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NICEC

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

NICEC STATEMENT

The Fellows of NICEC agreed the following statement in 2010.

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

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

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

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

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TITLE

The official title of the journal for citation purposes is *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* and the ISSN number is ISSN 2046-1348. It is widely and informally referred to as 'the NICEC journal'.

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

AIMS AND SCOPE

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

- Career development in the workplace: private and public sector, small, medium and large organisations, private practitioners.
- Career development in education: schools, colleges, universities, adult education, public career services.
- Career development in the community: third age, voluntary, charity, social organisations, independent contexts, public career services.

It is designed to be read by individuals who are involved in career development-related work in a wide range of settings including information, advice, counselling, guidance, advocacy, coaching, mentoring, psychotherapy, education, teaching, training, scholarship, research, consultancy, human resources, management or policy. The journal has a national and international readership.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

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Membership of NICEC is also open to any individual with an interest in career development (£100 per annum). Members receive the journal, free attendance at all NICEC events and access to publications and seminar materials via the NICEC website. Individuals from one organization can share their membership place at events.

For information on journal subscription or membership, please contact Wendy Hirsh: membership@nicec.org

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Digital technologies in career education and guidance

The theme of this issue is clear from the title: digital technologies in career education and guidance. From a number of perspectives, the issue provides an overview of the current use of digital technologies in the field. As individuals we engage with such technologies (and the plural - technologies - is the better word) to varying degrees in our personal lives, but in our professional roles we need to be informed of developments and their impact on career education and guidance practice. Many embrace the technological phenomenon, others may wish to keep it at a distance – the latter position is, increasingly, untenable. The internet now provides a significant context within which people explore and develop their career thinking and development. Examples of how digital technologies can shape that context are discussed in what follows.

The leading article is by **Tristram Hooley**. Tristram was asked to provide a summary of the current state of development: a Sisyphian task! However, beyond a mere description of the inter-relationship between the internet and career development, he discusses the 'conceptual architecture' that underpins the expansion of the internet and highlights the importance of digital career literacy. **Bill Law** then offers an evaluation of what works well in terms of online careers work, alongside a critique of the emerging issues. His conclusion demonstrates the need for what he terms 'grasp, reach and embodiment' - in effect a repositioning of careers work.

Tracey Innes is a senior practitioner working in the university sector. She writes about a project designed to consider how career learning theory can underpin the design and evaluation of ICT-based careers intervention. From her analysis, Tracey proposes a framework that can be used to both design and evaluate the effective use of such services. **Elle Dyson** works in a Youth Employability Service which has adopted a broad approach to working with young people; incorporating both online and offline services. Her article celebrates the success of using a blended approach; seen as vital for the engagement of young people and the future of careers work.

Next, **Anne Chant** discusses the changes in the way that career professionals access their own continuing professional development. She offers an evaluation of e-learning and blended learning experiences. Anne extends her argument to explore the parallels between the learning experiences of these adult learners and those of young people. Whilst highlighting the benefits, she also points to the limitations where these may reduce the engagement of learners - if there is a sole reliance on the use of digital technologies. **Debra Longridge and Tristram Hooley** also write about the effectiveness of blended learning, by analysing the experience of running a 'social media internship progamme' at their university – an intervention designed to develop students' digital career literacy. They suggest that while we often assume good ICT skills are evident, not all young people are able to identify how to apply these skills in the context of the development of their own careers.

The penultimate article by **Andrew Manson**, explores the role that online Labour Market Experience plays in challenging stereotypes in the construction of personal narrative for students in years seven and eight (ages 11-13). Andrew is a software developer who is concerned to broaden the focus of young people's views regarding their own potential, beyond the often narrow emphasis of the employability agenda. Through the use of case studies in the online video player 'Talking Jobs', he provides an interactive challenge to promote creative thinking and, potentially, social mobility. Finally, **David Dickinson and Leigh Henderson** discuss internet navigation and their thoughts regarding an application that can support sense-making in the career decision process. They explain 'intermediated facilitation by the careers adviser', as one of a series of professionals who can support the client's continuous 'Orientation, Navigation and Engagement' process.

