cluster groups and the production of an electronic portfolio. Each is outlined within the development of the work. This final article demonstrates how postgraduate study has helped to support the development of the practitioners' skills and has enriched their reflective practice. Indeed, reflexivity is a theme that unites all of these examples of postgraduate study and writing.

Hazel Reid
Guest Editor

Becoming aware of taken for granted attitudes and prejudices: A pilot study of Information, Advice and Guidance Practitioners

Liz Bradley

Introduction

This article reports on the early stages of my empirical research. It explores how the enquiry developed through doubts in my own practice as an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioner working outreach in East Lancashire. My early enquiry has developed out of emerging critical insights on my own 'whiteness' and further my 'taken for granted' attitudes. This resulted in the discovery of my 'own reflexive voice' which was captured in narrative, an example of which is included within this article. The research has been informed by theories on 'whiteness' and 'taken for grantedness'. The research also considers possible limitations of some current careers guidance training, which could mean that some practitioners never reflect critically on their own taken for grantedness. It is suggested that if they were to engage in this deeper level of critical reflection, then they may develop a better understanding of the different world-views of their clients.

Background

In 2005 I gained employment with a national charity that provides opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. My role was to develop and deliver a new project in East Lancashire; the project was to engage with people over twenty five who were not claiming any state benefits. Many of the clients needed support to overcome barriers and return to work or education, hence the need to provide careers guidance and advice on how to gain qualifications, skills, experience or employment.

The majority of clients who met the criteria for inclusion in the project were not from white backgrounds. The biggest single group were women of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian heritage. I developed strong relationships with a

number of women and the insights this gave me became the foundation of my epistemology. I began to question whether the government's Every Child Matter (ECM) policy (DfES, 2003, 2004), especially the Youth Matters section relating to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) would reach or benefit those who were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), and more so those who were from ethnic groups, especially young women. Since working with the women, I had seen first hand some of the barriers they faced, expectations of not only family, but in addition the conceptions held by other practitioners. I became concerned that the policies may not fit their experience, and this caused dissonance in my practice.

I began to question further how this policy was going to make any difference to the lives of Asian women in East Lancashire. Until this point my PhD research was focused on the effects or outcomes of the ECM agenda, but I started to engage in critical reflection and gained a greater emphasis on the dissonance between what happens at the 'grass roots' level and what is decided at government level.

The research journey: how my experience as a researcher shaped the research

In this section, I will use narrative excerpts – both my own and those of others with whom I have interacted in the course of this work – to illustrate and explain the development of my thinking and understanding which have shaped this research.

The Asian women who confided in me, my consciousness of being a white woman, and working as a Personal Development Adviser within the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community, formed the springboard for my first narrative. This narrative will provide insight into one of many experiences in East Lancashire. Before I recall my narrative, I present a pen picture in order to contextualise the narratives and provide supplementary information. The pen picture will give some background to Shahida, and the situation in which she and I found ourselves[1].

Throughout this document these sections are indented and can be further identified by the use of italic font. (A fuller description and discussion of the use of pen pictures will be given in the final thesis). Sections of text placed within

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[1] Within this story I have changed the names of the individuals and the places where we met to protect their identity

a box are my own critical insights. Speech boxes (inspired by McLeod, 2008) are used to represent the voices of those who have contributed to the early cycles of this research.

Pen portraits: Shahida and Liz

Shahida (25), born in Pakistan, came to England twelve months prior to our meeting, she had come with her husband, he was here as part of his professional development, they had been granted entry to the UK for two years and once he had completed his training they were to return to Pakistan. She had been educated to university level in her own country. She had been married for six years and had two small children, however back at home they lived within a family structure, where she had spent little time with her husband, and they where rarely allowed to make decisions for themselves or their children. We had been meeting for months, and as our relationship developed we had shared aspects of each others lives; family, husband and tales of children. I enjoyed meeting with Shahida, she was very likeable, and she had an inner glow, and seemed to radiate this.

Liz (44), born in Liverpool, 'white', my parents had both worked since about the age of fourteen and classed themselves as working class. We lived on a council estate, in a council house, in an area of Liverpool that was predominately 'white'. During my teen years, the estate was subject to high unemployment, and drug misuse. At the age of eighteen, I moved to Preston, Lancashire to undertake a Degree (I was the first in my family to do so). Later I married, had two children, I returned to education at the age of 39, gaining a Certificate in Education, followed by a degree. Shortly after this, I obtained employment with a national charity, working in East Lancashire.

Narrative: The beginning of my understanding…

I sat in the same old run down room in the local Community Centre where I had worked for the past few months. I had already seen a few of the women who I met there regularly that day. I remember thinking Shahida is coming soon and how I was looking forward to seeing her, to hear her progress and what steps she would take next to forward her career development.

She arrived as usual; it was nice to see her, I was eager to see her. Since we had been working together she had attended some of the one day courses I had organised in the Community Centre. I had seen how she had changed, developed and grown in confidence; from this we had worked together to secure work experience. She really wanted to work with children, and we managed to arrange for her to do voluntary work both in a nursery, at a local after school club and with a school. This time my expectation was that we would look at the next steps, possibly some paid employment; however I couldn't have been more wrong.

She came into the normal room and sat down. I remember thinking she did not seem her usual self, and I could see by the expression on her face something was concerning her. We started with our normal catch up, and then she said '…it has been decided that I have to go back to Pakistan….' it wasn't her choice to return and she was concerned. She went on to tell me how whilst in Pakistan she had also experienced what she described as cruelty from her husband's Grandmother. She was frightened of returning back to a time and place, in the past, as since leaving both her and her husband had experienced different lives in the UK. She spoke about how people here were nice, I remember feeling conscious of our differences, or was it me feeling uneasy about how I could or should respond? I was conscious that here I was, a white western woman, brought up in different surroundings with different values and beliefs. I inwardly acknowledged the difference in my response to her; in other words, how different would my response be if I were talking to one of my peers?

'I remember struggling with the conversation; all the time we talked I was conscious of trying to keep the conversation on track. My mind shouting out, don't go, talk to your husband explain your feelings; ask him to stand by you.'

However, I managed to keep the conversation on track and we discussed the reasons for her feelings. I was conscious of my power at this point, and on reflection realise that partly my response originated from the professional part of my being. After we had met, I continued to run through parts of our conversation; in my mind's eye, reflecting in that 'personal space' on the interview. On returning home, the events of the day re-played in my mind, and I recalled how powerless and moved I had felt that day.

'Should I have said anything different, could I have said to her the things that were going round my mind? Would it have made any difference to the situation for her, did I say what she expected, did she want the response that was in my mind?'

During this research I have kept a journal. This has helped me to become a critical IAG practitioner, reflecting on past experiences and going deeper to gain greater understanding. Because of this journey I was able to openly question my practice and became more conscious that here I was, a white western woman, living in a western world. This critical reflection highlighted a previously unconscious awareness of my possible power and authority. This consciousness assisted further questioning and through the narrative inquiry I started to see a new 'way of knowing' (Ely *et al.*; 1999: 64). This was where my research took on a whole new cycle; the insights from reflection led to deeper understanding. The research was being shaped by my own self critical insights, so I began to question how I as a white western woman could

provide careers guidance to individuals from different ethnic groups, without having any knowledge or thought of how my whiteness, and lack of multi-cultural awareness, may affect our working relationship.

This consciousness of my own power and authority, acted as a catalyst, which then assisted my realisation of a possible problem in practice. On reviewing the literature, I encountered Pearce (2003), who questioned whether practitioners could be aware of how their ethnicity might affect their practice. This contributed to my questioning, I was granted ethical approval for my research, and subsequently met with a number of outreach IAG practitioners.

On discussing my research one IAG practitioner commented:

'My practice in the past with ethnic women may have done them an injustice and I may indeed have worked with these individuals using my own belief systems, instead of theirs.'

This reinforced my questioning, as her comments echoed my original concerns, helping to validate my research. She had been a practitioner for many years; however, it had taken recent higher level study and further enquiry for her to gain this insight into her practice. This was a 'eureka' moment. I mentally acknowledged that my colleague's statement might reflect what can happen when 'white' individuals work with people from different ethnic groups. At this point I was also reading Thompson (2003), who discusses the concept of 'taken for grantedness', and defines this as 'to see the world from within the narrow confines of one culture, to project one set of norms and values on to other groups of people' (p.16). This had a great impact on me and has become the key concept within this research. I reflected on my IAG colleagues' comments; that some practitioners may have little or no thought for how their own taken for granted assumed power, or 'whiteness', may blind them to how they interact across cultural, ethnic, class, disability and gender differences. At this point I think it is important to explain what is meant by the term *whiteness*? Jay (2005), discusses this concept and says that it is 'not an attack on people' (np). He says studying this helps people think critically how whiteness 'has operated systematically, structurally, and sometimes unconsciously as a dominant force' (np). McIntosh (1988) adds to this and discusses how in western society white people are privileged and benefit from an 'unearned advantage and conferred dominance' (p. 7). Thompson (2003) comments how, 'Routinized social practices are strongly influenced by, and channelled through, dominant norms and cultural patterns and therefore reflect the status quo' (p.36).

My research started to focus on IAG practitioners, who may have never questioned this element of their practice. Therefore, there is a need to help other professionals realise their unconsciousness, their lack of criticality, of themselves, where they practice and the wider political setting. In a process of becoming critical, practitioners could then use their new understanding to improve and transform practice.

Standards, qualifications and frameworks in IAG

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)(2007a) and the supporting Quality Standards for Young People User Guide (2007b), have been developed to assist organizations in their delivery of IAG. Standard five of the guide outlines evidence indicators for 'promoting equal opportunity, celebrating diversity and challenging stereotypes' (p.19). On studying this further questions arose, as they outline that staff should be understanding and sensitive to service users' faith. How do service providers intend to do this when their staff may be unaware of their taken for granted practices? There is a need for practitioners and the services providers to go through a dialectic process enabling deeper understanding. By utilising both dialogue and reflection more connections could be made that would result in a more critical consciousness. Carr and Kemmis (1986) discuss that, 'Consciousness arises out of and is shaped by practice and in turn is judged in and by practice' (p.161). By reflecting on this, we can examine how practice is affected by outside forces. During this process, potential barriers may be identified, and this can enable practitioners to help people they support through Information, Advice and Guidance to break through discrimination and gain their rightful place in society. Despite the fact that careers guidance is seen as a necessary and important step, we find that the Labour government has implemented a change of focus for the Careers Services. Watts (2003) says that this has resulted in 'a legal entitlement to impartial Careers Advice and Guidance by skilled people (is) being lost' (p.1) and that there has been an 'erosion of professional standards' (p.1).

Therefore I turned to the current literature in relation to the ongoing debate about IAG qualifications and competencies. From my initial research in this area there is much discussion with regards to the correct qualification level needed to be a practitioner. The last qualification that had widespread recognition was The Diploma in Careers Guidance, this was in the 1990s, however since then this qualification has been replaced by The Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG). However the QCG 'has been widely criticised for its lack of an applied (practical) dimension' (McGowan *et al.*, 2009: 29) and in addition to this practitioners are also required to undertake NVQ Level 4 in Guidance. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) report (2009) outlines the existing United Kingdom framework for training of practitioners. They too refer to the NVQs and note that the standards have undergone many revisions since they were first developed in the 1990s (p.69). However, NVQs have also been 'widely acknowledged as failing to provide

practitioners with an understanding of underpinning theory and so as inhibiting the development of practice' (McGowan *et al*.; 2009: 29).

