

Careers Education and Guidance Must Become Much More Sophisticated

Anthony Barnes, Editor

In June this year, David Hargreaves, Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, spoke to headteachers in Buckinghamshire about the 14-19 reforms. In response to a question about work-related learning, he answered that 'careers education and guidance needs to become much more sophisticated in the curriculum'. Not much more important, but much more sophisticated. In their different ways, all of the contributors to this issue of the journal are arguing the same case.

Careers practitioners, for example, need to become much more sophisticated in the way that they market and promote their services to the intended beneficiaries of those services: young people themselves, their parents and employers. Sue Maguire discusses employers' lack of awareness of the traditional placement role of careers services in Leicester and Sunderland. This problem may actually be more widespread. The erosion of this placement function may be linked to wider government policies to boost participation in education beyond age 16; but it also suggests that the new Connexions partnerships in England may need to launch a major publicity campaign to make employers more aware of how Connexions can help them with their recruitment and selection of young people.

Susan Askew points out that there is a lack of information about what works in challenging gender inequalities in all aspects of young people's lives and in meeting the specific needs of young women and young men. She argues that effective careers education depends upon having an understanding of the different worlds inhabited by young people and the impact of family, religion, culture and community. The acid test of careers education and guidance is 'Does it make a difference to young people's lives?' Careers education and guidance needs to become much more sophisticated in its support for equality of opportunity and respect for diversity.

In *Portraits of Black Achievement: composing successful careers*, Jacqui MacDonald argues not only for more progressive curriculum reforms but also for more comprehensive careers education and guidance programmes for young people.

Terry Dray continues this theme of strengthening careers programmes for young people in his article about initiatives in higher education to improve employment opportunities for black and Asian graduates.

Jane Hemsley-Brown and Nick Foskett expose the limitations of the simplistic model of rational decision-making which still dominates school careers programmes. This model seriously underestimates the influence of class, gender, ethnicity and lifestyle on young people's career choices. Teachers need to be much more aware of the impact of the ethos and value system of the school, of their knowledge (and lack of knowledge) and of institutional pressures on the choice process. The four C's model of choice and decision-making provides real insights into how young people make and justify their career choices and points to the enhanced role which more sophisticated careers education and guidance strategies could have in improving young people's choices and decisions.

The naïve linkage of school subjects to careers can also lead to poor decision-making. Ken Adey and Mary Biddulph write about the need for history and geography teachers to make a more convincing case about the career relevance of studying these subjects post-14. Surely, this is another area where careers teachers could make a more sophisticated contribution?

Michael Arthur, who is interviewed in this issue of the journal, argues that people need to think of themselves as resources in a larger sense, to the occupations, industries, and economies in which their careers are invested rather than as resources to a single organisation. There is a striking parallel to be made here with careers practitioners. How many just identify themselves with the organisation in which they are working rather than with their 'professional field'. Arguably, it is this weakly-developed sense of professional identity which is one of the factors holding back improvement in careers education and guidance at secondary level.

Finally, Bill Law in 'Points of Departure' criticises the 'one version suits all' model of careers education and guidance - the equivalent of the global cheeseburger. In arguing for local solutions to local problems, Bill too is making the case that careers work needs to become much more sophisticated.

The 'structure of opportunities' available to young people varied, depending on the route taken into the labour market. Modern Apprenticeships offered higher levels of training and qualifications, access to higher occupational levels, guaranteed employed status to the young person throughout the training period and more opportunities for career progression at the end of the training programme. In addition, these opportunities were exclusively open to young people.

In contrast, the opportunities available under the National Traineeship programme, while guaranteeing training and qualifications to NVQ 2 or equivalent, gave young people access to a more restricted range of occupations. Since young people were not guaranteed employed status under the terms and conditions of the scheme, the opportunities for progression and career development within the company at the end of the training period were more tenuous. A number of young people, particularly in Sunderland, were participating in National Traineeships without employed status.

While the range of job opportunities available to young people who entered the labour market through direct employment was wider than that available with the support of government training, the level of training offered was generally much lower and the opportunity for qualification attainment and career progression much more limited. In addition, young people found themselves in competition with other groups of workers for entry into employment through this route and this segment of the labour market was not exclusively available to young people.

Employers were asked to state into which types of full-time jobs they recruited young people – other than for government supported training programmes. While the overall number recruited on an annual basis was small in most firms (typically two or three young people), the range of jobs available in all industrial sectors was contained within a limited group of occupational areas - clerical and customer service work, sales and warehouse work, catering and nursing assistant roles, garment machining and cleaning.

A much smaller number of young people were employed as 'trainees' in sectors such as accountancy, surveying and medical services, where qualification levels for entry into the job were higher. Recruitment to these jobs was restricted to school leavers. There was no evidence among the sample of firms in Leicester and Sunderland that increases in the number of part-time jobs had come about through a massive reduction in the number of job opportunities open to young people. On the contrary, a small number of firms had moved towards part-time working because they were finding it increasingly difficult to recruit school leavers, due to increasing levels of participation in post-compulsory education.

Finally, while the highest levels of training and development were available to young people under the Modern Apprenticeship programme, employers found it most difficult to recruit young people for these vacancies. For Modern Apprenticeships, employers were demanding higher levels of entry qualifications in comparison to those demanded for National Traineeships and for jobs available through direct employment. Also, most employers would only consider 16-year old school leavers. Thus, they found themselves in direct competition with schools and colleges which sought to retain young people in post-compulsory education rather than to encourage entry into the labour market through the work based training route.

Differences emerged between the two labour markets in relation to employers' abilities to attract young people into the job opportunities that were available. Staff recruitment problems for all groups of workers were far more acute among firms in Leicester. High levels of unemployment in Sunderland enabled firms in the area to experience few recruitment difficulties, and those firms which had experienced or anticipated a growth in their business activity recognised the need to recruit and train young people to meet future skill needs. However, in Leicester, a number of firms reported that their plans had been thwarted, because of an inability to recruit young people with qualifications (four or more GCSEs) due to increasing levels of participation among young people in full-time post-16 education.

Methods of recruiting young people

Table 1 outlines the methods used by employers to recruit young people. In the two areas, a similar pattern emerged in relation to recruitment into manual and non-manual occupations. Those companies which recruited young people did so to a much greater extent into non-manual as opposed to manual occupations. This is demonstrated by the increased response rates to the methods used to recruit into non-manual as opposed to manual occupations (see Table 1). In Sunderland, three methods of recruiting young people were mentioned more often than any others for both manual and non-manual occupations – the Job Centre, the local press and personal recommendation. While a similar pattern emerged among employers in Leicester for recruitment into manual occupations, some differences emerged between the two labour markets in terms of employers' recruitment patterns into non-manual occupations. Employers in Leicester relied far more heavily on local press advertising and much less on government agencies such as the Job Centre. In Sunderland, employers utilised the Job Centre as a recruitment mechanism for both young people and all groups of workers to a much greater extent. This may be attributed to the local employment situation in Sunderland, with the Job Centre being perceived by employers as being able to submit a ready supply of labour, while at the same time avoiding the expense of dealing with large numbers of applications which could be expected from local press advertisements.

Companies which recruited young people into full-time work through the promotion of existing staff did so through one of two ways. Some employers recruited young people into government supported training provision and encouraged them to apply for vacancies that were advertised within the organisation in the first instance. In Sunderland, public sector employers in particular viewed this procedure as a way of nurturing and developing the talents of young people, while at the same time helping the organisation to replenish the skills of an increasingly ageing work force.

'We realised that as an organisation, we were not recruiting young people, so we have used Modern Apprenticeships as a way of reversing this trend ... Every post is advertised internally first as part of our staff development strategy and 50 per cent are filled by our Modern Apprentices.'

(Public Sector Employer, Sunderland)

Employers in the retail and consumer services sectors (hotel and catering in particular) recruited some young people who worked in part-time jobs within the organisation and then moved into full-time positions when they left school or college. Thus, a proportion of young people moved into full-time work within the organisation as a result of either finishing or dropping out of school or college. In Sunderland, some young people had a number of part-time jobs in order to 'make up' a full-time job and moved into a full-time position with one employer when a vacancy became available.

'Young people make up a full-time position out of part-time hours, that is 39 hours each week. They combine working here with, say, working in a pub ... It is becoming more common.'

(DIY Store, Sunderland)

Table 2 Employers' Methods of Recruiting Young People for Government Supported Training Provision

Recruitment method	Leicester	Sunderland
Job Centre	0	2
Private employment agency	0	0
National press	1	0
Local press	3	1
Notice board	0	1
Recommendation	1	3
Direct application	2	2
Internal advert	1	2
Careers Service	4	4
Trade union	0	0
Internal promotion	0	1
Back files of previous applicants	0	1
Training provider	2	6
Other	0	1
Total number of firms who recruited into government supported training provision: Leicester 17 Sunderland 12		

In both areas, employers predominantly used training providers or the Careers Service to recruit for government supported training provision. Employers in Sunderland also relied upon personal recommendation to fill vacancies on government supported training programmes (Table 2). In Leicester, where employers reported some difficulty in finding suitable young people to complete Modern Apprenticeships, a number of employers advertised in the local press in an attempt to widen the net for potential applicants.

In addition, employers in the sample were asked to state which method they used most in order to recruit young people for full-time employment, government supported training provision and part-time employment. No significant variations could be identified within the analysis between industrial sectors, although some distinctions between the two labour markets were evident. The preferred recruitment method for young people for full-time employment among employers in Leicester was the local press. In Sunderland, employers reported that the Job Centre was the most frequently used method to recruit young people to employer-led vacancies. While the use of the local press to recruit young people in Leicester is consistent with the findings of the earlier study, the picture in Sunderland has changed. Ashton *et al.* reported a high usage by employers of the Careers Service to fill vacancies. This was linked to the widespread use of government supported training and to the high level of unemployment in the area, with the Careers Service being used by employers as a screening mechanism to avoid having to cope with vast numbers of job applications in response to advertised vacancies.

However, while both the use of government supported training remains widespread and levels of unemployment remain high in Sunderland, employers in the sample did not make widespread use of the Careers Service to fill employer-led vacancies.

Employers in both locations stated that local training providers recruited most young people for government supported training provision. In Leicester, companies relied heavily on young people writing directly to the firm to fill part-time vacancies, while in Sunderland, the Job Centre was regarded as the most effective method for the recruitment of part-time staff. Part-time vacancies for young people in both areas were concentrated in the retail and hotel and catering sectors.

Summary

In the recruitment of young people, while the Careers Service was regularly used by employers to fill vacancies on government supported programmes, very few respondents used the Careers Service as a source of recruitment for full-time jobs. This is significant, given that the majority of respondents recruited young people into jobs, as opposed to government supported training.

The Job Centre, the local press and personal recommendation were the three recruitment methods most frequently reported by employers, which may suggest that the majority of respondents in the sample were either unaware of, or unwilling to use the Careers Service as a source of recruitment to full-time jobs for young people.

This could be linked to the changing role of Careers Services in recent years, whereby increasing emphasis has been placed on careers advisers working with young people in schools. In addition, this suggests that, while Job Centres have continued to market their placement function, employers may no longer be aware that local Careers/Connexions Services can offer a similar service in relation to young people. Indeed this trend may have been exacerbated by the requirement placed on Careers Services to 're-focus' their priorities on those young people at risk of exclusion from participation in education, training or employment.

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Gender Stereotyping and Career Expectations

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This research investigates the efforts of schools and others to counter gender stereotyping in relation to career aspirations and identifies issues involved for careers education programmes in secondary schools.

Men and women in the labour market

More than twenty years after equal opportunities legislation was implemented in the UK, the position of men and women in the labour market shows resistance to significant, positive change (EOCa, 1999). Young women have made gains in education, especially pre-16, but there is little evidence that these have been translated into changes when they join the workforce. Jobs are still segregated along gendered lines.