There seems to be a general consensus within all the articles that engagement with digital technologies for careers work is not only inescapable, but also highly beneficial: alongside a clear recognition that a blended use with face-to-face work is essential. With the rapid growth of such technologies it is vital the field keeps up to date – this issue provides an interesting insight into current developments.

Hazel Reid, Co-editor

A developer's perspective on CEIAG

Andrew Manson

This article is an exploration of the role online Labour Market Experience (LME) plays in challenging stereotypes and the construction of personal narrative in YR 7 and 8 students at school. Classroom and small group debate provides an invaluable opportunity to develop career related thinking in young people ahead of more focused one to one guidance and refined skills exploration work.

Introduction

As a software developer with an anthropology background, but not a career person, I've come to understand careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) work in schools as helping young people learn how and where they might fit into the work place. Students are directed to see how their qualities, experiences and skills meet employer imperatives. This seems especially true of recent policy and language where emphasis on skills and employability is primarily about work readiness: young people's ability to help contribute towards growth as they enter the workforce. While these are vital economic goals, I'm concerned that this narrow focus is at the expense of the key role work-related learning has to play in helping address social inequality issues.

However, there is now an opportunity to reframe the role of CEIAG and to make sure social inequality is not overlooked. Much rests on the level of support and continuing professional development (CPD) offered to teachers and careers professionals alike, particularly in relation to the application of new technology, to help them understand and differentiate between different approaches to CEIAG.

Resources for blended learning

The digital age has changed things for good and on the whole for the better. However, early over-emphasis on measuring, tracking, and even personalisation gave rise to many over-engineered products that, unlike the Tardis, were quite frequently far smaller on the inside. In the careers space these resources were often cumbersome and over-structured, with rigid pathways to e-outcomes that learners did not recognise as a reflection of who they were, or what they could yet achieve. Meanwhile in the wider school environment there appears to be a shift in favour of learning through open-ended enquiry. Educators have developed better instincts for what they think will work in the classroom in a blended way, where what happens on screen is not an end in itself. This process has started to filter into application design, as open ended resources that allow greater experimentation are preferred. It's a view that's increasingly articulated by teachers (see any #ukedchat archive on twitter) who want blended tools that help set scenarios for classroom discussion rather than providing end-to-end experiences where neither student, nor teacher, can fail. In other words, teachers are beginning to reject 'fast food convenience products' in favour of blended quality tools, where the interactivity happens in the classroom between students and not just on screen. In this new reality the teacher has become more of a co-explorer in which small fails are an essential part of the learning process. However, a big question mark still hangs over the CEIAG space where this thinking has only just started to seep through.

What is Talking Jobs?

It is against this backdrop that I launched www.talkingjobs.net in 2007/8 to deliver short series of case studies as cross sections of UK society through an online video player. The player itself allows users to watch a case study from end to end, but perhaps more usefully, to hang on a question and traverse the materials instead, or randomly using the 'Mix it up' feature. This level of interactivity raises the engagement significantly, whilst also helping young people come to value the experiences of others they might not normally meet. It is a blended career learning tool, for teachers to help seed classroom discussion about work, stereotypes and society, and a guidance tool used as preparation for face to face sessions with careers and IAG people.

Each module uses a common set of 30 or so questions about people's working lives, their experience in education and their family backgrounds. The interviewees are nominated by colleagues and or employers to avoid self selection impacting on the tone of the materials. The approach to the editorial is very light touch with most of the work done in a collaborative way with the interviewee during the recordings. The interviews include discussion of their experiences in both negative and positive ways and include questions about family backgrounds, attitudes to education at home, as well as their experiences in the workplace. Seeing the whole person in this way was a core part of the undertaking as people's backgrounds underpin the life choices they make. I work closely with a documentarist who splits his time between making films and working in care homes. We limit the number of interviews we conduct in a day to help focus on consistency and quality in the materials. Also, quite importantly, impartiality is a core feature of the approach, with company, product and brand names avoided during the recordings. The interviews were shot to capture personal insights and experience, not as a direct sponsorship opportunity or for implicit brand messaging.