The purpose of the Cedefop research (2009) was to review trends and patterns in training provision for career guidance practitioners and to develop a common competence framework for career guidance practitioners in the European Union (EU). The report discusses how guidance is delivered in diverse settings and how some competences are 'transversal', saying 'that they encompass an ability or understanding that cuts across all the specific activities through which clients might be supported in developing and learning to manage their careers' (p.69). The report extends this further and states these type of transversal competences, which are also termed as foundation competences, are characterised by the fact that they are not work tasks, but underpin and cross-cut all work tasks. It is acknowledged that both the service user and the practitioner bring their own social, cultural, economic and personal circumstances and personal values and attitudes to the process. However the report also notes that the competence framework can only stress the importance of the personal philosophies and world-views of the career guidance practitioner. Furthermore it is stressed that:

> **Each career guidance practitioner needs to develop high levels of personal reflectiveness; this is indicated in the foundation competence on clients' diverse needs. The brevity of description of the competence framework does not allow extended exploration of these issues, but they are extremely important in applying the framework to particular situations of career guidance work.**

(Cedefop, 2009: 71)

Developing and refining the research

As discussed earlier, several factors led me to revisit my original research and it became clear that the underlying issues affecting successful policy outcomes were highly complex and often far removed from the daily concerns of the people working on the frontline as IAG practitioners. Along the journey of becoming more self critical, my research developed to question 'How do practitioners gain awareness of their taken for granted attitudes, assumptions and prejudices?' Furthermore, how does this awareness relate to their appreciating and understanding of difference (between self and clients, self and other IAG practitioners)?

The next stage of the research is to gain deeper understanding of the process of becoming aware of our taken for granted assumptions. Then, armed with this understanding, the intention is to co-research a wider purposive sample of NVQ IAG practitioners who at that point may not have verbalised their taken for granted assumptions. I further anticipate that if my hypothesis is

correct, and some practitioners are unaware of their assumptions, their awareness could be improved by the development of a reflective model which could assist IAG practitioners to gain fuller awareness of the different world views they and their clients hold.

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Embracing occupational history: a doctoral research study investigating the career aspirations of older workers

Ian King

An overview

What are the career aspirations of older professional workers in business advisory services? How does their career history influence their aspirations as they navigate toward retirement? These are the principal questions underlying the doctoral research programme showcased in this article. In contemporary society the concept of retirement is being challenged as the population ages and the government review their social strategies. 'Traditional' career pathways of older professional workers reflected an ascendant career which embraced their expertise and service, but now, with continuing organisational turbulence, some face a changing environment where their career path looks less certain. This article illustrates some of the main issues facing a new doctoral researcher; it is written at the beginning of the second year of research and addresses some critical questions that a new researcher needs to consider when they set out on their research journey. This reflective article takes Rudyard Kipling's (1902) 'six honest serving-men (sic)' as its framework:

> I KEEP six honest serving-men
>
> (They taught me all I knew);
>
> Their names are What and Why and When
>
> And How and Where and Who.

In the early months of this research programme, the author spent many hours questioning the purpose and aims of his research and, following periods of reflective questioning, realised that the cl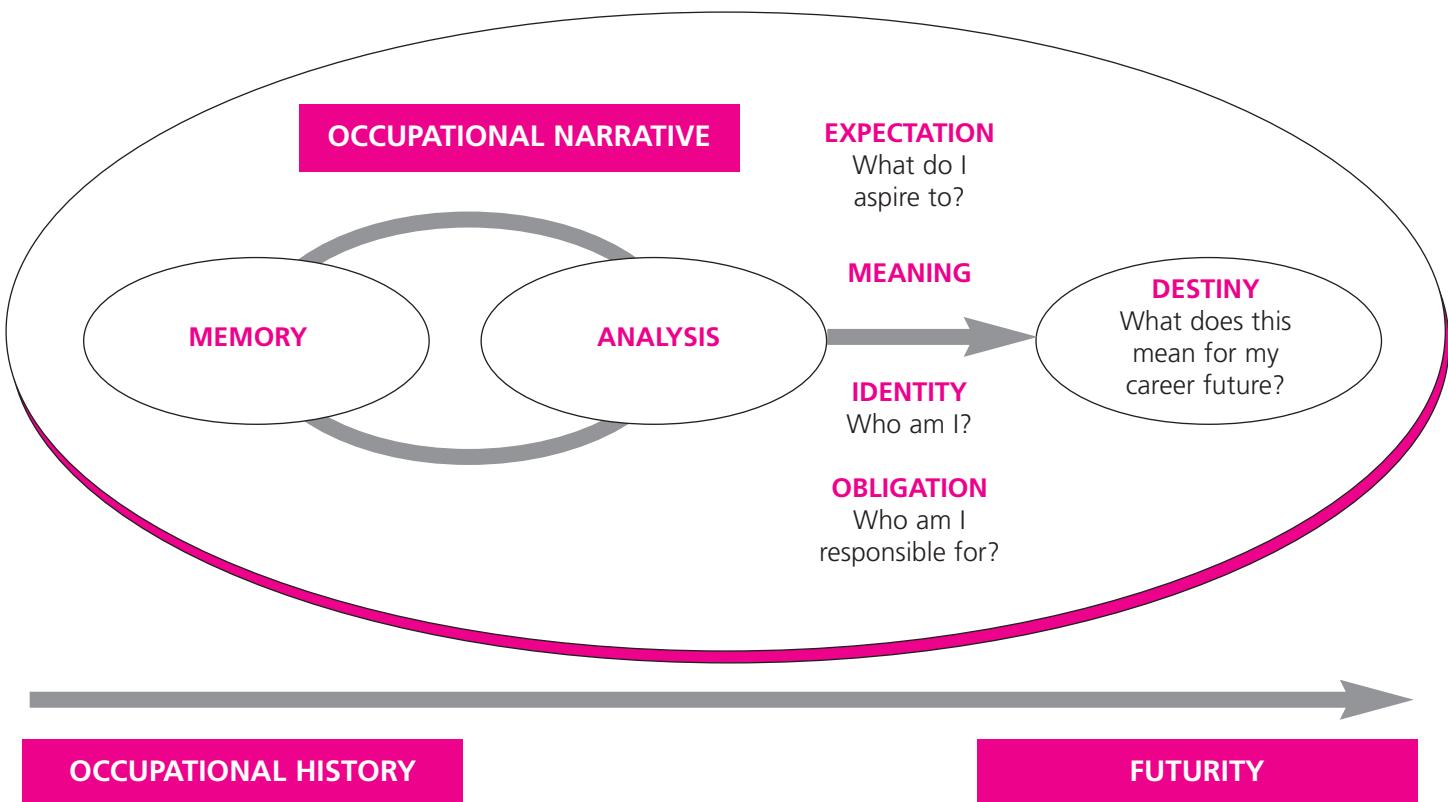arity of the research programme emerges from an iterative cycle of continual enquiry, discussion with others, writing and re/interpretation to identify and make sense of the research purpose.

WHAT is the purpose? Locating research focus

The focus of this research is the career experience of older professional workers who are in the later stages of their employment; specifically accountants, lawyers and management consultants. It seeks to address the question of what their aspirations are, pending their transition toward occupational disengagement, commonly known as 'retirement'; a contested notion in contemporary social thinking. I decided that I would research older workers in the age range 50 to 65 as this represents the period within occupational existence when a person is starting to think about workplace disengagement. This age range locates the commencement of a life-stage, often known as the third-age, defined by Ford as 'starting at 45+, because 45 is now the approximate point at which age can begin to present both men and women with significant (and for many, acute) problems in securing suitable employment' (1996: 1).

This life-stage is a period when the professional worker is caught between the ascendancy of the first half of their occupational progression and their potential descendancy or future slowdown; some organisations, perhaps unintentionally, discriminate against their older workers by minimising or downgrading their occupational experience. Ainsworth notes that, "ageism directed against the old is hostility towards a future self, not a clearly differentiated 'other'" (2006: 316). The challenge for older workers is how to continue their career journey without losing their occupational inheritance; one of my principal propositions is that 'all third-age professional workers can utilise their occupational history to give direction to their future' (King, 2010: 2).

In figure 1, I have illustrated my primary research foci – memory extraction, analysis and interpretation of occupational narrative. Cochran argues that, by recollecting occupational experiences, one can illuminate the future by disentangling the past:

FIG 1: A Conceptual Model for Investigating Occupational Experience

WHY is it important? Identifying research context

There is limited value to be gained from research conducted in a conceptual vacuum – political, economic and social (PES) determinants have contributed to the emergence of this research. A major driver is globalisation which is positioned by Beck in terms of '... a number of *dimensions*... of *communications technology, ecology, economics, work organization, culture and civil society*' (*author's italics*, 2000: 19). At the heart is the economic challenge, highlighted by the financial downturn (late 2008) which required governments worldwide to support their ailing economies – Cable describes "this conjuncture of extreme events and an increasingly hostile political environment... as a 'perfect storm'" (2009: 8). This research context, business advisory services, now operates in a world defined and regulated within a global architecture, a phenomenon which increases an organisation's capability to operate transnationally. Through knowledge distribution and economic realignment, professional environments have continually changed, requiring professionals to refocus their expertise.

In Britain, the notion of retirement emerged out of the social agenda of the early 1900s; until then, people generally worked until they were no longer able to, or ceased as a consequence of health problems or death. In contemporary society a state pension is paid to men at 65 and women at 60, although this is changing under current pension reforms. However, because of changing demographics (an ageing society) and economic conditions

'The basic function of a representation of the future is to create a meaningful narrative of the future that a person can live out. A decision situation is one in which the future is in doubt. One's path has become entangled, and the way is no longer clear. The task of the decider is to pierce through the tangled present to envision a path ahead… either way, piercing through the tangled present is a matter of straightening out a future narrative' (1997: 9).

This observation suggests that older workers can determine futurity, that is their future state of occupational anticipation, by untangling their past trajectory. They often project themselves through a web constructed from their perception of self and characteristics assumed from their institutional allegiance; this cloak of professional identity is a mantle which reflects how the individual perceives them self, described by Giddens as 'reflexive understanding' in the following citation, 'self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by an individual. It is *the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography*' (*author's italics*, 1991: 53). This first question then – What is the purpose? – suggests that researchers locate a clear focus for their research by finding their research boundaries in terms of both subject and population.

(increasing national debt), the government is re-examining state pensions. In addition to the PES considerations, older workers may face obligations, for example family, financial and health issues, which mean that they need to re-orientate their occupational engagement to reflect the demands these obligations place on them.

Vickerstaff *et al*. (2008) note that 'a small number of respondents were not looking forward to retirement; however, the great majority articulated strong cultural assumptions about retirement as a deserved right and presented a common vision of what retirement should ideally entail: a period of freedom and choice' (page 85); it seems that, for many, retirement is anticipated with enthusiasm. As Feldman (1994) notes, retirement is not so much a matter of reaching an age prescribed by government, but 'withdrawal from an organisational position or career path of considerable duration, taken by individuals after middle age, and taken with the intention of reduced psychological commitment to work hereafter' (cited in van der Heijden *et al*., 2008: 90). The ages at which people disengage from the workplace are often opportunistic, based on personal circumstances, rather than government directive; most older professional workers now have greater choice when determining their occupational destiny. The question posed in this second section seeks to encourage researchers to identify the context of their research.

WHEN will it help? Exploring research data

As older professional workers consider their career future, it will help to reflect on their occupational history, that is experience of their past career trajectory, but where can this experience be found? Thompson (1988) describes memory as a warehouse or 'a potential quarry… a natural repository from which to extract 'boulders' of life experience' (cited in West, 1996: 13). This metaphor suggests that all workers have a natural source from which they recall their memories, which Conway describes as the 'autobiographical memory' (2001: 1375); this is the main depository which stores one's occupational memories and associated experiences.

I have illustrated the constituent elements of the autobiographic memory system in figure 2. This shows the different zones of the autobiographical memory as 'long term' and 'working' memory containing episodic memory and knowledge respectively. Conway (2001: 1375) suggests that the autobiographic memory contains:

● episodic memory EM which 'represents the experienced self… and retains access to associated episodic memories', that is long term multiple memories that an individual holds about episodes – distinctive periods or phases of their past experience,

● episodic knowledge EK that is 'recent experience… yet to be integrated with the autobiographical memory… the immediate past of the experiencing self' and that this 'recollective experience... is induced by images, feelings and other memory details that come to mind during remembering', that is present experience recently acquired.