European legislation now requires that in principle all jobs in whatever sphere, should be equally open to women and men, and women and men undertaking those jobs should not be discriminated against in terms of pay or conditions of service. However in the workplace:

- 96% of engineering apprentices are male
- 89% of health and social care apprenticeships are female
- 79 % of computer analysts and programmers are men
- 86% of primary and nursery teachers are female (EOC, 2001)
- 4% of employed graduate engineers are women (WISE, 2001)
- 1% of those working in childcare are men (DfEE, 1997)

Despite legislation, both young men and women fail to apply for or secure jobs for which they are suited and where they are needed. Women are still less likely to advance to higher levels in their occupational choice and still continue to bear primary responsibility for childcare and continue to earn less than men in all ethnic groups (EOC, 2000). Women in Britain working full-time earn on average 19% less than men (EOC 2000). However, women's employment patterns have changed. The total number of 15-59 year old women in the labour market who are economically active in England and Wales has increased from 38% in 1931 to 68% in 1999 and more women work part-time, flexi time and job share (Bimrose, 2001).

While the number of women employed has increased dramatically, since the 1970s the number of men in employment has remained the same. This has reflected a shift in the type of jobs available, away from manufacturing

towards service jobs. Because of gendered 'scripts' men may be restricted in terms of obtaining jobs in expanding sectors of the economy. Until the early 1970s, there had been a 'natural progression' for most young men moving from school into work. Irrespective of educational achievement, if young men stayed broadly within an acceptable framework of behaviour then work would be available to them (Lloyd, 1999). It has also been argued that men may not have the same lifestyle choices because of the social pressure exerted upon them to work (Hakim, 1996).

While a great deal of statistical information relating to gender is available, the relationship between gender and other important variables, particularly class and ethnicity is unclear. Most published data takes only one variable into account. The EOC confirm that 'One of the most important omissions is the lack of good quality, accurate data on the qualifications, performance and employment experience of young people disaggregated at the very least, by gender and preferably also by ethnicity and social class.' (EOC, 1998). Ethnicity and class intersect with gender to reduce or compound disadvantage. For example:

- White women earn more than women from minority ethnic groups in London, but outside London women from Chinese and 'other' ethnic groups have highest earnings. Men display similar earning patterns.
- Minority unemployment rates are usually at least twice as high as those for white people, and highest for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black-African people. However, Indian and Chinese people tend to experience relatively low unemployment rates.
- 85% of white men aged 16-64 are economically active compared to 77% for all minority groups, while 74% of white women of the same age are economically active compared with 56% of minority ethnic women. (DfEE, 2000).

The cost of segregation in work includes:

- Discrimination - leading to isolation and harassment.
- Wasted talent - people cannot fulfil their potential and individual ambitions of both men and women are limited.
- Skills gaps - some industries with skills shortages are recruiting from a restricted pool. For example, there is a skills shortage in the computer industry yet the number of women entering this industry is falling.

The next section turns to a consideration of qualifications gained by young people to explore the extent to which segregation in the workplace is mirrored by segregation in education and training.

Young people, qualifications and career routes

Achievement at GCSE

At the end of the 1980s GCSEs were introduced into schools in England and Wales, establishing a common award scheme for all young people, where previously there had been a range of possible qualifications. Since then, while the performance of both young men and women has improved, young women have consistently performed better than young men in the majority of subjects. For example, in 1990/91 44.0% of girls achieved 5 or more A*-C grades compared with 36.0% of boys. By 1998/9, the results were 53.2% of girls and 42.6% of boys. Girls outperformed boys in English, maths, joint science, design and technology, history and all modern languages. Boys outperformed girls in physics, chemistry, biological sciences, IT, geography (DfEE, 1999).

However, gender intersects with socio-economic class and ethnicity to produce a more complex picture. For example:

- White students perform better than those from minority ethnic groups overall, but fewer achieve 5 or more passes at GCSE grade A* to C than those from Indian and 'other' ethnic groups.
- The most common level of achievement for Black males is 5 or more passes at grade D to G.
- Two-fifths of Black females achieve 1 to 4 GCSEs at grade A* to C compared with an average of just over a quarter for males and females from all ethnic groups.
- Across all ethnic groups, 69% with a father in a managerial or professional job achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C compared with 36% with a father in manual profession.
- Young people from minority and ethnic groups are more likely to remain in full-time education than their white peers.

Social class is a primary factor and young people from professional backgrounds have the highest levels of attainment at GCSE and those from manual and unskilled families the lowest (Women's Unit, 2000).

Pathways after 16

The Careers Service Activity Survey *Moving On* reveals that young women are more likely to be in full-time education after year 11 (75.7% female, 65.8% male). For young people with very good GCSE results the gender gap relating to staying on in education is very small (Payne, 1998). Conversely, young men are more likely to be in the labour market, either training or employment (20.9% male, 13.1% female). Young men are slightly more likely to be 'not settled' in full-time activity (7.9% male, 6.6% female). (DfEE, 2000).

Post-16 education and training offers a wide range of options including 'A' levels, vocational qualifications and modern apprenticeships. Strong gender differences are to be seen in choice of subject in both 'academic' and vocational courses.

'A' levels

Research indicates that what students have studied at GCSE and how well they performed dominates their decisions about what to study at 'A' level (Payne, 1998).

There is some evidence that pupils in single-sex and mixed schools make different choices as to what subjects to study at 'A' level. Girls in single-sex schools are more likely than girls in mixed schools to study maths or physical sciences (but less likely than boys). The Youth Cohort Study estimates show that, among 16 year-olds taking at least two 'A' levels, approximately 50% of girls are not taking any science subject (including maths) whereas the equivalent figure for boys is 30% (Payne, 1995).

After the age of 16 pupils appear to revert to traditional choices with girls choosing arts/humanities and boys choosing science/technology subjects. There is evidence that traditional patterns of subject choice may be difficult to alter because girls do well at literacy-based subjects and enjoy them and are, therefore, more likely to pursue arts and social science subjects than science. Recent statistics show that:

- 74% of 'A' level English students are female (EOC, 2000)
- 72% of those taking 'A' level computing are male (EOC, 2000)
- 77% of 'A' level physics students are male (WISE)

Vocational qualifications

The proportions of young men and women who go on to study for GNVQs is similar. However:

- 90% of GNVQ health and social care students are female (EOC, 2001)
- 81% taking GNVQ IT are male (EOC, 2001)

A similar situation is found with regard to Modern Apprenticeships (DfEE, 1999a):

- 3% of engineering and manufacturing modern apprenticeship trainees are female
- 1% of construction trainees are female
- 1% of engineering trainees are female
- 11% of health and social care trainees are male
- 3% of childcare trainees are male
- 8% of hairdressing trainees are male

Once again it is important to remind ourselves that gender intersects with socio-economic class and ethnicity. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Inaugural Conference on Equal Opportunities, January 2001 warned that:

'Young people from ethnic minority groups are less likely to obtain qualifications and jobs after they complete their training and are seriously under-represented amongst Modern Apprentices, particularly in traditional craft sectors.'

ARTICLES

The Survey *Moving On* shows the percentage of year 11 students entering training or work by occupation. Some of the statistics for 1999 are entered below:

	% Male	% Female	% Total
Managerial/professional	5.3	2.4	4.2
Clerical/secretarial	8.9	25.2	15.0
Skilled construction	13.3	1.0	8.7
Skilled engineering	5.2	0.3	3.3
Personal services			
7.catering	4.3	5.6	4.8
8.health care	0.3	5.4	2.2
9.child care	0.1	4.9	1.9
10.hairdressing	0.6	16.3	6.5
Sales occupations	7.1	14.2	9.8
Labouring and other elementary occupations	16.2	10.8	14.2

The Early Leavers study (DfEE, 1999b) showed that young women are more likely to leave youth training schemes early. They reported that 'female trainees aged 17 and those with non employed status had the greatest propensity to leave the scheme early'. The same study also reported that young black African and Caribbean students were more likely to leave than young white/Indian/Pakistani or Sri Lankan students. The main finding about the process leading to early leaving was that careers advice provided by schools was a key issue, with the main criteria centring on the provision of advice, its quality and, in particular, the preference given to academic education over vocational courses. Other reasons given for leaving were lack of support from the provider, poor experience on placement and personal reasons. Trainees with prior qualifications and those working toward qualifications at higher level were most likely to complete the course. Research conducted by the Policy Studies Institute (DfES, 2001) also found that in both Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA) schemes and Government Supported Training (GST) schemes young women were more likely to leave than young men.

Higher education

Women represent over half of all new students admitted to first-degree courses. However, they tend to study subjects such as social studies, humanities, languages and business studies (EOC, 2002).

Technical disciplines continue to attract many more men than women. Biology is a notable exception and more than half of all admissions to first degree courses in this subject are female. Women constitute around one-third of admissions to chemistry and about one-fifth of admissions to physics and engineering and technology.

Despite the rapid growth in computer science student numbers, women students are in the minority. There is evidence that some students - particularly women - reject computer science/IT because it is seen as desk-bound and 'anti-social' in some way. However, many young people are drawn to this subject due to the perceived high rewards in terms of career and salary prospects (EOC, 2002).

Again it is important to disaggregate the statistics by socio-economic class and ethnicity. For example, research also shows that at present less than 20% of young people under 21 from the lower socio-economic groups go to university compared with over 70% from the highest (DfES, 2002). In

1997/98, ethnic groups comprised nearly 13% of students at first degree level in UK universities - considerably higher than the minority ethnic share of the population of young people. However, they tended to be concentrated in post-92 universities and are more likely to be mature students (DfEE, 2000).

While it is important to consider statistics about employment, education and training, it is also imperative to consider young people not in education, employment or training. The Social Exclusion Unit's Report (DfEE, 2000), *Bridging the Gap*, explored the problems faced by young people between the ages of 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They found that females spent more time NEET in total than males and were more likely than males to be economically inactive rather than unemployed. However, males were slightly more likely than females to have more than one NEET spell. The *Young People and Gender* report states, 'Though official figures for unemployment suggest that this affects more young men, a large group of young women who are outside education and training, remain hidden. Many of these are young women with caring responsibilities ... The negative impact on long-term educational and employment involvement of being a young mother has been identified.' (Women's Unit, 2000).

The review of research submitted to the Women's Unit on young people from a gendered perspective concludes 'Of critical concern to policy-makers is the question of whether males or females are more at risk during the adolescent years. At different times in the past decades public anxiety has focused on one or other of the genders, but it needs to be recognised that both young women and men may be vulnerable in different ways. The central conclusion of this review is that it would be wrong to identify either males or females as being more in need of attention from policy makers.' (Women's Unit, 2000).

Stereotypes

One explanation that has remained popular to account for segregation in education, training and work has been gender and ethnic stereotyping. Stereotyping, it is argued, restricts the careers of women and men of all ages, despite legislation and the efforts of careers guidance services, educators, trainers and many employers. Stereotyping, it is argued, is embedded in many industrial sectors, and in social and family expectations and attitudes. For example, explaining why and how educational and occupational segregation is perpetuated suggests that young people do not cross into 'gender contrary' areas of training because of culturally determined definitions of skill, cultural norms, and ideologies surrounding masculinity and femininity (Cockburn, 1987). These largely determine the training that young women and men pursue. 'Those involved in (training) schemes such as managing agents and employers 'passively' discriminate (often unconsciously) against young women because of their narrow definition of equality.' (DfEE, 1997).

Stereotypes are seen as negative and act as barriers to individuals achieving their potential. They also set standards on which people are judged and what people expect of themselves. Additionally, they may lead to disaffection. For example, masculine stereotypes which glamorise 'laddish' behaviour, may have a negative effect on boys' performance at school (Epstein, 1998).

The EOC conducted research with young people aged 11-16 which focused on their attitudes towards, and experiences of, gender roles and identified the major influences upon them. This research indicates that young people with parents who are in professional occupations have less stereotypical attitudes than those with parents who have manual occupations. In responding to the statement 'It is okay if the father stays at home and looks after the children and the mother goes out to work' approximately 80% of girls and 70% of boys agreed in social classes ABC1 compared with approximately 68% of girls and 60% of boys in social classes C2D2. (EOC, 2001).