The central premise in Talking Jobs comes from treating all contributors' experience equally, with each response regarded as a useful fragment of labour market experience that can be approached from any direction. As such, reflections and insights from someone who left school at 16 are given equal weight to some with post graduate qualifications. To embed this in the learning, many of the lesson plans and activities ask young people to select clips across a variety of roles, and record their thoughts on what they have seen and how it relates to their own circumstance, and the impact on decision making. As such each module has to be viewed as a whole with case studies, video player and lesson plans used in concert to help move young people's thinking on. Through time, this premise was extended to include a 'Mix it up' button which shuffles the content so that the user does not know what response they will see next; as all opinions are useful provided there is a meaningful framework in which they can be discussed. As such, our CEIAG effort needs not just to encourage and develop young people to acquire skills, but also to ask questions across social boundaries. The tools they use need to not just offer accessible role models as inspiration, but must also help knowledge transfer between groups at the same time.

Triangulation

Recent discussion of the comparison effect is also worth mentioning. Young people are inclined to understand their own success through comparisons with those around them, in their everyday lives, offline, online or any other media. Failing by comparison is an effective way to switch young people off, threatening their ability to overcome confidence issues. We live in an increasingly image conscious age, where ideas around 'personal brand' and manufactured representations of self are both ubiquitous and sometimes even invasive. While developing a public persona through social media has become a central theme to many in careers higher education (HE) contexts, it needs careful consideration for school age children. While sites like Facebook do try to prevent the very young from setting up an account, this is routinely flouted by even primary school students, giving them access to very powerful communication tools which can leave them floundering if the

experience is at all negative. We need more informed classroom debate that lets young people understand their lives *in context* before these tools have too great a hold on their social and embryonic professional identities. This means schools developing more progressive social media policies while also helping young people develop the flexible mindsets they need to navigate the future, on line, off line or wherever. But it also means factoring into the CEIAG process a stage where very young people are encouraged to triangulate between other people's experiences, without immediately leaping towards comparisons between 'themselves' and 'other' in such a two dimensional way. This formative work, or triangulation between self and useful fragments of other peoples' experience, can then become a safe scaffold on which their own career narratives can start being constructed, yet without immediate risk to their own embryonic and perhaps fragile ambition.

You could do anything

During early piloting of the Talking Jobs resource back in 2007/8, I was working with a group of 16 Key Stage 4 students on a short set of twenty case studies in a school library with ICT equipment. Interestingly not all of the students had their own computer and some shared headphones. After 20 minutes exploring the materials, they came together in groups of four to share reflections on how what they had seen helped challenge stereotypes. At the close, they were asked, through a questionnaire, what had been the most significant thing they had learned about the world of work from the session. Four of the sixteen answers given were as follows:

- It doesn't matter what your family background is, you could do anything
- Even successful people have poor backgrounds
- Even if your parents aren't in a good job this doesn't mean you can't get a good job
- The jobs sound very different to the people that are actually in that career.

While this sample group was quite small and by no means a formal evaluation, it provided an early indication that the CEIAG work has a vital role to play in challenging received ideas that could prejudice future life choices. This small feedback exercise suggests that using resources like this, with an emphasis on traversing experience, can help challenge expectations and perceived limits, many of which are implicit and need to be unpacked.

In more recent platform testing with a larger group of 117 predominantly key stage 4 students, I asked the question: which approach do you think is more useful to you? Finding out about the jobs you like OR Finding out about a range of contrasting jobs. Unsurprisingly 72 per cent of respondents said 'Finding out about the jobs you like'. Reading between the lines I see a need for CEIAG work that quite deliberately prompts career exploration beyond personal interests in roles, as a core part of work-related learning. If followed up with a group discussion on findings, ideas and assumptions can then be challenged and also cascaded in both a blended and economic way, as essential precursor to the impartial guidance work that schools are obliged to provide.