When recalling occupational experience, the professional worker can extract occupational memories by 'consulting' their autobiographic memory, the principal depository within which is stored a wealth of occupational experience and associated memories. This autobiographic knowledge,

FIG 2: Autobiographic Memory System (Adapted from Conway, 2001)
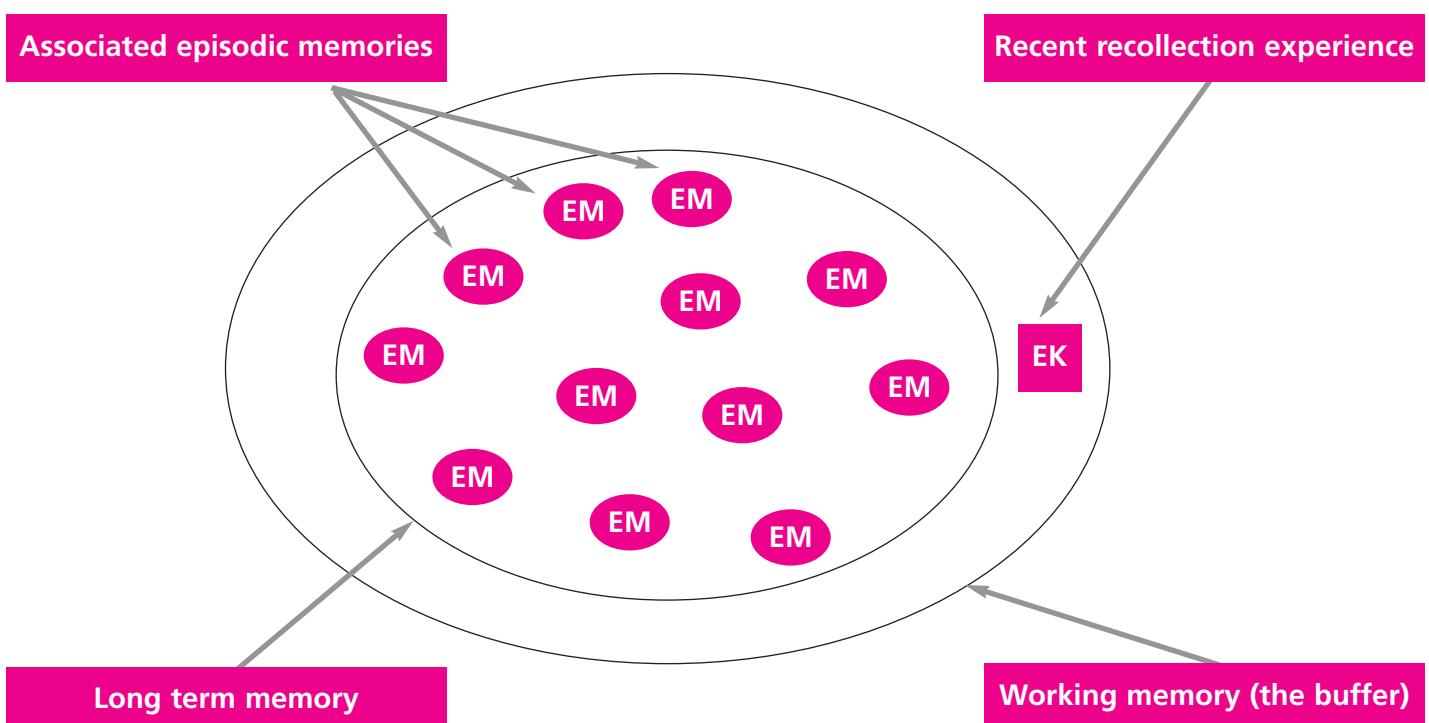
when reconstructed as an occupational narrative, offers a rich account of a professional's career experience. In this third section, I have suggested that researchers understand when their main research data source should be valued.

HOW does it work? Valuing research methodology

Moving on, how does the researcher initiate a process enabling older workers to retrieve their occupational memories? In this research I used 'auto/biographical interviewing' to enable professional practitioners to recall their occupational narratives. Crites describes this as a process for 'consulting our memory' (1971: 299), and, reflecting on the deliberations of Augustine of Hippo, he notes that 'this chronicle does not need to be recollected strictly, but merely to be recalled: I need only call up again the succession of images which stand waiting in memory in the order in which I experienced them' (Crites, 1971: 299). In addition to adopting a narrative methodology, I encouraged participants to plot their occupational history noting the 'high and low points' in their career trajectory – Cochran describes this technique as 'the life line' (1997: 74). By reflecting on this visual recollection, the participant sees a graphical representation of their career trajectory – this takes a unique form depending on the individual's career emergence. I also asked participants to isolate their career episodes, which are distinctive periods of their occupational experience.

Riessman suggests a simple definition of personal narrative as 'talk organized around consequential events' (1993: 3) and Law *et al.* (2002) explain that 'narratives are structured by episodes, putting events into significantly linked passages, presenting turning points, where problems must be solved or dilemmas resolved' (page 435). Narrative is a tool for enabling a reflexive conversation with oneself about past experience, and for analysing and interpreting the 'text' to derive meaning. Creating an occupational story is an approach to *reflexively understanding* occupational self through a process involving recollection and interpretation of the story told. This fourth question – How does it work? – positions the importance of clarifying research methodology.

WHERE will it lead? Determining research outputs

One research aim is to find out whether third-age professional workers will be able to use their occupational story to determine their future career direction. My principal objective is to capture a story which creates a representation of self; Morris (1994) emphasises that 'the self is not an entity but a process that orchestrates an individual's personal experience as a result of which he or she becomes self-aware and self-reflective about her or his place in the surrounding world' (cited in van Meijl and Driessen, 2003: 20) – an outcome of this social

construction is the meaning that it conveys to the story teller. Occupational identity is the mantle assumed by an individual, reflecting both personal and professional characteristics and traits.

The coherence of an occupational narrative reflects its authenticity, but Bruner, citing Bartlett (1932) cautions that 'the past is a reconstruction rather than a recovery... the secret of history is forever lost' (1983: 5). This underlines the relativity of our occupational existence in that 'we are never the complete author of our destiny for our career narratives are a co-construction within the context of our social reality' (King, 2007: 42). Thus, we can never expect to accurately recover our past experiences, they are merely a present construction – a fragment of our former trajectory. The question reviewed in this section recommends that researchers consider where there research may lead in terms of anticipated outcomes.

WHO is the author? Placing research authorship

Etherington suggests that readers should be 'informed about the position we adopt in relation to the study and by our explicit questioning of our own involvement' (2004: 32); she argues for 'authorial participation' in the research process, contending that, if the author's role in the research is identified then the reader is more likely to understand the research environment. Following early supervision, I was challenged to identify my position in this research as it had been instrumental in determining my research purpose, process and population; having initially omitted to place 'self' in this research, I resolved to do so.

Over thirty-five years, I worked as an organisational development consultant in various business consulting firms where I delivered a range of organisational learning and development interventions, travelling throughout the UK, Europe and North America. For most of this period, I realised a satisfying occupational experience as my career emerged in an ordered and ascendant manner from trainee through to director/head of learning. I had strived to achieve high organisational position, which, in the late 20th century, was often seen as a principal driver for career success, but, as a result of organisational turbulence, I disengaged from the workplace and, at this time, reflected on the writing of Francis Bacon who observed that 'the rising unto place is laborious... the standing is slippery, and the regress is either a downfall, or at least an eclipse...' (1960: 44). My occupational journey had taken a detour, but I found a way back through academic endeavour which led to participation in the doctoral research outlined.

This has opened a new academic pathway which includes reading, research, writing and teaching undergraduates and postgraduates. It also links to my earlier commercial existence creating occupational coherence – I have discovered the term 'portfolio educator' described by

Fenwick as 'a term adopted to represent people engaged in adult education activities, who create portfolios of self-employed work arrangements to contract their skills in a variety of contexts' (2003: 165). This last section has centred on the importance of placing self in the research, that is confirming authorial participation within the research process.

Summary

In this article, I have showcased a doctoral research study which investigates older professional workers, their occupational transition and the linking concept of 'retirement'. In addition to describing my research, I have framed some of the principal questions that a new doctoral researcher might consider when starting their research. Rudyard Kipling's (1902) 'six honest serving-men' have provided a framework on which to hang my reflections and, for the new researcher, their contemplations when determining their research direction. The author trusts that potential doctoral researchers will find answers through the illuminations offered in this article.

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Pathway Plans – telling my story?

Michelle Stewart

Introduction

Pathway planning concerns the transition of young people leaving care to independent living and adulthood. This article is based on doctoral research (Stewart, 2009) into the pathway planning process introduced under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (OPSI, 2000). The research concentrated on the key components of education, training and employment. In particular, it investigated whether such planning could improve the life chances of female care leavers who are teenage parents. Central to the process are the young person's aspirations and sense of identity, both fundamental to career planning.

This article reflects on two key aspects that emerged from the investigations and are pertinent to the practice of career guidance: the value of adopting a narrative framework as developed by Leiblich *et al.* (1998) when conducting interviews with the young people; and how participation in the pathway planning process supported the young people in exploring, reflecting and re-defining their sense of self.

Background

Research into teenage pregnancy, educational attainment and youth transition has increasingly highlighted the plight of young people leaving care (Biehal *et al*., 1995; Broad, 1998; Corlyon and McGuire, 1999; Stein and Wade, 2002; Chase, 2006), revealing low levels of educational achievement, greater likelihood of early pregnancy and parenthood, and long term dependence on State benefits. In response both to concerns regarding the transition to independent living and adulthood of young people leaving care, and to economic drivers underlying New Labour philosophy, new arrangements were introduced in 2001 under the CLCA 2000. The main purpose of the Act is to improve the life chances of young people living in and leaving local authority care, by placing new duties on local authorities to prepare young people in public care for the time when this care ceases. Those affected are defined as 'eligible', 'relevant' and 'former relevant' (DOH 2002, Chapter 2). Throughout this article these young people are referred to as 'care leavers'.

The CLCA 2000 requires local authorities to undertake a needs assessment for all care leavers aged 16-17 to determine what assistance they need up to the age of 21 (24 if they are still in education). A key component is the appointment of 'personal advisers' who have responsibility for agreeing with care leavers a transitional document called a 'pathway plan'. The plan is viewed by the government as fundamental to the process whereby care leavers map out their future and develop the knowledge and skills they need to make successful transitions, and so improve their life chances. Although at the time of their introduction there was no national template, statutory guidance (DOH, 2002) sets out what each plan must cover and includes a detailed plan for the young person's education or training and how the responsible authority will assist in relation to employment or other purposeful activity or occupation. The plan must be reviewed every six months.

Research design and methodology

Traditionally research on career transitions has been founded in 'positivism' and so adopted paradigms based on the assumption that individuals possess relatively stable personality traits which provide consistency in human behaviour. As in applied science, such an approach uses rational decision-making to match individuals to occupations: individuals are expected to develop and refine their ambitions, attitudes and abilities until they make a 'realistic' choice of occupation in line with self-image and vocational maturity. This objective goal-oriented approach to career planning is direct, sensible and beneficial. However, it is also limiting because it neglects the subjective dimension, taking little account of how social and cultural experiences are internalised and influence what is believed and valued.

To understand human action requires an understanding of meaning: the beliefs and values that underlie social action and organisational processes. Similarly, to move beyond descriptive research and endeavour so as to understand the process encapsulated within pathway plans, the research design and method needed to accommodate the ambiguity, uncertainty and inconsistency in the nature of 'self' and seek to comprehend the individual's construct of self: the sense of self and agency which is inexplicably interwoven with career. Also, to evaluate the effectiveness of pathway plans as a transition tool for female care leavers who were also teenage parents, particularly with regard to education, training and employment, the research design needed to allow the young person's dual identity as both teenager and parent to be recognised and drawn upon.

A single embedded case study design (Yin, 1994) was adopted. This made possible the uncovering of context-dependent knowledge and experiences to reveal the complexities and contradictions of real life, which can frequently challenge pre-conceived notions of understanding and so inform professional practice. In addition, it supported the collection of data from various sources, enabled different levels of enquiry and could incorporate different methods of analysis – both a narrative approach and discourse analysis.
With support and ethical clearance from a London inner city authority, semi-structured interviews were conducted

during 2005 with managers, independent reviewing officers, social workers, personal advisers and 12 care leavers aged between 16 and 20 years, of whom five had children under two and the remainder were soon to be parents. Records indicated that all had pathway plans. The interviews were held in addition to the collection and analysis of written documents. The selection and numbers interviewed were governed by procedural guidelines and who was available, combined with a judgement that sufficient data from a range of sources had been collected to answer the research questions. This judgment was supported by data findings being repeated with little or no new data being disclosed.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain respondents' own insights into the pathway planning process. They also provided clarification and corroborated evidence about the process established from the textual data. The structure of the interviews was guided by a list of pre-set questions, which did not include any specific questions about parenting. Field notes were made to record the setting and wider context within which the interviews took place.