The EOC research also found that: 'Older girls and boys are more egalitarian in attitude than younger children, yet this change in attitude becomes apparent at a time when their own subject choices reflect traditional male and female roles.'

This finding that beliefs around gender, careers and ambitions are firmly entrenched by the time young people are making choices at GCSE is confirmed by other researchers (Morris, Nelson, Rickinson et al., 1999; Miller and Budd, 1999).

Miller and Budd found that out of 221 jobs, 17 showed a gendered distribution in preference rating for both male and female at all ages, but the preference decreased with age. (Miller and Budd, 1999). Boys sex-typed appropriateness of occupation to a significantly greater degree than girls, although this difference was not significant in younger children. No consistent or stable pattern or preference emerged for males and females across age groups for school subject preference. They conclude that reduction of stereotypical views with age is attributable to changes in the beliefs of the female sample. However, while females believed that more jobs should be carried out by both male and female, they showed little interest in employment within the majority of the 'masculine' occupations presented by the researchers.

This finding seems to support the same finding from the EOC (2001) that:

'There is a contradiction between what young people think are suitable jobs for women and men, and the choices they make for themselves which often follow traditional stereotypes.'

Miller and Budd conclude that 'Perhaps more importantly these findings do not differ from those of many previous studies dating from the early 1970s.' (Miller and Budd, 1999).

The Fifth Framework Program project 'Gender and Qualification' investigated the impact of gender segregation of European labour markets on vocational education and training (VET), with special regard to key competencies of men and women. They took a comparative approach to gender competencies in Finland, GB, Greece, Portugal and Germany. The focus was on identifying key competencies in three occupations: engineer, waiter and nurse. Results were presented at a conference at the Institute of Education on the 27th and 28th February 2002. Anke Kampmeier's paper 'Transcending gendered features of key qualifications. What did we learn from the project?', although recognising the prevalence of stereotypes, also asserts that there are many differences between men and women which cannot be ignored. Hence they are labelled 'competencies' and viewed positively, rather than 'stereotypes', which have a negative connotation.

Key competencies in her view are 'more typical' for either men or women because they are either performed or perceived or expected from women or men in contrast to the other sex. Her findings from observation in the workplace and interviews with both training providers and

workers in the three occupations is that females are considered more industrious, attentive, accept better routines, accept external controlled work, are more sensitive, more sweet tempered, more patient, better at taking care of children, better with fine work, work more emotionally, work more precisely, are more co-operative, better communicators, take different roles, more creative, tolerate ambiguity, are more responsible and eager to learn. However, on the negative side they are less original in mathematical and technical thinking and do not like dirty, uncomfortable or heavy work. Men are said to be more competitive, autonomous, refer to own interests, determined, have an orientation toward fixed rules, more practical, emphasise entertainment, work more rationally, enjoy power, be better with heavy work but are less emotional, less relaxed in social contact and less relaxed in using their bodies (i.e. making physical contact). The inference from the work of the Fifth Framework Program is that young people choose careers in which they can use their natural competencies. However, more research is needed on whether this is, indeed the reason for a particular career choice, or whether the picture is far more complex.

Interestingly the list of 'stereotypes' or 'competencies' has changed little since the 1970s (see Askew, 1988), but possibly the value which we attach to them is changing? In the 1970s, those stereotypes attributed to males were generally viewed as positive while those attributed to females were viewed negatively. Kampmeier concludes that 'Female key competencies will gain more importance with the growth of the service sector' (Unpublished conference paper).

In the European research while it is accepted that not all females and males will have the ascribed gender traits, nevertheless they are seen as 'typical' for either sex. This is a worrying argument since each trait is open to a number of interpretations and varies according to context, e.g. boys are more practical, girls are more sensitive, depends on the context. In a context, which involved sewing, it may be that girls are considered more practical than boys, and when we talk about females working more emotionally, do we infer that they are more likely to be angry at work! Clearly the notion of gendered competency is interesting but open to misuse. Stereotypes maintain people in particular positions of inferiority and superiority and ascribed competencies may well do the same. The notion of gendered competencies does not address the intersection of class, ethnicity and sexuality.

In the 1970s and 1980s there were many projects which attempted to challenge stereotypical career choices (Myers, 2000). Much of the work involved raising awareness and challenging stereotypes; increasing the profile of high achieving women in non-stereotypical careers and of domestic and caring roles for men and encouraging girls into science and engineering related work, e.g. the Girls into Science and Technology (GIST) Project, an action research programme carried out in co-educational

comprehensive schools in Greater Manchester between 1979-1984. Strategies included visits to schools by women working in technical jobs, the development of teaching material more orientated towards girls' interests and a humanistic view of science, observations in school labs and workshops, and careers education linked to option choices in schools (Whyte, 1986). This was a very important first step. However, while it can be argued that this early work was partly successful, (for example, since its inception in 1984 the WISE campaign, has helped double the number of female engineering graduates in the UK from 7% in 1984 to 15% in 2001), clearly there is much to be done. There is a lack of information about what works in challenging gender inequalities in all aspects of young people's lives and how to meet the specific needs of young women and young men. Sharing good practice is crucial, as is proper evaluation of programmes to examine the extent to which they meet their objectives.

Rather than a focus on challenging stereotypes or on developing gendered competencies it may be less divisive to identify what kinds of competencies are needed in the modern market and to ask how we can develop these in both young women and men. It may also be more useful to ask how educational and vocational practices can contribute to reducing inequalities and segregation.

Finally, a focus on gendered stereotypes or competencies invites us to take a 'blanket' approach to work with young women or to work with young men without recognising the differences between young women and between young men. There are common influences that affect all young people living in a western society, including the media and education. However, the way these influences are interpreted will depend both on individual characteristics and on culture. This requires that effective careers education is dependent upon an understanding of the different worlds inhabited by young people and the impact of family, religion, culture and community.

Career decisions and the careers service

There is need for a more complex theory about how career decisions are made – young people's choice of career may reflect a far more sophisticated and rational understanding than that suggested by an explanation which puts 'stereotyping' at its core. If young people tell us, for example, that childcare is a 'female' occupation, we need to explore this using qualitative research methods to discover the rationale behind this assertion. The next section turns to a review of literature which asks questions about how career decisions are made. 'Currently, mainstream systems and programmes, rather than challenging traditional patterns of gender stereotyping and segregation, may only serve to reinforce them. There is, however, little evidence that this aspect of equality is an issue which politicians, policy-makers and practitioners across education and training are seeking to address.' (EOC, 1999b.)

Hodkinson (1997) argues that 'People make pragmatically rational decisions within the culturally derived horizons for each'. Decisions are neither 'individual choice' nor socially determined. Decisions are made because of chance or opportunity. 'Limitations on decisions are realistically recognised.' Choices are 'pragmatically rational' – located in the familiar and known. Opportunities are based on contacts and experience. One reason career advice is rejected is because it doesn't fit with young people's view of themselves; it lies outside their horizon. Beven (1995) argues that the capacity and willingness to make rational informed choices about careers is context related and cannot be separated from the social and cultural background and the life experiences of young people. Ideas drawn from personal construct theory may also be useful: 'To try and give guidance to pupils without taking account of their interpretation of events, their terms of reference and ... what is important to them can lead to making assumptions about motivation, values and choices, and the subsequent guidance given may not be particularly appropriate' (Beven, 1995). The implications for careers work in school are that both an approach which treats all young people as individuals and as free agents who control their own destinies, and one which sees young people as constrained by socially constructs (e.g. gender stereotypes) are not going to be entirely fruitful. Both these understandings need to be held alongside one which recognises cultural (and possibly religious) affiliations.

Bimrose (2001) asks what the dominant influences and inhibitors on women's career development are and how these differ for different groups of women. Evidence relates mostly to individual characteristics including high self-esteem, multiple role-planning and strong locus of control. Inhibitors include poor self concept, low expectations of success and the effects of gender role and occupational stereotypes (Betz, 1994). Structural barriers include ways the educational systems operate, the emphasis on gender roles, exclusion from certain activities, lack of role models, gender biased career counselling, career-family conflict, discrimination and sexual harassment. (Krumboltz and Coon, 1995). It is clear from this that the career guidance needs of girls and women are different from those of boys and men and that some single sex work may well be useful.

Vocational choice is a process of eliminating options and narrowing choices – individuals compromise their goals in coming to terms with reality as they try to fulfil their aspirations (Gottfredson, 1996). This implies the need for discussion with young people about why, for example, certain options seem to be out of the question or why some compromises are more acceptable or more accessible than others. Careers education programmes need to deal explicitly with the way individuals restrict their career choices and sensitive to sex, social class, ethnicity, ability and vocational interest. Career self-efficacy work would help young people develop self-confidence by exploring perceptions of ability and 'reframing' them. Practitioners

need to be familiar with research on the relationship between gender and career development and the complex interactions of gender, ethnicity and social class require training support and knowledge of discrimination in education and the workplace. Young people need political awareness of the ways social structure has moulded and limited them. A relationship between client and practitioner needs to be established and maintained to avoid the abuse of power.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1997) looked at perceptions of career guidance received and perceptions and knowledge of specific careers held by pupils age 10, 15 and 17. 410 pupils were interviewed in focus groups and questionnaires were used. 90% of young people cite 'enjoyment' and 'interest' as important choice criteria. Young people are more interested in the lifestyle associated with a job than with the job itself. In careers education and guidance (CEG) young people are often only told about the careers they ask about and therefore ignore careers which are unfamiliar or already rejected. They see CEG as predominantly an information providing service. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown comment that CEG mostly starts in upper secondary school and perceptions which develop at a much younger age are not explored when they need to be. In primary schools, formal careers education is almost completely absent even where opportunities arise naturally within the curriculum. Research confirms the view that occupations and career intentions are chosen at an early stage.

The implication of this research on career decision making is that practitioners and policy makers must recognise the complexity of career decision making processes. As Hodkinson states:

'Approaches which see guidance simply as providing more and better information plus professional advice in making a single choice are naïve and probably doomed to failure.' (Hodkinson, 1995).

The need to highlight gender, race and class issues

This section raises several important recommendations for Connexions, The Learning and Skills Councils, the Careers Service and careers teachers.

Connexions provides the opportunity to broaden the concept of career, and to see it in a more holistic context – broadening the range of learning and work opportunities. Connexions personal advisers are key to the delivery of the eight key Connexions principles. Their role includes direct work with the young person, including assessment, planning and intervention; working with schools and colleges to share best practice; enhance resources and contribute to curricular work in PSHE, drugs, health and careers education and citizenship; planning and working with parents/carers; reviewing progress and outcomes; developing informal and community networks; planning and working with other agencies (DfEE, 2000a).

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is another new organisation whose targets include raising achievement of young people aged 16-21, raising participation post-16 and raising the quality and effectiveness of the education and training they support.

Clearly, the important knowledge and skills which the Personal Adviser and officers working for the LSC will need must include awareness of equal opportunity issues as well as an understanding of career decision making processes – these are not highlighted in the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers (DfEE, 2001). The issues to be addressed in partnership agreements should include gender, race and class issues – these are not highlighted in the DfEE publication, 'Establishing the Connexions Service in Schools'.

Careers education and guidance in school also needs to include awareness of gender and other equal opportunity issues. EOC research in 1999 found that on documentation supplied, gender equality did not have a high profile in most careers services (Newscheck, 2001). Official publications need to highlight these issues. There is no mention of gender issues in the DfEE publication, *Preparing pupils for a successful future in learning and work* (DfEE, 2000b). Failure to highlight gender and its intersection with socio-economic class and race can only result in maintaining the status quo in relation to gendered work segregation.

Work experience and GCSEs in vocational subjects

Research by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) has found that many young people are greatly influenced in their subsequent career choice by their work experience. It appears likely that socio-economic class, ethnicity or gender are very likely to affect where young people do their work placement. Yet a recent report commissioned by the DfEE (Hillge et al., 2001) did not include any reference to ethnicity or socio-economic class in its findings. The only reference to gender is: 'While there has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap in some sectors, e.g. production, legal and media, large differences remain in education and health, where placements are predominantly taken by girls.'