Engine room of social mobility

At the 2010 Belfast ICG conference (4 Nov 2010) the UK Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, said:

> So what I want to say to you today is not just about careers guidance but about what good guidance can achieve. Careers guidance makes a difference. It's in the engine room of social mobility; a vital part of the machinery of social justice. Good advice doesn't just transform lives. It transforms our society by challenging the pre-conceived ideas about what each of us seeks. And what all of us can achieve.

However, set against this noble ambition, much of the debate on the conference floor, and in the run up to this speech, rested on the tension between practitioners seeing electronic tools as a direct threat to guidance, while workshop leaders and

speakers urged the community to resist polarising the conversation into a 'technology bad, people good' debate. Since that conference most of the UK Connexions Services have been dismantled and many of those working in schools and HE are now either out of (careers) work or self-employed, perhaps for the first time. Against this backdrop, the problem of efficacy persists, the way forward increasingly unclear, and the careers landscape increasingly fragmented.

How these technology tools get used is now even more central to the shape, value and survival of careers work in schools. For me this issue rests on whether the tools are used for self-directed online activities, with little input from teacher or careers people, or within a blended framework that deliberately sets out to challenge young people's assumptions about the workplace - before any matching exercises get underway.

The former scenario with self-directed learning and very little input is by far the easier to roll out, playing to what technologies are really good at; matching, searching and retrieving information, document management, creating portfolios, communications and of course tracking. But, these outcomes simply represent a migration to electronic from other media; in effect making more efficient processes that should happen irrespective of the technology. While this is all to the good, and may be more than enough for some students, it is likely to do very little to address the profound social inequality issues that exist and I'm not convinced this is the transformation the Minister was really getting at. Young people need support in widening their ideas about career and success and how this might differ between people, and this widening should sit in-front of any form of skills assessment. We can all acquire new skills, and even strive for desirable personal attributes, provided the motivation and support is there to help us do it.

'I want to do what she does'

A recent experience I had in a school beta testing the 'Talking Jobs' platform with 170 year 8 students in a series of back to back sessions with 25-30 students each at their own computer, illustrates these points more fully. The groups were all mixed ability and the event part of a wider careers day being put on by the school. Once a group had been given an exploratory task to complete, I started walking round the room talking to students singly or in pairs. During my walkabout, one year eight boy, who'd been quite cheeky on his way in, was now completely locked into one of the case studies. When I asked him how he was getting on, he turned to me, pointed at the screen and said; 'I want to do what she does'. The case study he was watching was a woman with spina bifida who had become an administrative assistant for a charity performing entry level clerical tasks. As with all of the Talking Jobs case studies, she talks about family, life at school and her childhood ambition to become a journalist, something she now felt unlikely to achieve. For me, what this young man had taken to heart was a respect for her tenacity and resilience, more than any specific skills she demonstrated in her current role. It was an exploration of her values that switched him on, providing teacher and or careers adviser with a hook for further conversation about career.

However, excessive pressure on teachers and teachers' time has created the quick fix scenario where these tools become a convenient way of meeting the curriculum requirements - no questions asked. Overall it feels like the CEIAG process needs to start from another point, with skills testing coming into the equation later on and handled by guidance professionals qualified to explore the results they offer. As such, the CEIAG tools we use need to take more account of the fact that we can all learn from everyone; that a butcher's life choices can influence a future barrister, and vice versa.

Teachers and careers professionals need resources which help students generate a broad and deep insight into people's working lives and experience irrespective of role or social background, and this needs to be delivered in a blended way. The 'see a vet be a vet' model is 'ok' but does very little to challenge assumptions and stereotypes and ends up maintaining the status quo, and the same types of children will get the same types of jobs as they have always done. Our young people will ultimately create the growth we need, but it will be all the more effective for us all, if

they are allowed to define success on their own terms through exposure to ideas about career from across all backgrounds.

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