The understanding of why and how the new arrangements were introduced, held by those involved on the pathway planning process, was evaluated in the light of legislation and national policy - that is, what was supposed to happen, not how it was perceived by the research subjects. The use of discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) supported an investigation of meaning and social interaction contained in the interview transcripts. Weight was placed on the way in which the speakers used discourses as interpretive repertoires to establish accounts of the world as solid and objective, positioning themselves within the discourse and negotiating meaning. The form and content of each transcript was considered for style of speech, sequence of events, choice of words or metaphor, feelings evoked, complexity and coherence. In addition the care leavers' responses were looked at in the context of other parts of the narrative and life chapters. Also reflected on were the meanings of gaps, contradictions, silences and the unsaid. Only findings from the care leavers' interviews are discussed in this article.

Life chapters

In addition to accessing the care leavers' perception and understanding of pathway planning, interviews with the care leavers were structured around the narrative framework as used in the work of Leiblich *et al*. (1998) in the hope of gaining vital and unique insights into their lives, especially their construct of beliefs and values, and sense of identity. To achieve this, the care leavers were asked to break their lives into chapters, record the chapters on paper by noting how old they were at the beginning and end of each chapter, and give each chapter a title. This autobiographical record was used as a tool to support attempts to explore the young person's plans and aspirations for the future in a structured way. To

accommodate time constraints imposed to limit intrusion into the life of the care leavers, they were not asked to discuss each life chapter in detail. Drawing on the work of Thomson *et al.* (2003), they were asked instead to recount a significant memory and a significant event or 'turning point' from one of the chapters that related to education, training or employment. These were linked through conversation to the life chapters. Then, building on these disclosures, the conversation was steered towards a more general discussion around pathway plans. This approach gave the interview a structured and manageable format.

From these conversations it emerged that care leavers saw a clear connection between gaining qualifications and accessing meaningful employment:

'I was looking for a job but I realised they prefer you if you've got qualifications.'

Also, although care leavers recognise that parenthood can place full-time demands on their time and energy, many shared the belief that educational attainment is important in enabling them to become economically independent. For example:

'I don't want to be on the social all my life. [My child will] have better stuff 'cos I'll have more money. If I had an NVQ then it would be easier for me to get a job because I'd have the qualifications I need.'

Similarly, they revealed that they linked educational attainment not only to economic independence but also to self worth:

'I'd just feel proud of myself if I'd done it. Knowing that I could go into a job and say I've done my GCSEs. Just to hear myself say it would be good.'

Structuring the conversation around the life chapters supported the process of exploration and provided a rich set of data on which further careers counselling could be founded. For example, this included insight into an individual's personal preferences:

'I do show patience for children but deep down inside I can't sit in a classroom all day. It's exciting but I prefer something more challenging, more paperwork, more dealing with people instead of children.'

'I'm more of a practical person than I was sitting there taking notes. I'm more of a night person. I love doing different things.'

The narratives provided unique glimpses of positive experiences from the past which could be captured in constructing a more meaningful future. For example:

'They sent us on work placements. There was one more space and I remember getting it. I was ever so happy. Doing reception work; it was fun.'

Similarly, they provided opportunities to explore less positive experiences:

'If I look back at that period of time, it wasn't a very productive period, so I probably just look back on that as maybe gives me the enthusiasm not to go back there but to move forward.'

Importantly, the narratives revealed individuals' values and sources of motivation, which frequently related back to their role and responsibilities as a parent:

'I just want to be happy. Not extreme rich like a footballer but just so I have enough money coming in to look after [my child], to look after myself and pay the bills without struggling. I just want to go out there and earn some decent money from a decent job that I enjoy. To give her a stable life and myself a stable life as well.'

However, it became apparent that many based their decisions on inadequate information and had received little, if any, career guidance to enable them to make comparisons, appreciate alternative points of view and develop their own (Law 1996a). This is demonstrated by one care leaver who decided to remain in education simply because they met the course entry requirements:

'I found a course in a prospectus. I was able to do that course with the grades I had, so I tried for that course.'

Similarly, the need for guidance was demonstrated by a care leaver overwhelmed with the often conflicting advice they had received:

'I had to have lots of advice from people, from teachers and my carers and friends and so on. Which was good, but at the same time it's not good because it confuses. It did confuse me because everybody had different views.'

Pathway plans and self identity

The creation of action plans can evoke a variety of responses and is often perceived as a bureaucratic chore (Law 1996b). Similarly, for pathway plans to be understood as worthwhile they must convey some sense of intrinsic value. The research revealed that a strength of a pathway plan was that ownership resided with the care leaver:

'Who does it belong to? Me, because it's my information. I'm just letting people know that stuff.'

The process of completing the pathway plan provided a means of building relations with the personal adviser and,

importantly, the opportunity to develop a network of social connections that could offer ongoing support and encouragement. For pathway planning to be most effective, working in partnership needs to be embedded in a shared understanding of the pathway plan as a 'tool' to support the transition to independent living and adulthood, and not as a measure of service performance.

A significant, and perhaps somewhat unexpected, revelation was that participation in the process and completion of pathway plans on a regular basis supported the care leavers in reconstructing their sense of who they were – a central aspect of youth transition (Marcia 1980):

'Completing the plan has helped me learn more about myself.'

In terms of self awareness, care leavers discovered a new sense of confidence and motivation in their life as a parent combined with an acceptance of responsibility and independence:

'Since I've had the baby I've been confident in myself that I can do stuff and everything. And I feel happy as well now. Having a baby I've got a lot of responsibility.'

The structured approach of pathway planning combined with ownership of the pathway plan, had supported care leavers in taking control of their life and personal development. Using the pathway plan to break down the post-16 transition into a series of smaller tasks made it less threatening. Moreover, in contrast to the sense of chaos many had experienced, adopting a structured framework provided a sense of inner calm:

'It's good to plan because when you plan something then your mind is more organised. I believe planning is the right way because if you don't plan things everything is just going to be everywhere and your mind goes mad. Planning is much better because if somebody tells you in advance that's much better and something to look forward to. No-one knows how people feel inside when they don't plan. Plan it; make it positive. It gives you more control. If you don't plan it's a negative thing. Not knowing: it's so stressful.'

Over time, participation in the process enabled care leavers to envisage and construct a more meaningful future and increased their sense of self-worth and self-efficacy:

'The pathway plan's really helpful because when I look at it, I see my life as more organised and then I feel more worth. I feel a sense of worth and I've got something to look forward to. I could see where I am and what I'm looking forward to doing in the future.'

Summary

The career objectives of care leavers may not be the same as those of the aftercare services. Exploration is necessary to achieve a mutual understanding from what can be a very different perspective. Using the 'life chapters' allowed care leavers to communicate the complex relationship between events and the emotions that they engendered. Adopting a narrative approach recognised that how they respond to complex and difficult situations affects their commitment to action. It also can better accommodate changes in the belief system and decision-making process that arise from their cultural and social environment. In turn this can provide insight about how best to develop a future-orientated career focus and to support planning.

Children's Trusts are asked to ensure that all care leavers receive impartial information, advice and guidance in order to help them make informed choices about post-16 learning opportunities and careers options. The level of comment recorded in the interview transcripts indicated that the importance of education, training and employment in improving care leavers' life chances is recognised. In contrast, there was little evidence of this being reflected in the pathway plans. The analysis of data disclosed that the education, training and employment of care leavers who are also mothers are seldom considered. Importantly, the pathway planning process and the pathway plan are rarely used to support them in their return to learning or transition to employment.

The research suggests that participation in pathway planning can prove fundamental to the process whereby young people leaving care map out their future, develop the knowledge and skills they need to make a successful transition, and so improve their life chances. Moreover, greater involvement in pathway planning by guidance professionals could increase access to the careers information, advice and guidance needed to raise awareness of the options available. This could also better enable care leavers who are also teenage mothers to build on their aspirations as parents and their desire to become economically independent.

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Connecting career education with social justice: relating theory to practice in New Zealand secondary schools

Barrie A. Irving

Introduction

This short article provides an overview of my PhD, discusses a number of key issues that have guided my thinking in the development and design of my study, outlines how I will be doing the fieldwork, and explores how the findings might connect career education with social justice.

Developing my PhD study: a personal reflection

As I developed my research I found myself thinking about my own life history. This led to a reflexive exploration of my own conceptions of career and career education, and why I feel social justice is important. Being critically reflexive helped me become more aware of the ways in which I ascribed meaning(s) and value(s) to the multiple perspectives within the literature, and how my past history, and present situation informed and shaped the issues, concerns and challenges identified. I adopted poststructural feminist conventions by writing myself into the text (Jones, 1992; Lincoln and Denzin, 2000), acknowledging that as 'I' write and research reflexively these are not the views of a disconnected 'other', but a representation of my own understanding of the world, infused by my (sometimes contradictory and shifting) values.

Focusing the research

Career education bridges the divide between compulsory schooling and the wider social, economic and political world. It is concerned with enabling students to manage their future lives effectively (Ministry of Education, 2009). Yet little attention has been paid to where social justice 'fits', either in the international literature (see Guichard, 2001), or in reviews of practice in New Zealand (see Vaughan and Gardiner, 2007; Watts, 2007). Therefore I developed my PhD around the central question: 'How is social justice understood within career education in New Zealand secondary schools?'

In my study I am exploring whether career education policy and practice is socially inclusive, culturally sensitive, critically informed and politically dynamic. Drawing on Young's (1990) concept of the five faces of oppression, which is informed by critical social theory (see Anyon, 2009), my aim is to: 1) explore how career educators

understand social justice; 2) examine how policy informs practice; 3) interrogate 'common sense' explanations of 'career'; and 4) identify the multiple discourses that currently inform career education theory and practice in New Zealand secondary schools.

Overview of the literature
Conceptualising career(s)

Inkson (2007) suggests that career is a key signifier of individual identity, and occupies a central position within our lives. This coalesces with Young and Collin's (2000) view that 'career can be seen as an overarching construct that gives meaning to the individual's life' (p.5). If this is so, then how 'career' is conceptualised and understood requires careful consideration. The contemporary constructivist paradigm presents a view of career as a process of self-construction through which people give meaning to their own individual 'career' paths (Collin, 2000).

Yet a closer reading of the literature highlights that the language of career, and how it is defined, is often confused (Richardson, 1993), with the term 'work' frequently used to signify paid employment (Haworth and Lewis, 2005). Moreover, economic participation appears to be privileged, with human value measured in relation to this. This raises questions concerning those who are not active in the labour market (see Irving, 2005). Should they be regarded as 'careerless' (Collin, 1996) for example, the insignificant 'other' to the economically productive subject (Dyer, 2006)? In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education (2009) acknowledges that career can encompass a range of life roles, and that 'everyone has a career' (p.6). Therefore in my research I am looking at how career education policies, and career educators themselves, conceptualise and give meaning to the notion of 'career'.

Career education or career development?

Whilst McCowan and McKenzie (1997) assert that career education practice is based on career theory, Harris (1999) challenges this, suggesting that the concept of career *education* is not only under-theorised, but also contested. New Zealand research by Vaughan and Gardiner (2007) also found that career education lacked conceptual clarity in schools. More noticeable perhaps is the drift in terminology from the language of career *education* to that of career *development*, with the terms being used

synonymously in the literature (see Patton, 2001). This conflation is at risk of confusing learning *about* career in an educational sense, with preparation *for* career in relation to competency acquisition. Learning *about* career might engage students in critical discussion and examination of how social, economic and political concerns contribute to the formation of a 'career' identity (Irving, 2009), inform notions of citizenship (Hyslop-Margison and McKerracher, 2008), impacts on how social justice is understood (Irving, in press), and plays out in the labour market (Hyslop-Margison and Armstrong, 2004). Preparation *for* career lends itself to a focus on the preparation of students to take self-responsibility for their futures by gaining the 'flexible' skills, attitudes, instrumental knowledge, and competence(s) that will enable them to obtain and retain employment in an uncertain (economic) world (see McMahon, Patton and Tatham, 2003).