However, recommendations made in the DfEE report do not address this issue. Further research is needed into the different work placements undertaken by girls and boys, as well as further research into socio-economic factors affecting work placement choice. For example, are children from middle class homes more likely to find placements themselves (with the help of parents) and do these placements more closely match the young person's career hopes?

The DfEE emphasises the importance of developing a competitive, efficient and flexible labour market. Key reorganisation of the education and training system in the

last two decades has involved enhancing vocational pathways post-16. Intellectual and practical skills, as well as skills necessary for lifelong learning, career re-orientation and adaptation to the technological and work practice needs of a post-industrial, post-modern society are priorities in government education and training policy. The Government White Paper 'Schools Achieving Success' proposed the introduction of 'vocational' GCSEs. The government also plans to increase the number of specialist schools and the range of specialisms, to include subjects such as mathematics and computing. Proposals also included the possibility of pursuing predominantly vocational programmes which provide a basis for progression to a Modern Apprenticeship at age 16 or to further vocational study after 16.

The first new GCSEs in vocational subjects are to be available from September 2002 in some schools. These new GCSEs will initially be available in Applied Art and Design, Applied Business, Engineering, Health and Social Care, Applied ICT, Leisure and Tourism, Manufacturing and Applied Science. Each will be a double award, equivalent to two GCSEs.

In January 2001, the then Secretary of State announced proposals for 14-16 year olds to study at a college or with a training provider for one or two days a week throughout Key Stage 4 and to work towards worthwhile qualifications. General FE colleges were invited to form partnerships with schools, training providers and other agents to put these initiatives into effect. Partnerships will benefit from a comprehensive programme of training and support from the Learning and Skills Development Agency (DfES, 2002).

All these proposals could limit rather than extend girls' and boys' education and career opportunities. As we have shown, subject choices in vocational subjects are even more stereotyped than in traditional 'academic' subjects.

'The particular role of vocational education and training is to prepare young people for their post-school employment. The issue of gender stereotyping is therefore linked directly with the current provision and delivery of vocational education and training to young people.' (Miller & Budd, 1999). Since the late 1980s the national curriculum has meant that all students have to study a range of subjects at GCSE, which limits the effects of stereotyping. The perceived success of girls in education pre-16 has been argued by some to be due to the fact that a core curriculum and examination system was introduced at the end of the 1980s where previously there had been a range of possible qualifications. The argument is that where boys and girls take the same examinations, they perform as well or better than boys. This argument is supported by data from the 1800s and early 1900s (Cohen, 1998). In terms of educational and vocational equality, therefore, there remains a strong argument against 'choice' in pre-16 examination subjects. We would also argue that individual 'choice' should not be

the sole or main criterion for work experience placements. 'Encouraging young people to take up work placements in non-traditional fields of work is an excellent way of broadening their experience' (Newscheck, 2001).

It will be important to closely monitor the gender, economic background and ethnicity of young people who follow the 'vocational route' pre-16 and to ensure that the new differentiated education system does not lead to even further gendered segregation in the market place.

Summary of recommendations

A focus on gender stereotypes as an explanation for gendered job segregation is reductionist and ignores the very complex inter-section of gender with socio-economic class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and age. It is suggested that work which targets the needs of specific groups of young people is likely to be more useful. This work should be informed by discussion with young people about, why, for example, certain options seem to be out of the question or why some compromises are more acceptable or more accessible than others.

Work with young people on gender, race and class in relation to career expectations is not simply a matter of offering different role models and challenging stereotypical attitudes and expectations. The social and economic context in which people find work needs to be addressed, as do issues of self-efficacy and decision-making processes.

Gender and how it intersects with socio-economic class and ethnicity should be a central issue in training programmes for personal advisers, careers advisers, careers teachers and those working in the LSCs. This training should go beyond a common sense understanding of stereotypes to include an understanding of current research in relation to the complexity of career decision making and of how different femininities and masculinities are constructed. Personal advisers and others working with young people on career decisions will need a range of very specific skills to enable them to work with different groups of young people.

Young people need opportunities to explore their perceptions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' with highly trained professionals.

Work on attitude clarification needs to start in primary schools.

Inter-agency work such as that being conducted by Equality North West in Wigan seems an excellent way forward.

We need to encourage participation and partnership with parents and communities.

Peer education and mentoring for young women and men from other young people is a useful way forward.

More liaison is needed between college and school – Lloyd (1999) discovered that many young men find themselves on inappropriate courses with little prior information.

The introduction of new vocational pathways pre-16 needs careful monitoring in relation to gendered segregation.

Work placements should be carefully monitored in relation to the sex, socio-economic class and ethnicity of pupils.

Further research

The research for this report has highlighted a number of gaps in our knowledge about how different groups of young people make career choices, how they experience the transition from school or college to work, the kind of lifestyle they hope for and the values attached to this hope, their beliefs about what particular jobs entail and about their own abilities. Until we have more information we are likely to fall into the trap of identifying solutions which may be simplistic. This is not to argue that challenging stereotypes, for example, is unhelpful – on the contrary we are arguing here that challenging stereotypes is important, but that on its own it is extremely unlikely to make any but the smallest difference in challenging gendered segregation at work.

We need to know how different groups of young women and men think about themselves in respect to work. For example, Lloyd (1999) reported on the views of 63 young men living in Newham, Salford and Leicester aged between 18-20. Most were school underachievers, had been in temporary, insecure and on the whole poorly paid jobs. For the majority of young men in the study, most jobs in the workplace were seen as appropriate for both men and women. It was pay, rather than gender, that appeared central. Lloyd concluded that perceptions of masculinity affected their view of the male role, career decision-making, attitudes towards school and teachers, and their reluctance to seek help and advice and suggested that these perceptions must be engaged with if schools and others are to better prepare young men for the transition into the labour market.

We need to know more about how young people make decisions about their careers, and whether these decisions are based on stereotypical assumptions or on more pragmatic considerations related to understandings about pay, conditions in the workplace, training opportunities, issues relating to harassment or isolation, and so on.

We need to know more about the experiences, background, and beliefs of young men and women in jobs not 'typical' for their sex. This would help establish why some young people do choose non-stereotypical career routes and may indicate some ways forward for careers work in school.

Research shows parental influence to be the single most important factor for young people (Robinson, 2002; Lightfoot, 1997; Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 1997).

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More research is needed to establish how to support the role of parents in the careers education and guidance process. Friends and peers are also important – more research is needed to illuminate the influences of this group.

We need more information about how Vocational Education and Training (VET) practices contribute to on-going gender segregation. How can VET practices contribute to reducing gender barriers?

Research is needed into the role of career professionals and barriers to young people's use of services.

Research will be needed to establish the extent to which the work of Connexions and Learning and Skills Councils is informed by an awareness of gender and other equity issues.

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Portraits of Black Achievement: Composing Successful Careers

Jacqui MacDonald

Portraits of Black Achievement: composing successful careers arose from the need for greater public awareness of the contribution that black people make in Britain in the face of widespread media coverage of black under-achievement.

Initially conceived as a resource for young people making life and career decisions, the project has yielded material of value and interest to a wide readership. It provides a series of accessible and personal narratives of black achievers in the UK. We can all learn individually from these accounts which also contribute to a wider debate on issues related to access, inclusion and achievement.

Research background

A database of some 300 names was assembled, and an initial mail-out, consisting of an explanatory letter and a questionnaire, was completed. Prerequisites included the need to have been born in the UK or a resident since the late 1940s and to have achieved a recognised professional status within their field.

Interviews were arranged with individuals covering a broad range of occupational categories and reflecting many regions of the UK. Those interviewed covered a spectrum of age (25 - 70), gender and background and their experiences demonstrate that there is no simple formula to achieving success. Interviews with seventy individuals took place over an eighteen-month period, and were based on information from the questionnaires and a question list. The latter was re-designed after initial interviews. Interviews were of one to two hours' duration and were recorded. They were then transcribed verbatim.

Full-length transcripts were read and key sections identified. A shortened version of each interview was then produced, using as much as possible of the actual words spoken by the interviewee. Drafts were then forwarded to the interviewees for amendment and approval. Final drafts incorporated the interviewees' alterations and suggestions.

Robert Taylor, a national black photographer, took a black-and-white photograph of each interviewee encapsulating their character and personality.

Introduction

As a black person, born in South London of African Caribbean heritage, I am concerned with the emphasis on black under-achievement and the lack of acknowledgement of black success. I wanted to redress the balance and inspire young people in their career and life choices. This collection of interviews demonstrates the positive contribution that

black people are making in Britain whilst pursuing a path to personal fulfilment. The interviewees discuss life experiences including family, education, work, the idea of a black community, and what it means to be black and professional in the UK. Some of the material and views expressed challenge beliefs and attitudes held by both white and black communities.

The first person accounts provide a revealing glimpse of the experiences of these individuals as they explore what has motivated them to compose their careers. For the majority of those interviewed, life has not been plain sailing, but one of struggle and dogged determination. They, like the generation before them, have helped pave the way for subsequent generations to open up more chances and opportunities to realise their potential.

The reasons some black people achieve against the odds are complex. A number of questions might be considered. What sort of individuals succeed? Is it to do with their personality or general characteristics? Is it serendipity, or the era in which they were born? Is luck a factor? Is it the professions they choose? Is there networking going on behind the scenes? Understanding this complex set of factors is of great importance to me as a black woman, as a teacher, as someone who worked within the youth service and as a consultant to the careers service. My particular interest is in the position and status of black people in Britain and the stories these individuals tell.

Reflections

My book challenges the assumption that oppressed people cannot be empowered, and are therefore incapable of being successful. Many black people living in the UK have achieved status in their professional lives; but their success has not been achieved easily. It has occurred as a result of individuals composing or constructing their own careers.

Many of the individuals featured in this book have had a number of work experiences before opportunities, perhaps even luck, guided them to their current professions.

What is interesting about their reflections is how they have defined their success. For some, it is about 'achieving against all the odds' while for others it is 'not being afraid to make mistakes'. Whilst recognising they are successful, one or two felt that had they been white and/or male, their achievement would have been much more significant. Success is seen as being very much about personal gratification.

These individuals do not regard themselves as role models. Far from it, they are individuals who have worked hard and kept focused despite conflicting pressure. With sheer determination they have achieved respect and recognition in their field. As one of the interviewees put it:

'Being the only black person makes you incredibly strong and resourceful. You don't need anyone else's acknowledgement that you're okay because you know you've fought and you've got this far'.

What is striking is that none of those interviewed is complacent about their achievements. They do not want to dwell on the fact that they are black, but wish to be recognised first and foremost for their achievements in often challenging climates. They speak from a black perspective, but do not represent all black experiences.

As black achievers, they seek acknowledgement, respect and a chance to get on like anybody else. Their dreams, hopes and ambitions are no different from those of any other ethnic group. Some told of their humble beginnings and the strength and importance of extended families. The strict upbringing, of which some spoke, did not hinder their success. In fact, it may have contributed to it. Whilst some came from middle class homes, all came from backgrounds where there was an expectation that they would at least try their best and recognition that this might be against the odds.

All recognise there is racism within society, but do not wish to dwell on it. The main question for them is 'What can you do about it?'. They had used a number of strategies to overcome their obstacles and these are described in the interviews.

Key themes

A number of themes emerged in the production of this book. They include:

- **Identity**

How individuals identified themselves in terms of colour and their profession, depended upon who one spoke with. Is this individual a professional who happens to be black

or a black person who is also a professional and successful? Does identity really matter and, if so, for whom?

- **A black elite as well as a black middle class**

Are we seeing the public emergence of a black elite? Is there a black middle class or merely a black professional group? Many felt uncomfortable being referred to as 'black middle class' whereas others clearly saw themselves as a member of that group.

- **Professional success**

Professional success brings its own complexities. There is also an issue of gender and race and how one is treated at work as well as the games people play in order to succeed.