As a small exporting nation, New Zealand responded to the global challenges of the 1980s by embracing neoliberal economic reforms (Kelsey, 1997), placing importance on the notion 'that each one makes a 'continual enterprise' of ourselves' (Olssen, 1996:340). Career education in New Zealand therefore needs to be understood within this broader context. According to the Ministry of Education (2009) career education should concern itself with the development of 'career management competencies which will assist [individual students] to manage their lives' (p.6). This issue has particular salience for my own research where I am exploring *which* theory (or theories) influence policy and inform practice, and how government objectives shape the focus. I am also interested in learning how *career educators* decide what should be included/excluded, and whether (or how) it prepares young people for a critical engagement *with* life.

Locating social justice in career education

As mentioned earlier, there has been little research concerning how social justice is understood within career education, or where social justice concerns 'fit'. The term social justice is often loosely applied, lacking clarity and definition (Sandretto, 2004), thus leaving it open to multiple interpretations. Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) note, 'like 'equality of opportunity' or 'choice', 'social justice' is one of those politically malleable and essentially contested phrases which can mean all things to all people' (p.549). Where issues of 'social justice' have emerged within the career education literature in New Zealand these have tended to focus on 'equality of access', the need for individuals to overcome personal 'deficits', challenges to gender stereotyping and issues *for* Maori and Pacific Island students (see Ministry of Education, 2009; Vaughan and Gardiner, 2007).

Thus, at the heart of my study, I am interested in knowing how social justice is understood within career education in New Zealand secondary schools. How are social justice concerns positioned within policy, are issues of social justice located (and addressed) within practice, and are there contradictions, resistances and silences?

Methodology and method

The chosen methodology and method has been guided by an interpretivist paradigm which is concerned with the nature of knowing and an understanding of how 'reality' is socially constructed, negotiated and conceptualised. Interpretivism is embedded within qualitative research and sees social reality as a web of 'complex and interwoven variables' (Davidson and Tolich, 1999:28), through which human beings make sense of their lives as they interact 'within' their world(s). A further feature relates to the view that certainty, 'truth', and naturally occurring 'facts' should be regarded as partial and unstable referents. Finally, interpretivism identifies language, through discourse, as playing a central role in the shaping and informing of individual and social worldviews.

Reflecting the socially constructed nature of qualitative inquiry, Patton (2002) poses the following key questions: 'How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, 'truths', explanations, beliefs and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and those with whom they interact?' (p. 132). With reference to my study these questions provide a useful focus as I explore: how the 'real world' is constructed in policy documents and by career educators themselves; what has influenced career educators' understanding of social justice *and* career education; finally, how this understanding has shaped their behaviours and social practices in relation to what is considered to be 'valued knowledge', particularly with regards to career preparation and the place of social justice.

I have adopted a qualitative approach as this is an interactive form of inquiry, locating the researcher within the world(s) of the researched. It operates at the contested borders between reality and representation, engaging with complex and contradictory values, knowledge(s), truth claims and experiences (Davidson and Tolich, 1999). As a method it will enable me to gain an insight into the multilayered lives of participants through direct interaction with them, thus facilitating the gathering of rich data.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to make sense of the data as it is politically and socially informed. CDA focuses on the ways in which language is implicated in the construction of meaning(s), and (re)presents multiple, and at times contradictory, discourses. Drawing from a poststructural perspective, CDA rejects the notion of the fixed or unified subject, with the researchers gaze focused on an examination of way(s) in which discourses are utilised to present 'common sense' truths and (partial) representations of how things are, thus providing opportunities to consider how things might be (Luke, 1995-96). My analysis therefore is not simply concerned with indentifying 'obvious' discourses, but also those that

may lie beneath the surface. CDA provides a critical lens through which textual material can be analysed in relation to what is said, how language is employed, and what is omitted. It will contribute to an uncovering and examination of the beliefs, values and social practices that inhabit career education, and contribute to a more complex understanding of how social justice is understood within this curriculum area.

Work in the field

Having gained ethical approval from the University my fieldwork begins with an analysis of the career education policy produced by the Ministry of Education (2009). This will provide an insight into current official thinking concerning the concept of career, the role of career education, and how social justice issues are positioned and understood. I also intend to analyse the policies of the Careers And Transition Educators Association (Aotearoa) (CATE) and the Career Development Association of New Zealand (CDANZ), the professional bodies that encompass career educators.

Moving on to the school-based aspect, I am currently in the process of sending a letter and information sheet about the study to a number of principals asking whether they would be interested in allowing their school's career educator to participate in the study. Those who agree will be asked to provide copies of their school's policies and programmes that relate to career education and social justice for analysis. The data from this will provide a broader context for the study by contributing to a collective overview of how the participant schools position social justice in general, and in their career education policies and programmes more specifically. It will also provide an insight into the focus of the localised school-based policies and programmes. Using semi-structured questions, I plan to interview approximately 18 career educators in secondary schools, in both urban and rural areas, who are responsible for the development and delivery of career education. Here I will explore with the participants how they understand concepts of career, career education, and social justice, and how they relate this understanding to their policies and practices. Once the initial findings emerge, I will circulate these to all of my participants and ask for their comments and observations which will be used to inform the final version.

As a means of making theory useful and practice informed (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1988), I am planning to develop a critically informed social justice framework for use in New Zealand secondary schools. This framework will explore 'critical' social justice concerns in relation to how social, economic and political discourses position and shape concepts of 'self', 'work', 'career', 'opportunity', and 'justice'. Working collaboratively with research participants who wish to engage at this deeper level, and with representatives from career organisations (such as Careers Services, CATE and CDANZ), the primary goal of the framework will be to provide career educators with a

resource that enables them to reflexively engage with the social justice issues and concerns that are identified, and to consider these within the context of their own localised situations. In support of the framework I envisage the development of a strategy, supported by curriculum ideas, and examples of 'good practice' (where possible), that identifies ways in which a critical understanding of social justice might be incorporated into career education (and cross-curricular) practice. The aim is not to produce a prescribed learning package, but present ideas and possibilities, underpinned by precepts of social justice that are critically informed, and might be applied in localised settings. I anticipate that the framework will also provide a foundation for the future development of curriculum materials and resources (subject to funding) that will support career educators who wish to incorporate 'critical' social justice approaches within their career education practice(s).

Conclusion: connecting career education with social justice

As a critical researcher for social justice in education (see Griffiths, 1998) I have endeavoured to ensure that the principles of justice, fairness, recognition and inclusion are evident throughout all aspects of my research design. More specifically I have incorporated a collaborative approach that opens up opportunities for participants to contribute to the (re)co-construction of knowledge. Finally, I plan to construct my findings, and develop the proposed framework, as part of a multivocal and dialogical process in which the voices of participants are heard.

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Becoming a 'Professional': researching the development of career practitioners' professional identity in a New Zealand context

Fiona Douglas

Introduction

This paper outlines my current PhD research which examines how career practitioners' professional identity construction is affected by their environment. The research takes a post-structural approach, focusing on the issue from the perspective of the 'subjects' or careers practitioners, rather than the structural, 'top-down' requirements of policy-makers and other agencies. The paper introduces the research, identifies the research problem, gives a brief insight into the literature, sets out the aims and methodology, and identifies the potential contribution to understanding the effect of the environment on career practitioners' professional identity. Once my PhD is completed, I hope the outcomes of the research will contribute to understanding how practitioners construct their identity in relation to the discourse of professionalisation.

Successive Labour and National governments in Aotearoa New Zealand have pursued economic and social policies that embed the ideology of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is achieved through promoting market supremacy and the agency of the individual and the family (Clarke and Newman, 1997), replacing collective welfare systems with 'user-pays' models (Benington and Stoker, 1989). This 'neo-liberalism' emphasises 'career information and guidance as a source that can help us get more from the population.' (Personal interview with a senior manager, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2001) and uses tendering and contracting processes to produce 'quasi-markets.' The supply of career advice, guidance and counselling is fragmented; delivered by a range of organisations that include an increasing number of small businesses who tender for government contracts.

Professionalisation of career practitioners in New Zealand remains problematic (Furbish and Ker, 2002), despite the founding of the Career Development Association of New Zealand (CDANZ) and some tertiary courses in career practice. Practitioners have diverse backgrounds and qualifications and although many are well qualified generally, the availability of specific qualifications in career practice is limited. Although contracts with government departments require practitioners to be members of CDANZ, there is no pre-requisite for practitioners to be qualified and no agreement of competencies from which to assess practitioners (ibid). These structural preoccupations although essential, are well researched, but do not address practitioners' experience of the professionalising process. This gap becomes the area in which my research is located.

The research problem

Two aspects coalesce to form the foundation of my research. The first is well expressed in the most pertinent question posed by Hughes (1963) 'what are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people.' (p.666). To understand this necessitates studying the practitioners' desire to professionalise rather than the structures of professional associations or qualifications. Secondly, I draw on Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) who believe that 'the concept of identity is the key to understanding modern organizations' (p.78). These two aspects combine to provide the foundation for a fresh approach to understand how practitioners construct themselves as 'professional' subjects. The research problem focuses on the relationship between career practitioners' work environment and the development of their professional identity.

Aims

My research aims to understand how career practitioners think about and describe their professional identity, to understand the influence of the external and internal environment on its formation and to examine whether a core identity is discernable and what characteristics may be seen to serve practitioners in their professionalisation best.

An overview of the literature

I draw on two broad bodies of literature to inform this research: the literature relating to the professions and the literature relating to identity. A brief synopsis follows.

The Professions

Weber (1924) emerges as an influential theorist on the professions, identifying the importance of legitimate, rational authority. Professions strive for rational power through the formation of exclusive groups, which bestow rewards upon members. These groups act to further their own interests to the exclusion of others and 'social closure' occurs as the group strives to convince others of their status and exclude those deemed unworthy. The groups seek greater economic, social and power rewards that differentiate them from each other and from non-professionals. Larson (1977) takes up the concept of social closure and identifies the 'professional project' as a deliberate act taken by occupational groups to professionalise. Durkheim (1957) emphasises the importance of altruism and professional ethics. Associated with this is the licence to practice and potential to be disciplined. Thus professions are defined by functions and traits, as identified by Moore:

> **The possession of an established body of systematic knowledge; a commitment to altruistic service to the client; the existence of an occupational association; membership of which is the licence to practice; a high level of educational achievement among practitioners and considerable autonomy at work.**
> (Moore, 1970:8)

Johnson, (1972) criticises such approaches from the perspectives of class and power, and Witz (1992) criticises them from a feminist perspective. Drawing out the Weberian concept of social closure, Witz (1992:36) emphasises the 'two key strategies' contained within it. These are exclusion and demarcation. I have already described briefly the benefits of exclusion to the professions. Demarcation is 'concerned with the creation and control of boundaries between occupations.' (p.46). For Witz, Johnson's critique of the privileging of social class and power fails to address the further disadvantages women face. She argues that while 'working men were directly embroiled in the struggle between capital and labour,' they were repressed by the class and privilege system and this 'was a struggle that was stacked against them' (p.37). Women, she argues, have an additional struggle, one against male oppression and repression.

These accounts focus on 'profession' as a status achieved through social closure, after having met the criteria of traits and functions. These structural and formulaic definitions remain highly influential despite the 'casual generalisation' of profession (Fournier, 1999:281) in which traditional constructs are cast aside and all self-respecting trades personnel lay claim to being professional. Yet these accounts omit how subjects constitute themselves within their occupation. To address this, I examined the literature on identity which I now review briefly.

Identity

The literature on workplace identity reveals a range of representations. The most common is corporate identity (Rodrigues and Child, 2008), which is 'for what and for whom the company stands' (p.889). The corporation imbues job holders with its identity, they are expected to absorb and reflect this in their dress and behaviour. Consequently, this influences constructions of identity through compliance and/or resistance (Hodgson, 2005).