- **Making choices**

No single factor influences the career choices that individuals make, that is, whether to aim high or to give up and give in to the stereotype of black under-achievement. Educational attainment, family background, gender, race, opportunities (serendipity) as well as economic and social structures are all factors that contribute to determining the direction an individual will take.

Family or school networks allow some individuals to access certain jobs, but not for the individuals in this book. Most grew up in an era when media coverage indirectly influenced their conceptions as to the jobs that were open to people like them.

Several commented on the objective and fair advice given to them in schools by teachers. For most their dreams and aspirations remained almost closely guarded secrets with little parental understanding or support. For others their school experiences and significant individuals inspired and sometimes served to spur them on in their determination to prove themselves.

The ideal scenario that involves planned decision making was certainly not the case for the individuals we interviewed. There were those whose plans bore little resemblance to actual outcomes; many reacted to serendipitous opportunities and turned them to their advantage. The issue is that whilst perhaps their experience is no different to other groups, they saw and seized opportunities and proved success was possible.

- **Strategies**

Their accounts demonstrate the importance of knowing how to play the game, gaining the skills to play the system to their advantage rather than surrendering before the end of the first round. Other strategies used by individuals in their pursuit of success included self-employment, becoming independent of a structure that ultimately restricts, as a result enhancing their creativity and status.

• Race and racism

Race did not emerge as a central theme in the interviews. Most did not make explicit reference to it at all but where they did their views were forceful. Whilst all those interviewed recognised racism within society, they spoke more or less with one voice when they suggested that the black community must fight its own corner. They believed that the black community needs to be more unified, and should not expect too much from outside; it is not enough to demand what society needs to do, but there is a need to address more importantly what black people need to do for themselves.

• The role of parents and families

All participants were unanimous in their belief that parents/families have a role to play in the positive experiences and achievements of their children.

What next?

Through the accounts of these individuals, the complexities of being a black professional in the UK are emerging. There are no quick fixes, but we can't lose hope. As Janet Daley wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* on 22nd August 2000:

'By rendering invisible the quiet achievements of black women and decent black men, the media cult of the black delinquent prevents young Afro-Caribbean men from seeing themselves as succeeding in any arena other than the criminal street'.

There are lessons here for a number of agencies; schools need to acknowledge the prevailing economic and social structures, and to use this knowledge in the planning and delivery of a more progressive curriculum which includes a comprehensive careers education and guidance programme for young people.

Parents have a role to play in encouraging and supporting their children, even when they too might be unclear as to what is at stake or are trying to make sense of the system for themselves. It is not sufficient to expect schools to provide all the encouragement and directions that will allow young black people to aspire to prestigious and fulfilling work.

Our participants talked of the need to challenge low expectations and encourage high expectations and for all agencies to find ways in which young people can be empowered and develop their self-respect and confidence. Some spoke of the need for families to maintain links with their ancestral 'homes' and to encourage exploratory visits. In fact, one or two argued that it is not the role of the school to go out of its way to teach black history, but something that the home should be addressing. The school's role is to provide a curriculum which would nurture young people towards success.

Professor Errol Miller argue that there is no single factor to explain institutional inequalities. It is the interaction between a number of social criteria such as gender, race, class, religion and geographical location, which influences the development of individuals. Miller contends that it is impossible to completely level the playing field which will always be tilted in favour of the dominant group.

'All we as educators, family and others can do is to help young people address the issue of power structures... It is not the hand that the individual is dealt that is important, but how they deal with that hand...' (Open lecture at the Institute of Education, 17th October 2000.)

What has been missing for many years has been a positive portrayal of black achievement. This is not to deny the discrimination that black people continually face, but to promote the achievements and successes which are overlooked by schools, the media and society in general. There is a need to positively demonstrate that black people can and do achieve at the highest level.

'Young people must be helped to construct their own future, recognise the disadvantages, but helped to be creative and productive in their thinking in order to move on... We have underestimated what is required to be successful' (ibid. Miller).

In this book, I set out to examine not only the ways in which this group of black professionals composed their careers, but also the complexities of being a black professional in the UK and how their success masks issues of inequality in our society. The question is how do we move from the diagnosis that inequality exists to identifying specific contextual treatment? I describe this plight of black people as the 5Ds of black youth: disadvantaged, disaffected, disillusioned, disruptive and disappeared. I hope the book goes some way towards dispelling this blanket view of black people.

Note

Jacqui MacDonald is a NICEC Associate. This article is based on an edited version of the introduction to *Portraits of Black Achievement: composing successful careers* published by Lifetime Careers Publishing in 2001.

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Recruiting Black and Asian Students and Graduates - Some Solutions from the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service

Terry Dray

To recruit the best talent it is essential for employers of graduates to value diversity. Where once we had equal opportunities and a 'one size fits all' approach driven by legislation, we now have diversity where differences and values are respected and business need is the major driver. Diversity is as much about dealing effectively with a diverse range of customers as it is about managing a diverse workforce. As the world changes businesses need to respond accordingly. Workforces need to reflect both the communities and customers that the company serves.

Many talented graduates are disadvantaged in the labour market. For example Black African males are up to seven times more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts.

Many recruiters are striving to improve communication channels and methods of raising their profiles on campus to encourage greater numbers of applications from talented individuals from under-represented groups. However, many continue to stress that on and off campus, non-mainstream opportunities to engage meaningfully with such target groups are limited and that numbers of applications are disappointing.

Higher education careers services have a very real role to play here. Consideration needs to be given by the careers services to how well the needs of black and Asian student groups and recruiters are being met. Many such services are working proactively in this area. The University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service is at the forefront of developing diversity programmes, products and services that broker relationships and encourage better communication between recruiters and black and Asian talent. These include:

Diversity Mentoring Higher Education (DMHE)

Includes two mentoring programmes. INTERACT for students with disabilities and INTERFACE for black and Asian students. Individual students are paired with a volunteer employee mentor and they agree to a minimum of four one-hour meetings between October and April. The dominant theme is employability and the enhancement of self-esteem, confidence and networks. Full induction training is provided for mentors and mentees where issues such as hopes, fears, managing expectations, agreeing an informal contract, successfully managing meetings and

support structures are considered. Three employer-led workshops covering applications, interviews and assessment centres are provided for the students and on-going support for mentors and mentees is provided by the DMHE Team and via the website.

The programmes are students driven. Students choose the type of occupation and industrial sector from which they would like a mentor. They can also express a preference as to whether their mentor is female/male, is from a particular ethnic group and has a disability or not. It has been shown that because the programme is explicitly concerned with employability and career development the student mentees are primarily concerned with the mentor's occupational and industrial credentials rather than their ethnic group and gender, etc.

In 2002/3 DMHE will include 18 higher education institutions and 200 mentoring partnerships. It will operate in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, Cheshire, West Yorkshire, the South West, London and Limerick. Companies involved include BAE Systems, The Inland Revenue, Land Rover, Accenture, HSBC and Manchester City Art Gallery.

For further details see: www.diversitymentoringuk.ac.uk

The Ethnic Diversity Fair

This event, unique in its type and size outside of London, was organised for the first time in October 2001. It was supported by the National Union of Students Black Students Committee, the Commission for Racial Equality and a large number of higher education careers services. It attracted 1600 students and graduates, 34 major recruiters including Deutsche Bank, Proctor and Gamble, Ford, The BBC and Goldman Sachs and a significant reserve list! As a vehicle for targeting black and Asian student talent the fair has proved very popular. Recruitment and information fairs are a popular and tried and tested communication method for recruiters. Many students who attended this event commented that they liked the fact that the fair 'was for them' and that the recruiters who were present were there to meet potential applicants from ethnically diverse backgrounds. After the success of this event a second fair is planned for 16th October 2002 at the University of Manchester.

Further details are available at:
www.GraduateCareersOnline.ac.uk/ethnicdiversityfair

www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk

This site was developed in 2001 and was financially supported by The Department for Education and Skills and Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. This site is supported by hefce and is the official career development site for black and Asian students, graduates and graduate recruiters. As well as providing information and advice to students, graduates and recruiters the site also allows recruiters to publicise their commitment to diversity and raise their profile by having:

- A company profile page with a hot link to a recruitment site;
- Two 'Me and My Job' profiles featuring black and/or Asian employees;
- Graduate job vacancies advertised;
- An employer case study detailing diversity policies and practices.

Regarding this site Gurbux Singh, Chair of The Commission for Racial Equality, has said:

'It is unacceptable that ethnic minority students find it harder to find work after graduation than their white counterparts. It is for this reason that we welcome the introduction of this exciting new website which will provide a platform for job searches and the promotion of best practice.'

Further details concerning the site and how to subscribe can be found at: www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk

Businesses often strive to be unique and distinctive and to recruit and retain excellent employees. Developing a diverse workforce encourages uniqueness and celebrates difference. Talented students from under-represented groups like ethnic minorities are often first generation higher education students who do not have well developed personal and professional networks. There may be an absence of role models in certain industries for such students to emulate and associate with. Black and Asian students and graduates need real access to graduate recruiters in order to understand, through dialogue, that they too can aspire to work in companies that take seriously the creation of truly diverse workforces.

Black and Asian students and graduates want to know that recruiters are targeting them and want to hear the recruiters' messages. At the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service we are aware of the challenge. We are taking seriously the needs of recruiters and students and graduates and are looking forward to working with students, graduates and recruiters on a range of programmes, products and services that provide some solutions.

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Patterns of Choice: a Model of Choice and Decision-making

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Jane Hemsley-Brown and Nick Foskett

Introduction

Careers guidance is a critical factor, particularly where young people from social backgrounds with no family traditions of FE or HE make a choice to pursue such a pathway. The findings from research highlight the role of careers guidance as an important counter to negative attitudes, knowledge and perceptions of some education, training and career pathways.

The paper aims to present an overview of choice and decision-making in educational markets. The research projects on which this paper is based are discussed in more detail in the book *Choosing Futures* (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001). The fundamental argument for enhancing choice in a marketised education and training arena was based on assumptions about the impact of individual choice on the responsiveness and performance of educational institutions and training providers. The forces which determine how parents, and young people discriminate between the competitive alternatives offered to them in the educational market place, at every stage from choosing a nursery school to choosing a higher education institution, is at the very heart of planning in education and training.

An integrated model of choice is presented which is applicable in a wide range of educational choice arenas, and has emerged from the findings of sponsored research carried out by the Centre for Research in Education Marketing (CREM).

Continuity, interaction and choice

The findings from a wide range of projects carried out by CREM indicate that strong themes underpin decision-making:

- Choices and decisions are not discrete, unique experiences but are simply part of a complex web of choice and decision-making that links every choice and decision from early years, through post-compulsory education and/or training, to labour market entry.
- While there are specific issues at particular points, there are also many common themes and linkages between them.
- Decisions at each point can shape, and may ultimately strongly determine, the opportunities that fall into the individual's choice environment in the future.
- The traditional research approach in student choice focuses on only one choice point. While providing a useful part of the picture, this simply contributes to the jigsaw puzzle.

This paper draws together some of the emerging ideas by looking at:

- Patterns and themes in choice that have emerged;
- Models of choice making that can be inferred from the analysis;

- Implications of the ideas for some wider policy issues that emerge.

Patterns of choice

A number of themes have emerged from our synthesis of ideas relating to choice in education and training markets, which weave together both the *process* of choice and the *outcomes* of decision-making. These relate to:

- The role of the family in choice;
- The social context of choice;
- Institutional context - the role of teachers, schools and colleges in shaping choice;
- The primacy of academic pathways in choice;
- The importance of perceptions and images;
- The psychological dimensions of the development, reinforcement and protection of self-image;
- The role of failure, defaulting and dissonance in choice; rationality and sub-rationality in choice;
- The tensions between stability and instability of choice outcomes.

Choice is dynamic. The evidence from each of the key stages of the education/training pathway demonstrates that choice is a dynamic and emergent concept at all times.

Choice is not an instantaneous or even short-term period of decision. It is a momentary external expression of the balance between a wide range of social, cultural and economic perceptions. Its expression as a choice today is unlikely to be identical to its expression as a choice tomorrow.