Organisations use collective identities to classify people by hierarchy and position, conferring titles, rewards, resources and sanctions accordingly (Jenkins, 2004). Collective identity also occurs through social class, occupation and trade union affiliation (e.g. Whyte, 1956; Tunstall, 1962; Braverman, 1974). However, the neo-liberal emphasis on individualism challenges traditional occupational collectives, encouraging people to construct an individual identity according to the sense they make of their situation, environment and assessment of the future (Giddens, 1991).

Dramaturgical interpretations of identity (Goffman, 1984; Hochschild, 2003) understand the individual as playing a part according to their environment, changing their identity as the situation demands. Thus, its formation is transient and audience-dependent. Hochschild shows the lengths to which organisations resort to compel employees to enact the polished performance of identity their corporate vision requires. Goffman argues that the ensuing persona is internalised through 'deep acting,' and, as Hochschild shows, this corporate creation is highly dependent on the self, through self-talk and self-discipline. Dramaturgy provides an important insight on what people do to develop their occupational persona, but begs the question as to why organisations and institutions are so influential and why identity work is so important.

Theorising the literature and positioning the research

I have chosen to use a post-structural 'lens' to theorise the literature and position the research. Poststructuralism is not a theory per se, but a 'movement of thought' (Peters, 2001:2), that challenges the inevitable and cumulative forward motion of structuralism. It 'folds the limit back on the core of knowledge and on to our settled understanding of what is true or good.' (Williams, 2005:2) For me, this necessitates moving away from externally imposed constructs of what constitutes the 'professional' and towards comprehending how career practitioners understand and define themselves.

Foucault's work provides a way to understand and theorise these issues. Power, resistance and wider societal discourses within which the subject is positioned or located (Foucault, 2002) emerge as key themes. What does this mean? Discourses are the collection of regulatory writing, speaking and acting (commentaries) that influence 'how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the

conduct of others.' (Hall, 2001:72) These underpin how we define our knowledge, make sense of the world, what ideas are accepted or rejected, and how these regulate behaviour in society. The use of the term 'subject' instead of 'person,' 'self' or 'individual' is important. 'Subjects are produced through systematic relations of power' (Kondo, 1995:98) and the term 'connotes both agency and subjection/discipline' (ibid).

Rather than understanding profession and identity as deliberate acts of social closure or self-representation, a Foucauldian perspective examines discursive formations and subject positions. These affect and are affected by the relationships between power, knowledge, control and resistance (Foucault, 1979, 1997). The subject is malleable, produced 'through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations and has no existence and certainty ... from one subject position to another.'(Hall and du Gay, 1996:10). Discourses position the subjects and this causes identity formation to become plastic.

Initially, Foucault (1995) saw identity as inscribed on 'docile bodies' which were then reformulated as the organisation required. These disciplinary processes wipe out previous identities and a new one is re-fashioned by the disciplinary regimes. The whole system of discipline and punishment leads to 'normalisation' i.e. compliance to achieve an ideal in a process that simultaneously collectivises and individualises. Collective identity occurs by complying with the imposed norm, and individual identity through how well the individual enacts the norm. External expectations are internalised and worked on through the individual's own self-critical gaze. Organisational mechanisms such as appraisal therefore become both a performative act that confers or reinforces identity (e.g. how good or bad someone is at something) and convert real lives into writing (Foucault, 1995), creating a permanent record of a selected version of the person's identity.

Later, Foucault (1997) shifted his gaze from genealogy to care of the self, with the self central to identity formation. From this thesis, identity requires a high degree of self-work, crafting, self-examination and understanding. Not only must one 'become the doctor of oneself' (1997:235) but also conduct oneself ethically towards others, (Rabinow and Rose, 1994) 'listening to the lessons of the master' and finding 'someone who will be truthful to you' (Rabinow and Rose, 1994:30).

Career practitioners' professional identity evolves and changes according to the discourses within which their subject position is located. For career practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand, the neo-liberal discourse strives to reconcile individual freedom with the need to control, frequently at a distance, aided by contracting arrangements with government departments. Further discourses are constituted through government policies

and required practices, continuous professional training and development, requirements of the professional association and supervision. Career practitioner subjects are positioned in relation to these powerful 'discursive resources' (Fournier, 1999:281), collective identity is moulded by contracting arrangements with government departments, occupational titles, work content, and monitoring and review mechanisms. These enable 'control at a distance through the construction of appropriate work identities and conducts' (ibid). Reflexive practices become the chosen mechanism of career practitioner self-care, and supervision provides a forum for confession (Rabinow and Rose, 1994) which reinforces modes of behaviour through pastoral power (ibid). This practice governs the conduct of conduct (Gordon, 1991) and 'concerns the different ways in which humans have been urged and incited to become ethical beings' (Rose, 1999: 244-245); which ultimately affects formation, maintenance and adaptation of professional identity between the subject, the subject position and the discourses within which the subject operates.

Methodology and method

Moving on, in the research I use a phenomenological (interpretive) paradigm which views the world as socially constructed and subjective, recognising that the observer is part of the process. 'Phenomenology emphasises that things and events have no meaning in themselves. They only mean whatever human beings take then to mean' (Jones, 1993:98).

I have chosen discourse analysis (DA) as the method. This choice aligns the methodology, method and the Foucauldian theoretical framework. DA embodies a critical element which challenges 'naturalised' assumptions, recognising that 'particular actions serve(s) particular interests' (Cameron, 2001:123).

Primary data comprises in-depth interviews with thirty-five participants. These include career practitioners and managers from career-related occupations across New Zealand and those involved in professional accreditation processes. Potter and Wetherell (1987) advise against large sample numbers because the focus is on discursive forms, 'it is *not* the case that a larger sample necessarily indicates a more painstaking or worthwhile piece of research.' (p.16). Instead, large samples lead the researcher to get 'bogged down … without adding anything to the analysis.' (ibid). Primary data comprises detailed, semi-structured interviews and secondary data consists of organisational and policy information. Close reading of the data identifies 'interpretative repertoires' (Wetherell, 2001:269), revealing 'consistent and bounded discursive themes' (ibid). These show how the subjects construct their identity in relation to different discourses. Models of identity become discernable, constituted by the participants in relation to their subject position (Davies and Harre, 1990).

Conclusions and potential contribution to knowledge

Career practice in New Zealand is a small but growing and increasingly diverse occupation. Formal attempts to establish a profession have met with limited success and have concentrated largely on structural aspects. Using a Foucauldian theoretical framework and discourse analysis as a method, I consider how the practitioners construct their identity as occupational and professional subjects. This research will contribute to the theorising of the career practitioner subject from a Foucauldian lens.

Besides contributing to the theoretical understanding of what constitutes the professional subject, my research findings may have a practical application for employing organisations and career practitioners. Employing organisations may find aspects that inform their recruitment, retention and staff development, but also, practitioners may find an external gaze offers the opportunity to make sense of the relationships between environmental factors and development of their professional identity. Furthermore, the research has the potential to be generalisable to other nascent professional groups.

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Exploring the helping skills used by careers advisers: application of the Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Mode Category System

Douglas Govan

Introduction

This article reports on a study that explores the use of the Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Mode Category System as a framework for investigating and categorising the helping skills used by career advisers. Audio-recordings of 13 career guidance interviews undertaken by six careers advisers were transcribed and then coded using the HCVRMCS. At the time that data were collected career advisers participating in the study worked for Careers Scotland and used Careers Scotland's 'Approach to Guidance' (Allen and Paine, 2006) in their interviews with clients.

This study forms part of my PhD research in which I am exploring the efficacy of a guidance model that was adopted and adapted by Careers Scotland. My research interests are informed by evidence from national and international research that demonstrates the immediate and intermediate outcomes of career guidance, but which highlights the need for further studies of the career guidance process (Dagley and Shannon, 2004; Heppner & Heppner, 2003; Hughes *et al*., 2002; Magnusson and Lalande, 2005). In this respect there is much that we can learn from the extant counselling and psychotherapy research base (Heppner and Heppner, 2003) and I have drawn from this in the development of my research.

Research aims

The aim for the study reported here was to identify and categorise the helping skills being used by careers advisers who were working with the Careers Scotland Approach to Guidance (ATG) in their one-to-one interviews with clients. At the time that the data collection for my study was undertaken, I was working for Careers Scotland and my research was funded by the organisation. Since then the organisation has been re-positioned and is now part of Skills Development Scotland, a new national body and I now work as an independent consultant.

Careers Scotland adopted, and adapted, the strategic interviewing model developed by Nottingham Trent University (NTU) (ICG, 1997; Allen and Malkin, 2006). The NTU model emphasises a rational and objective approach to career decision-making. Central to the NTU model is the notion of applying a model of guidance that helps careers advisers and their clients to explore the process by which clients arrive at their career decisions and the appropriateness of any existing career plan. Careers advisers using this model are then applying a matching paradigm in which they diagnose client needs in relation to the client's approach to career planning.

In my research I am interested in what the active ingredients of ATG interviews are, and as part of this focus, seek to understand the careers adviser inputs; and the helping skills that they utilise in the career guidance process. The research is explorative and this study is one part of a wider interpretative, discovery-oriented and qualitative inquiry methodology. This article reports on the application of the Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Mode Category System (Hill, 2009) in my research.

The Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Mode Category System (HCVRMCS) is a pan-theoretical measure that 'operationalises' the helping skills used by counsellors. An early version of the system first appeared in 1978 as the Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Category System (Hill, 1978). Since then there have been a number of revisions of the system published (Hill, 1986; Hill *et al*, 1992). The latest iteration of the system is available on-line as a companion to (Hill, 2004) and was modified for the first edition of this text (Hill and O'Brien, 1999). The user guide and supporting resources for use of the HCVRMCS can be accessed on-line (Hill, 2009). In this revised version of the HCVRMCS there are 12 nominal and mutually exclusive verbal response modes: approval and reassurance, closed questions, open questions, restatement, reflection of feelings, challenge, interpretation, self-disclosure, immediacy, information, direct guidance and 'other'. In earlier versions two additional modes, minimal encourager and silence were included. As the HCVRMCS was being used in my study to support exploration and understanding of the guidance process, I applied all 14 response modes when coding the interviews. To my knowledge this is the first time that a study using the HCVRMCS to analyse career guidance interviews has been reported. Definitions of each category are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Hill Counsellor Verbal Response Modes Category System definitions[1]

1. Approval and Reassurance: Provides emotional support, reassurance, encouragement, reinforcement. It might indicate that the helper empathises with or understands the client. It might suggest that what the client is feeling is normal or to be expected. It might imply sympathy or attempt to alleviate anxiety by minimising the client's problems. It might imply approval of the client's behaviour.
2. Closed Questions: Requests limited or specific information or data, usually a one- or two-word answer, a 'yes' or 'no', or a confirmation. Closed questions can be used to gain information, to ask a client to repeat, or to ask if the helper's intervention was accurate.
3. Open Questions: Asks the client to clarify or to explore thoughts or feelings. The helper does not ask for specific information and does not purposely limit the nature of the client's response to a 'yes' or 'no' or a one- or two-word response, even though the client may respond that way. Note that open questions can be phrased as directives as long as the intent is to facilitate clarification or exploration.
4. Restatement: A *simple* repeating or rephrasing of the content or meaning of the client's statement(s) that typically contains fewer but similar words and usually is more concrete and clear than the client's statement. The restatement may be phrased either tentatively or as a direct statement. The restatement may be a paraphrase of either immediately preceding material or material from earlier in the session or treatment.
5. Reflection of Feelings: A *repeating* or rephrasing of the client's statements, including an explicit identification of the client's feelings. The feelings may have been stated by the client (in either exactly the same words or in similar words) or the helper may infer the feelings from the client's non-verbal behaviour, the context, or the content of the client's message. The reflection may be phrased either tentatively or as a statement.
6. Challenge: Points out *discrepancies*, contradictions, defences, or irrational beliefs of which the client is unaware, unable to deal with, or unwilling to change. Challenges can be said with either a tentative or confrontational tone.
7. Interpretation: Goes *beyond* what the client has overtly stated or recognised and gives a new meaning, reason, or explanation for behaviours, thoughts, or feelings so the client can see problems in a new way. Makes connections between seemingly isolated statements or events; points out themes or patterns in the client's behaviour or feelings; explicates defences, resistances, or transferences; gives a new framework to behaviours, thoughts, feelings, or problems.
8. Self-Disclosure: *Reveals* something personal about the helper's non-immediate experiences or feelings. These statements typically start with an 'I'. However, not all helper statements that start with an 'I' are self-disclosures (e.g., 'I can understand that' or 'I don't know that' are not self-disclosures). Self-disclosures can be of history and credentials, feelings, personal experiences, or strategies.
9. Immediacy: Discloses helper's immediate feelings about self in relation to the client, about the client, or about the therapeutic relationship.