Three important points emerge from this:

1. **Expressions of choice are unstable.** At any one moment choices are inherently unstable in terms of their precise specification, and possibly in terms of their essential components. This idea of instability of choice will be explored further below.
2. **Change requires action.** Any desire at a policy level to alter the macro scale patterns of choice preferences requires actions that will change perceptions and understandings both amongst all the influencing factors in choice (young people, parents, teachers and the media, for example) and across the whole time span of choice.
3. **Choices can lead to unintended consequences.** While choice makes the system more responsive to the wants and needs of individuals within society, it makes the exercising of any form of political control to shape choice much less easy and much less predictable in its outcomes, and can lead to a number of 'unintended consequences'.

The family context of choice

Choice is the product of complex social processes. The family environment is, of course, a product of its social situation. The contrasts between choice in middle class contexts and working class contexts may reflect differences in the importance of economic and social factors in lifestyle models, differences in educational and social histories, and differences in the 'cultural capital' of individuals and families. Such differences are clearly not just based in social class, but interact in different ways with the cultural values of particular ethnic communities.

The choices of young people are never free of the influence of their family. This implies that replication of choice and values from generation to generation is a significant element in understanding broad patterns of choice in education and training markets.

The social context of choice

Social class and ethnicity are linked to choice. The expected link between social class, social status and choice has emerged very strongly in relation to each of the choice points we have considered. Broadly speaking, middle class aspirations relate strongly to notions of economic

advancement and social status, while working class choice is focused more strongly on the young person's own preferences and the desire to preserve social acceptability. Just as choosing is strongly linked to social class, so we have identified a number of strong links between choice patterns and ethnicity.

'Life-stylism' - lifestyle is an important choice factor. The growing significance of lifestyle as a theme in the development of personal image is one we have stressed elsewhere in our research. Lifestyle is intimately involved with social relations, leisure and social status in relation to peers and other groups. We would suggest therefore, that the expansion of 'lifestyleism' might see a growing influence on choice of factors relating to this aspect of the social context of young people and their parents.

The institutional context of choice

An important environment of choice influence is that of the young person's school or college. At each of the key break points in the education/training system, the teachers in the school, and the overall ethos and value system of the school, are important in shaping perceptions and images. Several aspects of this institutional context appear to be of particular importance in the choice process.

The interaction of institutional 'messages' and 'parental values' is important, for they may act as positive reinforcement to each other or, through contradictions and conflicts, provide substantial dissonance in the thinking of young people and their families.

The knowledge and guidance of teachers other than careers teachers is of importance in shaping perceptions, but the accuracy and reliability of that knowledge is questionable. Added to this limited knowledge is the institutional pressure for teachers to push young people towards decisions that are primarily in the school or college's interest because of its own competitive needs.

The role of careers guidance is important as a counter to existing attitudes, knowledge and perception, and is a critical factor where young people from social backgrounds with no family traditions of FE or HE make a choice to pursue such a pathway.

The role of marketing and promotional strategies is important. These have emerged as a very important influence in choice, perhaps more by providing 'just-in-time' information to enable choices to be justified rather than in fundamentally changing the choices that may be made.

The primacy of academic pathways

Academic pathways are still the most popular choice despite government policy and rhetoric to the contrary'. A dominant theme that emerges from the analysis of choice

from 5 to 18 is the importance of academic pathways as the most frequent choice of young people, and the market value that academic choices appear to possess. For active choosers, whether they are parents of three-year-olds or 10-year-olds, or young people themselves considering post-16 pathways, the dominant themes in their choice relate to accessing academic pathways. University entrance seems to represent the kite mark of economic and social success in the wider community, and is perceived as the gateway to economic enhancement, social status and lifestyle benefits by most young people.

The academic pathway is viewed as the only route to university. Access to university is itself seen as only achievable by the pursuit of academic pathways through post-16 education, and active choosers appear to make their choice at any key point so as to optimise the chance of pursuing a successful academic route at later stages of their individual pathway.

Vocational routes are often viewed as a second choice. At all stages, non-academic pathways are seen as the option of those not able or willing to access academic routes.

The role of perception and image

Within any decision-making process, whether related to education/training choice or the purchase of consumer goods, an important element is an individual's belief and understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of choosing each particular option. Central to this process is the role of perception, for to the individual it is their perception of the world that is the objective reality on which this cost-benefit analysis is made. Three forms of image in career choice have been identified:

- *Contracted images* that an individual has constructed for themselves from their own experiences.
- *Delegated images* which are acquired from other people's perceptions.
- *Derived images* which emerge from the media.

These images interact to create the individual's overall perceptual model of any component of the choice they are engaging in, and this will be true for both the young person and the adults who are involved in advising, formally or informally, that choice.

This creates three interesting issues in understanding choice:

1. The perceptual models held by each person will be unique, which will in turn provide a unique input into the choice making process.
2. Guidance, information or input from a third party is itself the product of that individual's own personal perceptions. Since education and training choices are largely concerned with decisions about an adult world

that young people have not directly experienced, almost all their perceptions will have been passed through the filter of other people's perceptual models before reaching them.

3. The great significance of the media in the lives of all sectors of the community, and the importance within media communications of the creation of image linked to the objectives of a consumerist society. 'Lifestyle' has become an important element both in formal marketing by organisations and in the general approach adopted by the media. Our research suggests that derived images from the media are important in creating and amending the perceptual constructs young people have in relation to careers and the labour market.

The psychological dimensions of choice

Reinforcement of self-image It is implicit within any discussion of education and training pathways that young people are preparing, and being prepared, to assume a role within adult society. Central to all this is the development of self-image by the individual young person. Identifying who they are, what their relationships with family, friends and the wider community can be, and seeking a role in the adult world, is built around creating, protecting and expressing self-image.

Protecting self-image is not a process unique to young people, of course. Our analysis of school choice, where parental influence is very substantial, has shown that adults operate the same psychological processes, as their older teenage children will in due course. Exploring the mechanisms for defending and justifying school choice in different social groups will be an important arena of future research.

Choice, defaulting and dissonance

High expectations. A strong theme that has emerged from the analysis within the research has been the high expectations of children, young people and their parents throughout the decision-making process. The reasons for this over-optimism are complex. In part it reflects the underlying values of society that support the pursuit of high aspirations. There is also a strong belief in luck or chance, a belief that things will fall into place, based on a serious over-estimate of the likelihood of such chance events occurring. This is no more than the over-estimation of the likelihood of success that has made the National Lottery in the UK so popular a form of recreation.

Young people often default to a less ambitious career choice. The consequence of this over-optimism, though, is that for many young people, the reality of their eventual choice is one that emanates from a failure to achieve their original personal goals. Their choices are second (or lower) choices, and they must go through the process of defaulting to lower ambitions in pathway and career choice arenas.

Rationality and sub-rationality in choice. The development of enhanced choice in education has been founded on an unquestioning policy view of choice as an economically rational process. The evidence from the analysis of education/training choice in our previous research has confirmed that we must not base any true understanding of decision-making and choice on such models.

Overall, therefore, we should describe choice in education and training arenas as either sub-rational or, according to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), pragmatically rational i.e. rational within the confines of limited information, the inherent human desire to minimise effort and the pressure to preserve self-image in the announcement of decisions. What we are seeing is not a non-rational process but a choice of justification strategies.

Stability and instability of choice

The use of the term choice in relation to education and training pathways can be misleading, for the term has an implication of irrevocable commitment to a line of action or behavioural strategy. It suggests that choice is the ultimate culmination of a rational, reasoned process, and once made will not be revisited. This is an invalid and naive view of choice and the choice process, for we have shown that many 'choices' are unstable, and are subject to change, modification and reversal over short or long periods of time.

We must regard instability of choice not as a sign of a failure in the process, but as an integral part of choosing. Stability is a much less common state than instability in this environment.

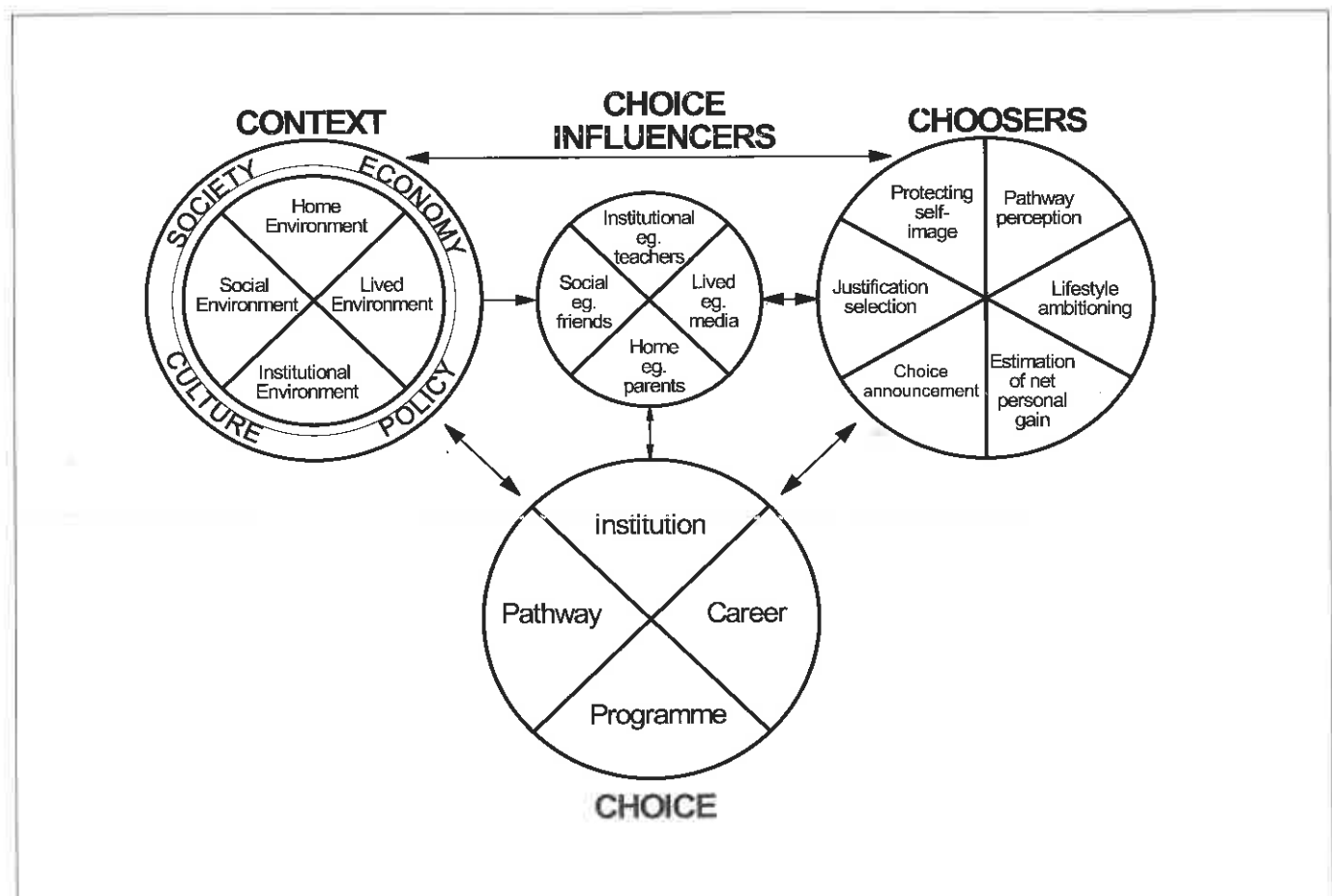
Modelling choice and decision-making

In examining some of the patterns and themes that have emerged from a consideration of young people's choice it is possible to begin to construct a conceptual model of the choice process. The analysis of choice within this paper is the basis of our own model of choice and decision-making in education and training markets (Figure 1).

The four components of the *Four C's model* are:

1. Context;
 2. Choice influencers;
 3. Choosers;
 4. Choice.
1. **Context.** The chooser operates within a context that is defined by the full range of components of their individual life: their home; their institutional

Figure 1 – The four C's model of choice and decision-making



environment (work or school); their social existence; their lived space (i.e. the geographical locations that their lives encompass); and the social, cultural, economic and the policy environment within which each of these operates. This context provides the passive backdrop to choice, the panorama of the individual's life that defines their own existence. Each element within it comprises people, processes, culture and values, each of which will contribute to the whole environment of choice.

2. **Choice influencers.** This context provides not just a passive, inert background of implicit influences on choice, but also active explicit influences, and this is represented in the model by the choice influencers. These influencers may be people or they may be processes such as media communications. The difference between the passive 'context' and the active 'choice influencer' can be illustrated with reference to the role of a child's school in the choice process. Its passive implicit influence lies in its mere existence as a component of the child's life, albeit imbued with strong value-laden implicit messages about the world of work, education and training. Its active explicit influence, though, emerges when it engages with the choice process directly through the ideas and actions of teachers and careers teachers. Such choice influencers act as an important intervening filter on the perceptions of the environment that an individual chooser may have. Where these influencers are people, whether they are teachers, friends, peers or parents, they will be engaging in a range of psychological processes to generate their own interpretations of the environment and preferences for choice. These are described below in our consideration of 'Choosers'.

3. **The 'Chooser'** is important within the model. We have recognised that the question of 'who chooses' generates different answers in relation to each young person and to the particular choice point they have reached. The chooser of a child's primary school is not the child, but will be an unequal partnership decision between mother and father. At age 11, the child will contribute to this partnership choice, and by 16 or 18 will be the dominant partner in the choice. We can identify a range of psychological processes they will be applying to the choice on a continuing basis, whether they are a mature adult, child, adolescent or young adult. These will be:

- the construction of perceptions of careers, and of FE and HE options, from contracted, delegated and derived images (pathway perception);
- the construction of lifestyle ambitions from similar sources (lifestyle ambitioning);
- the comparison of perceptions and lifestyle images in an informal estimate of net long-term and short-term personal gain (estimation of net personal gain);

- the comparison of perceptions and lifestyle images with the need to protect and enhance self-image in the social and cultural context that the individual operates within (protecting self-image);
- the selection of post-hoc justifications to preserve self-image and group identity (justification selection);
- the announcement of a choice within the social and cultural environments where the individual operates (choice announcement).

There is no implication in this description of the internalised psychological processes of the choosers that this is a rational, sequential and essentially positive process of choice. Our analysis of the generic principles of choosing futures earlier within this paper has emphasised how many choices are second best options, or are simply a default residual after other options have been rejected or have simply not been acted upon.

4. **Choice.** From this interaction of context, choice influencer and chooser, will emerge a 'Choice'. That choice is not fixed or irrevocable, however, and itself is subject to interaction with the other components of the model, and hence subject to change. It is important to recognise, therefore, that choosers may revisit any of the stages many times, as significant changes in context (e.g. policy changes), or new information provided by choice influencers (e.g. careers education and guidance input), are drawn to the chooser's attention.

Travelling the pathways of education and training

The model we have described above provides an objective view of the nature of choice in education and training markets. Our interviews with many young people and their parents through our research suggests, however, that to each individual the story of their choosing and the way in which they follow 'their' pathway is more a narrative of a personal history than a systems model can portray. We believe the choice process may be perceived, therefore, like a journey, where decisions and choices made along the way determine, not individually but through the product of their interaction, the final destination to be reached.

The concept of a career or educational trajectory is an oversimplification, for it suggests a logical link - once a student is on a particular path then that leads, inexorably to a specific, or one of a narrow range of, outcomes. An analogy of journeying, following pathways, is much more appropriate. The model is that of a careers and education and training 'landscape', representing a three dimensional view of the whole careers and jobs field.

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What's the Point? Pupils' Perceptions of the Relevance of Studying History and Geography to their Future Employability

Ken Adey and Mary Biddulph

This article draws upon the findings of an ongoing inquiry into pupils' perceptions of the relative usefulness of studying history and geography. A questionnaire survey of over 1400 Year 9 pupils in ten East Midlands' comprehensive schools was undertaken in the summer term 1999 and follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same cohort of pupils at the end of Year 11. The findings suggest that their understanding of the relative usefulness of both history and geography in their future lives is in the main limited to naïve reference to forms of employment. There is a clear lack of understanding of the unique contribution the study of these subjects can make to pupils' future employability. It is argued that pupils will only begin to appreciate the career relevance of these subjects when the issues of historical relevance and geographical complexity and topicality are made explicit in the teaching of these subjects.

Take-up and perceptions of subject usefulness

Although the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) had insisted that the school curriculum should be 'balanced and broadly based' (OFSTED, 1995, p.18), the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a steady decline in the number of pupils opting to study history and/or geography after the age of 14 (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1996; Department for Education and Employment, 1999). Clearly part of the problem lies with restricted option choice post-14 and with the attraction for many pupils of studying subjects newly available to them at this stage in their school career (e.g. sociology; economics). The introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects will obviously exacerbate this problem. However, a questionnaire survey of over 1400 Year 9 pupils in 10 East Midlands' comprehensive schools (conducted in 1999) and follow-up small group interviews with Year 11 pupils in 2001 also revealed unfavourable perceptions in the minds of pupils about the usefulness and career relevance of both subjects.

There is a long history of evidence that perceptions of subject usefulness in relation to intended careers are important factors in option decision-making (For example, Reid *et al.*, 1974, Pratt *et al.*, 1984, Stables and Wikeley, 1997, Lord and Harland, 2000). There is evidence also that the connections pupils make between subject choice and career

intentions are often ill informed. Ryrie *et al.* (1979) noted that '... not infrequently the supposed usefulness of particular subjects for particular jobs was somewhat doubtful or unrealistic' (p.54) and Stables and Wikeley (1997) concluded that 'The naïve linkage of school subjects to careers ("there is no point in doing art unless you are going to be an artist") not only betrays a sadly narrow view of education but is also essentially problematic in its assumptions' (p.402).

Dubious career links

The East Midlands' questionnaire survey has revealed also that for both history and geography most Year 9 pupils try to relate study usefulness to career intentions but that the nature of this relationship is often extremely unrealistic. In history, commonly expressed dubious career links saw study of the subject as useful preparation for jobs such as paramedic, nurse, pharmacist (because of the study of 'The History of Medicine' as part of the GCSE syllabus in many schools) and receptionist. Others felt that history *would be useful* if you wanted a history-related career (e.g. as a history teacher, museum worker, archaeologist), although few expressed the intention of seeking such careers. In geography, usefulness was related to employment in the travel industry or the armed forces or to everyday situations such as being able to read a map so that you did not get lost when travelling! Very few pupils were able to identify any aspect of the intrinsic value of studying either subject.

The follow-up interviews with Year 11 pupils showed that by the end of Key Stage 4 there were some pupils who could identify the distinctive contribution history and geography made to their learning. In history, some saw the relevance of knowing about and understanding past events:

'You have to explore the background to things, the reasons why something happened, and you can relate that sometimes to real life'; and

'It gives you an inside view of why things are the way they are in the world today'.

Others stressed the importance of the skills they had developed through the study of history:

'Like all the election stuff that's going on – It's all propaganda... If you listen to what the political parties are saying, a couple of years ago I would have believed it all but having done history you start to sort out what's fact and what isn't'; and

'When you are doing sources you have to analyse it rather than just take it for what you see... seeing things for more than what they appear on the surface'.

Some of the connections now being made between subject relevance and future career were more realistic, especially in relation to careers in law:

'I want to be a lawyer, so - arguing cases and putting forward a well-presented argument and looking at things and maybe not taking it at face value. Like the provenance of sources - That's really useful, and weighing up the evidence and being analytical'.

However, for many pupils there was still no real understanding of the purpose of historical study in relation to knowledge, understanding or skills, and unrealistic subject-career connections remained:

'We're never going to use the history of medicine unless we go into medicine'; and

'Other than writing there isn't really many skills in it'.

For geography the term 'useful' was applied by pupils in the Year 11 survey in a range of different ways. Some appreciated that geographical themes relating to the study of people and places provided them with insights into real events, patterns and process that they might not otherwise have understood. This was particularly true of development themes where pupils could see that geography presented them with the opportunity to *understand* the nature of difference and to value such difference.

'It gives you greater knowledge of the world and what's happening...you learn about different countries and their way of life;' and

'When you're doing development it gives you a different perspective on the world and you see it in a different light.'

One or two pupils did elect to study geography at Key Stage 4 because they believed it could contribute in some direct way to their chosen career. One pupil decided to opt to study GCSE geography because he wanted to be an astrophysicist. He thought that the physical aspects of geography, particularly geomorphology, climatology and hydrology would provide him with the necessary skills and understanding which would enable him to recognise and interpret landscapes:

'...in the future I want to be able to do something with astronomy and astrophysics and I want to be able to recognise land features as in the physical side of geography... I now know and recognise a lot of land features which helped with job prospects. Others could see that some aspects of geography, such as industrial location, could be useful to pupils who saw themselves opting for some sort

of business career. However, they were hazy when it came to being more specific than this. For some students, even after two years of studying the subject at GCSE level their ability to articulate why geography might be useful to them was superficial and related to general interest rather than anything specific.

'I just thought it would be interesting - I liked earthquakes and volcanoes'; and

'I just thought that generally it would be helpful and I was interested in the physical aspects.'

The fact that pupils opted to study the subject just because they found it interesting may not be a specific problem. It is quite refreshing that some pupils opt for subjects at this level because they are interested in it rather than because they have a specific career aspiration.

However, what is worrying is the difficulty many seemed to have in articulating the usefulness of geography, a discipline which claims to be relevant, topical and 'all around us', to their development as active and concerned individuals with an increasing sense of responsibility for contributing to current issues and debates.

The role of subject associations

Both the Historical Association and the Geographical Association are contributing to attempts to raise the status of their respective subjects in schools. The Historical Association's major contribution has targeted Year 9 pupils who are about to make their option choices for GCSE. Each year it produces materials (e.g. posters, CD-ROMs, flyers) that attempt to illustrate the relevance of historical study. The main purpose of these materials has been to show that people with a background of history study occupy a very wide variety of occupations: the 2001 flyer depicts twenty men and women working in jobs ranging from speech therapist to maintenance engineer; from special effects technician to actor; from cabinet maker to marketing manager. The Geographical Association is equally busy. It too produces a support pack outlining the links between geography as a school subject and possible career links. There is also a new position statement for geography in which the geographical association identifies what it perceives to be the key outcomes for geographical education. Here reference is made to the links between geography and the world of work:

'geographers with their skills of analysis and synthesis are highly employable.' (GA: 2002a).

In another recent publication, *Developing the case for geography* (2002b), there is explicit reference to geography graduates being among the most employable in the country.

Too little? Too late?

Useful though these contributions are is it too little, too late? If more pupils are to continue with the study of history and geography post-14, they need to begin to appreciate its usefulness well before Year 9, and they need more than a late reassurance that people who have studied history or geography have gained employment in many different occupations.

For history a key to this lies in the teaching of historical significance - In essence, an understanding of how past events affected people's lives, and an appreciation of how this contributes to an increased understanding of life today - something that is much neglected in history teaching at present. Such *understanding* is developed through both the content and the processes of studying history. It is this *understanding* of key concepts and human motivation and conduct that serves to open up such a wide variety of occupations to those with a history background. For pupils to want to study geography post-14 the evidence from the pupils themselves seems to suggest that they need a much

earlier understanding of the purpose of the subject and this needs to be more clearly articulated by teachers in the classroom.

Topicality is a key aspect of relevance in geography and is clearly part of the challenge of teaching the subject. For pupils to see real purpose in studying geography they do not necessarily need to see direct links between geography and a specific career path. What they need is to understand that geography is 'topical' and that it helps them to understand real places, real people and the complex interrelationships that bind them all together.

Until history addresses historical significance and geography complexity and topicality pupils will continue to ask: 'What's the point in doing this?' Until they understand the point, there is little hope of increasing the number of pupils who opt to study history or geography beyond the age of 14.