10. Information: Supplies information in the form of data, facts, opinions, resources, or answers to questions.
    a. *Information about the Process of Helping*
    b. *Facts, Data, or Opinions*
    c. *Feedback about the Client*

11. Direct Guidance: Provides suggestions, directives, instructions, or advice about what the client should do to change (goes beyond directing the client to explore thoughts or feelings in session).
    a. *Process Advisement*
    b. *Directives*

12. Other: Includes helper statements that are unrelated to the client's problems, such as small talk, salutations, and comments about the weather or events.
13. Minimal encourager: This consists of a short phrase that indicates simple agreement, acknowledgement, or understanding. It encourages but does not request the client to continue talking; it does not imply approval or disapproval. It may be a repetition of key word(s) and does not include responses to questions (see information).
14. Silence: A pause of 5 seconds is considered the counsellor's pause if it occurs between a client's statement and a counsellor's statement or within the client's statement (except after a simple acceptance of the counsellor's statement, e.g., "yes," pause).

The HCVRMCS is primarily a descriptive method that helps to illuminate what naturally transpires during the interview and categorises and describes the helping skills being used by practitioners. It does not provide a measure of how well the verbal response modes are applied or the effectiveness of their use throughout an interview. Early research using the system established that the application of specific response modes is associated with counsellors' theoretical orientation and training (Hill, 1979).

Method

Six experienced and qualified careers advisers volunteered to participate in my research. All the advisers, five female and one male, have had a role to play in supporting the development of the ATG and have an on-going role in training other staff in the use of the model. This non-random purposive (Cohen *et al*, 2000) sampling of careers advisers helps to reduce the instances of data being collected from interviews that follow an approach other than the ATG. The participation of these advisers ensures greater treatment integrity, since they have an in-depth knowledge and experience of using the approach.

The participating careers advisers all had training with staff from Nottingham Trent University on the use of the strategic interviewing model that underpins the ATG. Careers advisers work together as a community of practice to facilitate the on-going development and embedding of the approach. Detailed guidelines and a staff handbook provide an ATG reflective practice toolkit for all careers advisers. The use of the ATG Staff Handbooks and the professional community of practice, help to ensure that the intended career guidance model is the one that is actually delivered.

Due to the practicalities of work in the field a true random sampling of clients was not feasible. Accordingly, I selected a process of 'purposive' 'convenience' (Cohen *et al*, 2000) sampling for this study. Participating clients are then those who agreed to have their interviews recorded and as such form a 'convenient' sample. Careers advisers operate a needs-based model of delivery and only those clients who require in-depth guidance would receive an ATG interview. Agreement on diagnosis of need is reached jointly between client and career adviser. The aim was to collect data from a mixed sample of post-school clients, where possible taking account of age, gender and ethnicity characteristics, and as a result the sampling process is also described as 'purposive'.

Data for this part of my research consist of 13 audio-recorded ATG interviews, which varied in length between 28 and 61 minutes. Clients were five male and eight female, aged from 16 to 55 years. Although there are recognised advantages to video recording such interviews, the practicalities of working in the field meant that audio recording was a necessary compromise. Discussion with careers advisers volunteering to participate in my study made it clear that video recording would be overly intrusive

and would be likely to have an adverse impact on the course of the ATG interview process. A small digital recorder is much less intrusive for careers advisers and their clients. Also, it would have been difficult to ensure set up of video equipment at times that clients would agree to participate. Each of the 13 recorded interviews was transcribed and transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy before the coding of texts was undertaken.

Coding

Analysing transcripts using the HCVRMCS is a two-step process. The first step involves dividing the text into response units, which are for the most part grammatical units. Detailed guidelines for this process are provided in Hill (2009). In this study I chose to use codes (13) minimal encourager, and (14) silence, and as a result not all response units are identified following the rules laid down in Hill (2009). The beginning and end of each unit is indicated in a transcript by a slash (/). In step two each identified response unit is then assigned a single code.

Andrew Paine, a colleague from Careers Scotland, joined me in the coding process and we formed the judging team for this study. It is preferable to work with a minimum of three judges, but in the end I was pleased to have one volunteer and to be able to progress my study applying a consensual research paradigm. Prior to coding the interviews I supervised 15 hours training and practice in the use of the HCVRMCS framework using the support materials provided with the on-line manual (Hill, 2009) and excerpts from two transcripts. A kappa statistic can be calculated to determine the agreement levels between judges assigning codes and an acceptable kappa should be above 0.60. On the training scripts our kappa score was 0.73.

To reduce any influence we might have had on each other, Andrew and I coded the transcripts independently and apart. The interviews were coded by hand directly onto the transcripts. Typically we would complete a transcript and then meet together to review the codes assigned to each speech unit. Any discrepancies were identified, discussed, and argued to consensus. I then entered the final agreed codes into the NVivo 8 software package for further analysis.

Results

In all, 4361 codes have been assigned across the 13 interview transcripts. The number of times each HCVRMCS category appears, and the percentage of total occurrences, is shown in Figure 2. Grouping the responses from six careers advisers and 13 interviews inevitably obscures individual differences in the data. However, in all cases the code that appears with the most frequency is (10b) 'Information – facts, data, or opinions'. The frequency of (10b) responses as a percentage of each adviser's total verbal response units within an interview ranged from 23% to 55.3%. In 8 of the 13 interviews more than a third of the speech units were coded as (10b).

Figure 2: HCVRMCS Summary of Coding

Code	HCVRMCS Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Approval & reassurance	140	3.2%
2	Closed questions	470	10.8%
3	Open questions	356	8.2%
4	Restatement	288	6.6%
5	Reflection of feelings	7	0.2%
6	Challenge	42	1.0%
7	Interpretation	68	1.6%
8	Self-disclosure	59	1.4%
9	Immediacy	35	0.8%
10(a)	Information - process	327	7.5%
10(b)	Information - fact, data, opinion	1461	33.5%
10(c)	Information - feedback on client	334	7.7%
11(a)	Direct guidance – process advisement	168	3.9%
11(b)	Direct guidance - directives	328	7.5%
12	Other	69	1.6%
13	Minimal encourager	202	4.6%
14	Silence	7	0.2%
		4361	

A summary of careers advisers' helping skills that emerge for each interview is provided in Figure 3 (see below). The helping skills identified from the data tell a story of a guidance process that is characterised by the use of 'information giving' and 'direct guidance' verbal response modes. So, whilst careers advisers do differ in their verbal behaviour across the 13 interviews, providing information clearly dominates as a helping skill. The picture emerging is of a directive guidance process that promotes a highly structured form of discourse.

Of course there is a degree of interpretation required when assigning codes. In this process judges have to make an interpretation of the intentions of the adviser when arriving at a decision on how to code each speech unit. Most of the discrepancies that emerged between judges in this study were around the coding of text that focused on the careers adviser 'teaching' or explaining the ATG decision-making method. After much discussion we agreed that for coding sections of the interviews that dealt with teaching the ATG method the code 'information – facts, data, or opinions' (10b) would be used; unless there was clear evidence of clients being invited to engage in an activity that supported their learning. If clients were being directed to undertake an activity during the interview then this would be coded (11a) – 'direct guidance process advisement'.

Figure 3: HCVRMCS Coding Frequency

HCVRMCS Codes	Careers Adviser ATG Interviews													TOTAL
	CA1 (1)	CA1 (2)	CA2 (1)	CA2 (2)	CA3 (1)	CA3 (2)	CA 4 (1)	CA5 (1)	CA5 (2)	CA5 (3)	CA6 (1)	CA6 (2)	CA6 (3)	
1 Approval & reassurance	8	10	17	10	13	11	18	11	4	14	7	9	8	140
2 Closed questions	79	43	38	22	28	40	29	23	25	42	30	46	25	470
3 Open questions	48	21	17	3	14	21	15	44	24	47	35	43	24	356
4 Restatement	36	15	22	7	28	31	32	33	13	20	14	23	14	288
5 Reflection of feelings	1	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
6 Challenge	1	2	2	2	0	6	2	4	2	6	4	10	1	42
7 Interpretation	8	5	1	0	6	7	11	12	0	4	6	5	3	68
8 Self-disclosure	3	3	4	2	4	4	1	4	5	7	11	5	6	59
9 Immediacy	0	0	4	0	4	2	7	1	1	3	3	9	1	35
10a Information - process	24	27	17	5	7	27	32	43	24	29	33	36	23	327
10b Information - fact, data, opinion	79	64	83	47	143	118	106	147	198	121	146	163	46	1461
10c Information - feedback on client	5	4	16	7	11	44	21	35	32	42	39	56	22	334
11a Direct guidance - process advisement	36	28	6	2	21	9	13	10	4	17	9	11	2	168
11b Direct guidance - directives	34	40	34	25	42	21	6	25	17	12	32	33	7	328
12 Other	2	10	18	10	1	0	3	2	3	4	1	10	5	69
13 Minimal encourager	26	43	21	24	19	13	16	9	5	3	3	7	13	202
14 Silence	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
														4361

Discussion

The underlying philosophy guiding the practice of careers advisers working with the Careers Scotland ATG model is a client-centred approach. It is a model in which the careers adviser focuses on the client's decision-making and career planning process, and evaluates this against an ideal rational approach to career decision-making. Clients are directed in interviews to consider an approach for making a well-informed and realistic decision. Interviews are directive in the sense that careers advisers invite clients to focus on a particular decision-making methodology. The focus of diagnosis and progress within an interview is on the career planning process and decision-making approach of clients.

So, what does the analysis of the data from this study tell us? What emerges from the data in this explorative study is a picture of the helping skills that careers advisers select, consciously or sub-consciously, in order to meet the strategic objectives of their ATG intervention with clients. It is recognised that at any given time the helping skills applied will vary depending on the needs of clients and the skills sets of careers advisers. The data suggests that in 'teaching' the preferred decision-making approach that is at the heart of the ATG, there is an emphasis on information giving. This was a feature of all the recorded interviews. This may not be provision of labour market information and information on options and opportunities that clients often expect to receive from their adviser. It is however a highly structured form of discourse in which information is being given to the client about a particular process of decision-making.

Discussion with careers advisers participating in the study reveals that after many years of practice they are not always conscious of the helping skills they draw on when working with their clients. It was surprising to some that more use had not been made of the more reflective and less structured verbal response modes. The data captured in this study has for some stimulated a deep reflection on practice that helps to bring to life the impact of theory on their work with clients. This is perhaps where the greatest value in the application of the HCVRMCS lies for career guidance, as a tool that supports meaningful structured reflection on professional practice.

This study indicates that the HCVRMCS is a valid and profitable tool to use to examine in detail the application of helping skills in a career guidance interview. As a tool to support structured reflection on practice, the HCVRMCS provides a methodology for uncovering a rich source of data that stimulates many questions about the guidance process. Caution should of course be applied to my interpretation of these results. This was a small, explorative study that focused on the application of an analytical framework to understanding the helping skills applied within the context of a distinct guidance model.

It would be interesting to compare the results of analysis using the HCVRMCS across different models of career guidance practice. I would be delighted to work with anyone interested in such a project.

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Defining Advanced Professional Practice in Telephone Guidance

Margaret Christopoulos, Sue Blyth, Oliver Burney, Jenny Hamilton, Alison Taylor and Hayley Warrington

Introduction

This paper is co-written by a team of five Quality Coaches from the Careers Advice Service (CAS) and a tutor from the University of Derby. Its purpose is to examine CAS processes and determine how these contribute to defining Advanced Professional Practice (APP) in telephone guidance. Quality coaches, together with CAS coordinators and managers, support the use of quality tools and approaches to recognise and enhance good practice in the CAS. This paper considers these.

The CAS was launched in 1998 (Watts and Dent, 2008), as learndirect advice, consequently rebranded CAS in 2008. It was managed, designed and developed until 2008 by Ufi/learndirect when the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) took over this remit. The CAS is delivered in two centres by BSS (Broadcasting Support Services) on behalf of the LSC. It provides an information, advice and guidance service for adults primarily in England and Northern Ireland. BSS is a not for profit organisation which provides public service contact points.

The guidance and advice service is delivered by Career Coaches, supported by Quality Coaches. In 2009, the CAS has 83 full time equivalent Careers Coaches, of whom eight are Quality Coaches. Coaches have a vocational qualification, NVQ4 in advice and guidance. In addition many have graduate and postgraduate qualifications. The five Quality Coaches co-authoring this paper have successfully undertaken a Postgraduate Certificate in Telephone Guidance from the University of Derby. Careers Coaches are responsible for delivering advice and guidance at a distance, including by email, offering CV support and telephone guidance.

Quality Coaches develop a consistent approach to practice by providing feedback based on direct and study based experience of guidance practice. They mentor inexperienced and experienced practitioners to develop the quality of the service, and provide the opportunity for continued professional development (CPD). They work with external organisations to promote the benefits of careers guidance, and raise CAS' professional profile in the wider guidance community.

This paper focuses on the telephone guidance service. The service received around one million telephone calls in 2006 (Watts and Dent, 2008) and Watts and Dent note that, 'guidance delivered by telephone is of good quality measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance' (p.464).

There is currently no formally agreed definition known to the authors of 'Advanced professional practice' (APP) in the guidance field. Coaches who have undertaken the postgraduate certificate consider specialist expertise, high skills and knowledge levels as essential features. Schon (1983), Hambly (2002) and others have considered the ingredients of APP, although Schon's work considered the topic in general, not in relation to career guidance. All Coaches have achieved advanced practitioner status with the Institute of Career Guidance which demonstrates their commitment to CPD. Membership requires that Coaches adhere to the ICG Code of Ethics (ICG, 2009). Reflecting upon ethical issues in using such techniques is considered paramount to ensure they operate within the ethical guidelines of the profession. One of the authors of this paper (Hayley Warrington) offers a working definition here, 'an advanced professional practitioner in telephone guidance is one who welcomes new ideas for practice, actively tries out new techniques taking a flexible approach and openly engages in self-reflection'.

APP is subjective - its boundaries unclear, arguably a debate rather than an approach; a landscape rather than a destination. CAS' sophisticated toolbox of APP defining systems contribute to the identification and promotion of excellent practice. This paper considers six of these quality processes and suggests ways in which they combine to define and develop the concept of APP in telephone guidance. This paper does not seek to describe and analyse the many facets of APP in telephone guidance, these will be considered in a future publication.

Three of the processes considered here take place formally in monthly call reflection sessions, these are reflective practice, mentoring and skills/cluster groups. The other three, the e-portfolio, the Quality Framework and levelling are considered separately in later sections.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice has been identified as key to the role of a professional (Schon, 1983). At the CAS, reflective practice is considered an integral part of the Careers Coach role and takes the form of monthly call reflection sessions, self-reflection and peer to peer reflection. Through these forums Coaches are provided with the space and support to reflect upon how their personal practice fits in with best practice, defined by the CAS through quality frameworks.

Reflection sessions are facilitated by Quality Coaches who provide space and time for the Careers Coach to reflect on their practice through listening to recorded calls together. A Careers Coach can also request time to engage in self-reflection, listening to examples of their, or their colleagues', practice independently. Regular peer to peer reflection sessions are organised so that Coaches also have the opportunity to receive peer feedback and share best practice. Reflective practice is a prominent feature of the Careers Coach role and is seen as an important part of their CPD as a guidance worker.

The process of reflection enables Coaches to reflect on many aspects of APP which include the skills involved, application of theory, the helping relationship and introducing new and emerging theories and practices like motivational interviewing. The medium of telephone guidance offers benefits to the reflective process as Coaches are able to listen to a recording of any call they take, stopping and starting the call as necessary to reflect upon elements of practice and this enriches the reflective process.

Mentoring

Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999, p.3) define mentoring as 'off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.' The sessions provide space for self-reflection and feedback from mentors on potential 'blind spots' (Egan, 2007) in relation to practice, often critical for development. Quality Coaches assess the call in relation to the CAS call Quality Framework, discussed below. In this way mentoring supports several elements of APP including: application of theory; ethical considerations; interview skills; the impact of practitioner thoughts, feelings or assumptions on practice; use of the voice and the quality of the helping relationship. The mentoring sessions can be seen to fulfil the three functions of supervision defined by Hawkins and Shohet (2007: 57) as: 'educative', in relation to supporting practitioner continuing professional development (CPD); 'supportive', through helping practitioners to manage their own feelings in relation to interactions with clients and 'managerial' in ensuring the standards of the organisation are met - in this case adherence to an agreed Quality Framework.

Mentoring can help to identify calls that are strong in certain areas such as building rapport or discussing decision-making. This in turn helps to shape and define APP as Careers Coaches can listen to examples of best practice in their individual development areas identified during mentoring sessions. Best practice calls are also used as examples for training new Coaches. Advanced practitioners can become peer mentors to new staff to discuss calls and share best practice. Telephone guidance supports mentoring uniquely in the ability to listen back to call recordings made in the least intrusive way available as there is no physical presence of an observer or visible recording equipment.

Skills/cluster groups

Quality Coaches design, facilitate and evaluate monthly cluster groups ensuring consistency across the service. The format used, encompassing different learning styles, may include research completed before the session, call listening and group work.

Cluster groups offer Coaches a safe, confidential environment to discuss, develop and review new and existing areas of expertise. Working as part of a team within tight time constraints can make it difficult to allow time to reflect and discuss practice with colleagues in everyday work. Cluster groups provide a forum to explore emerging issues in practice and discuss difficulties faced. They provide reassurance that the Coach is not alone through identifying solutions and sharing examples of best practice, inspiring colleagues to incorporate such insight into their work. Coaches can learn to challenge and are encouraged to try something new as part of the group; which can feel more supportive, avoiding the intensity of one to one sessions. Woods (2001: 30) described group supervision as 'an opportunity to support each other in a direct and purposeful way' and found it a useful method to develop understanding of theory and practice.

Cluster groups are a mechanism enabling those with less experience to tap into the knowledge of their more experienced colleagues, whilst shaking others from potential complacency of using tried and trusted methods. Topics addressed are in response to advisors' requests, or areas identified by Quality Coaches which may be to build on or challenge Coaches' knowledge base. New techniques and strategies are introduced to develop their toolkit, while providing a supportive environment to enhance skills and confidence in responding to the shifts in client and policy expectations.

Electronic portfolio

A multi-media environment that places large numbers of people in one setting facilitates the provision of formal development events for peer groups. However, in contrast to this, some advisers report feelings of isolation and remoteness from colleagues. There is an element of

constraint posed by the telephone system, and restricted mobility necessitated by this, together with unpredictability of call flow, makes informal exchange of views between advisers problematic.

An adviser e-portfolio has the potential to ameliorate these feelings. The immediacy of the medium allows advisers to utilise unpredictable downtime between calls and presents 'a potentially powerful tool for the development of reflective practice' (Bimrose et al., 2007: 305). It is used to record written reflections on practice, either privately or viewable by other advisers, and to capture and reflect on what is learnt from CPD activities, enabling sustained discussion with peers online. The e-portfolio supports APP by facilitating debate on ethical practice, emerging new theory and putting theory into practice. Approximately half of current topics on the forum are within these categories, the remainder being primarily the sharing or seeking of knowledge of careers or career planning and management.

It should be noted that the e-portfolio does not cater to everyone's tastes or learning style: approximately 40% of advisors do not contribute to discussion forums or maintain a publicly-visible diary. However, an internal survey in 2008 reported that advisers gained benefit from reading the reflections of others who used the e-portfolio, rather than recording their own. For those who choose to use it, the e-portfolio provides a channel for practitioners to share understanding of theoretical principles, something that Kidd et al. (1994) observed there was little opportunity for. It also provides a means of knowledge-sharing and development of own practice.

Quality assessment framework

A Quality Framework was developed by the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) for learndirect in 2008. The Framework has been integrated within the development of the CAS since 2008. The Framework is used in two ways, externally and internally. It is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the service on behalf of the LSC annually. It is also used regularly by CAS coordinators, managers, Quality Coaches and others within the CAS to support the delivery of services. The Framework is used as a basis for the CAS monitoring systems supported by Quality Coaches. Typically it is used within the CAS to analyse recorded calls, to give feedback to Careers Coaches and to develop training – these aim to establish a high level of APP.

The framework has nine quality dimensions, which cover the aspects of the whole advice and guidance intervention, from greeting, to the appropriate level of advice, guidance and information given by the Coach, to call closure. Within each dimension there are desired outcomes which relate to each: in all there are 24 desired outcomes for the assessment of quality in practice. Each desired outcome is supported by examples of good practice. There is a tiered grading scale which is used to assess the practice of Coaches, from outstanding, to good to inadequate. In the

external assessment of a large sample of telephone calls during 2008/2009 each dimension was considered against this four point scale. The framework that has been developed is a highly effective device to identify excellent practice in separate dimensions, as well as providing an indication of areas of relative weakness that can be addressed by training. However in a new and fast developing service criteria for judging service excellence may need revision over time. To date the Quality Framework has been used over a two year period.

Levelling in telephone guidance

The tools of levelling at CAS are the Quality Assessment Framework and an internal system of call scoring. Levelling is a process whereby Quality Coaches and coordinators reach a common understanding of performance levels within call scoring, thus supporting not only standardisation but also integration of theory into APP. As the service develops beyond the structural and technical, practitioners and others can debate the economics of APP at a distance and the value of coaches' in-situ decision making. Levelling relies on a group analysis of a recorded call. Quality Coaches and service coordinators negotiate expectations of performance in relation to the challenges that the caller's situation brings. 'Levellers' have different levels of knowledge, preferences and opinions about what is effective. The process is thus a diplomatic discussion of what a service values but also feels is practicable.

How can these parties agree on what is 'outstanding' or APP? The question is trickier than it may seem. Firstly, it is arbitrary. Where the bar is set is based on the economy of the resource, for example how much CPD coaches have, and the context of the client market, including how callers come to the service. Essentially, it is group goal setting in context. To be too aspirational can create a gravity towards the bottom of the scale, demoralising Coaches. It can be a real struggle of empathy for 'levellers' to imagine not knowing something and recognising the 'clunkiness' (Hambly, 2009) in a Coach's attempts to put theory into practice. Equally to be too realistic can stunt the growth of more ambitious approaches.

Reflective practice is a key counterpoint to issues of assessment. Coaches, informed by a wider range of theory, increasingly make decisions that cannot be heard. For example, Hodkinson (2008) highlights that matching a person to a career opportunity is a flawed assumption but is embedded in public consciousness. Coaches, in practice, face dilemmas of the kind: shall I challenge this assumption or is it reasonable for the caller to believe this at this time? The dilemmas of Coaches inevitably become the speculations of levelling sessions.

Conclusions

Telephone guidance is a new and valuable service to support career decision making. In a decade the CAS has been a leader in the development of this service, creating an internationally recognised service with advanced tools

and processes for identifying and developing high level skills of its practitioners. Its highly trained professional staff routinely use these tools and processes, primarily as a means to develop and encourage advanced practice, rather than 'shame' relative poor practice. However, products of assessment, like recorded calls, are not sufficient to determine APP. A dialogue between assessors, Quality Coaches, and Coaches is needed to establish the thinking behind in-situ decisions, this is particularly true of the use of intuition within practitioner and client interactions. It would appear that if APP is to flourish, tools of reflection and sensitive mentoring are essential. There is also a quantifiable cost of providing evaluative processes.

In conclusion, the understanding of APP in telephone guidance has greatly developed through the work of the CAS. The tools and processes described have provided clear benefits to activities which support CPD: they enrich the reflective process to further the development of the advanced practitioner's skills. These tools will continue to develop, advancing the concept of what APP is in the wider advancement and careers services.

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Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal   2010