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Career Success in a New Perspective: An Interview with Michael Arthur

Gitte S. Nielsen

Michael Arthur grew up in the UK and is now a Professor of Management at Suffolk University, Boston, USA. He is author of *The New Careers* (Sage, 1999, with Kerr Inkson and Judith Pringle) and editor of a series of books aimed at developing career theory, including *Handbook of Career Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), *The Boundaryless Career* (Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Career Creativity* (Oxford University Press, 2002). The interview below was originally published in the February 2002 Danish journal *Civiløkonomen*, and the interviewer is editor of that journal. Michael is currently a Visiting Fellow at NICEC.

What is the state of the art in human resources - and what are you working on right now?

You ask about human resources, but there's a question - resources for whom? As typically viewed through the lens of 'human resource management' the person is a resource of the employer. This is a way of thinking we have inherited from the 'industrial state' era that followed World War II. To oversimplify, it means that we are supposed to do what the employer wants rather than what we want for ourselves. That doesn't work any more. Indeed, it seems immoral.

Immoral?

When a company could be reasonably sure of offering lifetime employment, it was more defensible to ask people to do the company's bidding. Doing so was a response to the company's offer of employment security. Today, a company that claims to offer such security is deceiving itself - and its employees. So people need to think of themselves as resources in a larger sense, to the occupations, industries, and economies in which their careers are invested. Companies can come and go, while industries and economies stay healthy.

Can you explain that a bit more?

Take the independent film industry. A new firm gets formed just about every time a movie gets made and then the firm is disbanded on the movie's completion. But the industry thrives because people make their own career and learning investments in each movie project and then stay closely networked over future opportunities. The same phenomenon is largely true in the software industry, the cellular phone industry and in many other industries that we used to think of as providing permanent jobs. Healthy industries don't offer permanent jobs any more. There's too much change going on.

So what's the moral high ground for companies today?

Simply to be honest with the employee. Don't promise what you can't deliver. Do try to provide a good learning opportunity so that the people will be more employable if

and when they move on. And get rid of those old assumptions that people can't be trusted. Also, don't claim you have got rid of the old assumptions until you've cleaned out old-fashioned seniority-based pay and promotion systems or pension schemes that are back-loaded according to length of service.

Is there anything else in it for companies?

How about being part of something larger, and more dynamic than the old employment contract ever supposed? How about being part of a healthy industry in which people come and go and pollinate firms with knowledge like bees pollinate the flowers in a meadow? How about being among the firms that take best advantage of this cross-pollination? What came first, Nokia or the regional industry conditions that host Nokia? Didn't the industry conditions come first? Yet you wouldn't think so if you read the mainstream management and human resource management advice.

So that brings us back to people?

Back to people and their careers, but let's be clear what we mean. The basic meaning of 'career' is the person's - unfolding set of work experiences over time. Seen in this light, it's up to the individual to make what he or she wants to out of his or her career. There's no need to make social attributions about what represents success. Having fun or keeping a roof over the family home or keeping enough time free to pursue serious hobbies can all be forms of career success.

Could we get back to the state of art of research in human resource management and career development?

We need to pursue a new kind of research that responds to new questions. A central issue is the way we view career mobility. Looking at employee turnover only looks at one side, and what is most commonly seen as a negative side, of the mobility picture. However, we have done very little to systematically track when and where people come and go and what they carry with them. Doing research on any single organisation or even a group of organisations doesn't

address how knowledge flows within and between industries. We have tended to dismiss as 'noise' what may be most important.

If you are looking at careers themselves, what do you see?

People are more empowered and more in charge of their own careers when those careers develop through a series of jobs that nurture an individual's unfolding enthusiasm, skill sets and networks. People are economic actors in their own right. The image used before was one of cross-pollinating knowledge. Each of us brings knowledge with us, picking up more as we go along, stimulating other people's accumulation of knowledge, and distributing knowledge in the economy. However, unlike pollen, knowledge multiplies each time we share it.

Perhaps young people are brought up to share knowledge more easily? Perhaps they realise we can all get 'richer' through that sharing?

Let's hope so! However, many influential people still look at knowledge in the traditional way. McKinsey & Co recently proclaimed a 'war for talent' where they treated knowledge like bread, or cash in the pocket. The image suggests that instead of sharing knowledge we ought to guard it. The message suggests companies ought to hoard people and even constrain their professional communications.

Why not think less about employment and think more about knowledge management? Companies can accumulate and retain knowledge while people come and go. For example, companies can make effective use of management consultants, like McKinsey consultants, by having them work with a project group, and learning from the consultant's experience. This goes for working with other outside specialists as well - like suppliers, customers, distributors and alliance partners.

What can career research be used for in practical life?

One of the most important things is to help people effectively participate in economic life on their own terms. That will in turn provide a key to promote creativity and innovation in the economy at large. We won't do this through formal hierarchies or job descriptions. However we might do it by thinking about the possibilities in bringing people together in project-centred teams. In effective project teams, the members learn from each other while the project unfolds. Moreover, relationships developed during the project have the potential to last a lifetime to the mutual benefit of the people involved as well as of their future employers.

And how do older people fit in?

They must also make career investments. They, too, have a capacity for new learning. We all know examples of lively older people. But we haven't made it easy for everyone to continue to learn and grow. So it's hard when people have

been constrained by old employment practices and can't have their time back. Nevertheless, it's better that we acknowledge the problem. And people may have more knowledge and learning capacity than some observers would presume. The best we can do is work on the problems in as constructive a way as we can while making sure we don't end up in the same place with the next generation of older workers.

You have been working in the UK, USA and a little bit in Denmark. Do you see any characteristic likenesses or differences?

A lot of deference has been paid to large American companies over the last fifty years, with California's Silicon Valley as a notable exception. Britain also seems to take its cues from large organisations and to grant them a special place in the social system. However, the traditional large corporation may not be the economic engine of the 21st century. The knowledge economy changes the rules. Companies may come and go, but the knowledge generated in them hangs around. It's not clear that either the US or the UK offers the best model for the future. Let companies be more temporary and adaptive and let people go for jobs where they can learn the most.

Like good actors want to work with Woody Allen and (Danish Film Director) Lars Von Trier for little money but a large learning experience?

Exactly. Self-respecting actors seek to work with such people. They put learning before earning. Yet we tend to deny the chance for this self-organisation and re-organisation to occur in everyday employment practice. We can do better.

Note

Michael Arthur will give the 2002 annual lecture at the Centre for Guidance Studies on 11th December from 4.30pm-5.30pm.

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Import Controls

Bill Law

Globalisation offers big-time scope in the search for 'good practice'. But it also kills off much of what is distinctive in local cultures.

There is no denying that careers work is globally spread. But it is also locally rooted; and so, it is not idle to ask:

'How locally appropriate does a careers-work programme need to be, in order to be effective?'

In coping with this question, the NICEC consultation on careers education (reported in the last edition of the Journal) does better than most international studies. It sets out cultural differences, particularly in the way Connexions is set up, but it seeks no 'the-same-for-everybody' consensus.

And it really would be crazy to urge the world-wide importation of other people's 'good practice', without first understanding why each culture develops its own distinctive form of provision.

Career is socially transacted - in response to other people, with them and for them. And we best know other people face-to-face. Career development must, then, first be understood locally. NICEC Associate Phil Hodgkinson is the contemporary trailblazer for the development of such ideas. He sets out how a culture of up-bringing establishes habits-of-mind which shape the approach to working life. He cites good sociology in strong support of the position; but it is no less strongly supported by evolutionary psychology's growing understanding of the special value of learning in groups.

The implications of all this are startling: the usefulness of learning is not to be found in lists of what people should learn, nor even in accounts of how they learn; it is best accounted for in terms of where - and with whom - people learn. A recent monograph, 'How Careers Really Work' (below), gathers the evidence, applies it to career management and illustrates how it accounts for career learning in a range of cultures.

The new thinking strongly supports Connexions, which - more than any policy-supported career programme - links career to local culture.

Cultures of career

Culture comes in all sizes: thinking big, it is possible to talk about Asian and American cultural differences; more locally, cultural differences are sources of reciprocal envy on both sides of La Manche; and - on these islands - the Welsh, Scots, Irish and English make a point of seeing things differently. At neighbourhood level, jokes which might get roars of

approval in some urban rugby club, are found wholly unfunny in certain parts of Hampstead.

Humour points straight at cultural attitudes: the risible identifies the insider, the valued, what can be changed... and what can't. It also identifies 'who can be expected to do what'. We start to take in those myths, its music and these images as children. And what we learn varies - between continents, nations, classes, ethnicities... and neighbourhoods.

Such learning is driven as much by feelings as by rationality. To the individual, it feels like no-less-than the 'the way things are'. People go on believing, long after they have forgotten how they learned. Beliefs accumulate and shape ideas about what 'we can do', what is 'beyond our reach', what 'I want' and what is 'not for me!'. And, so, the group infuses the self.

The career-development impact of such habits-of-mind is massive. And they are different in Haslemere, in Harlech and in Hamilton.

The careers-work cheeseburger

Careers work itself draws on cultural roots. In England, early psychometric-matching models felt good in a culture optimistic about the uses of science for recovery in a still-threatened society. Within twenty years, a more open and hopeful culture welcomed career liberation, rather than stability. But a battering of oil crises, recurring balance-of-payment deficits and discontented winters hardened our collective head, so that linking careers work to how the economy was thought to work seemed - at the time - like a

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good idea. Even the DOTS analysis is not free of cultural references: it had its highly individualistic heyday when it seemed possible to believe that 'there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families'.

Then, as you may have heard, history ended. And, with nothing much to look forward to, we looked back. There is such a thing as post-modern careers work: a pastiche of purposes: community stability, economic benefits, educational standards, environmental protection, personal liberation, rational choice, and social equity. All of these? Really? They come in no particular order - no theme, no story... no history-in-the-making. Lost priorities.

It lays us wide open to globalisation; which has its own priorities - local priorities, are - in global terms - little more than clutter. Global-capital can super-efficiently deliver McDonald's, Murdoch, and Manchester United; but it really doesn't matter all that much where they are to be delivered. The search is for 'world class' standards - the ideal mixture of sugar and fat, the perfect body in the perfect home-and-garden, the winning team - all that true believers might dream.

Careers work also has its true believers. It is possible to bang the drum for careers work in much the same way that Man United fans shout for their team. They mark progress, not from history, but in score lines and on league tables - reached by the perfect mixture of economic benefits, raised standards and whatever else suits global purposes. And some international studies look no further than the benchmarks which set such standards.

Global standards require central control. But local purveyors really should examine, probe and evaluate the product, before they start banging the drum for it. Yet middle-men of standards rarely say anything about why - of all the standards they might have sold us - their standards are the indicators of 'high quality' for careers work. How do they know? It's a question even true believers should ask - come to think of it, it should be asked especially by true believers.

Meanwhile, back in Haslemere, we're dealing with a belief that there is, out there somewhere, some ideal recipe for careers work, to which our programme only approximates. Our quest is to knead what we have towards the ideal, until it becomes the global cheeseburger of careers work.

Restarting history

The NICEC consultation raised such issues - in particular about central control.

'All countries recognise a tension between making careers education guidelines prescriptive and giving schools flexibility and autonomy over the design of their programmes. Flexible guidelines allow schools to be more responsive to individual and local needs but may result in careers education being squeezed by competing priorities.

Prescription of "core" can result in the minimum provision becoming the maximum.'

Because people's work connects them to other people, and because the impact of learning is substantially influenced by the 'with-whom' of learning, then local experience must be heeded. But central directives cannot take account of local priorities; indeed, they suppress them.

International comparison is useful, but not so that Hamilton can import Harlech's goodies. Comparison is more valuable for the way it throws into relief what is distinctive about one's own work. International perspectives help us most, by helping us better to see ourselves. After all, who really knows Haslemere, who only Haslemere knows?

Looked at like this, international studies become less about disseminating the structures of provision and more about releasing the dynamics of change. And, in the dynamics of change, the distant-and-directive figures less prominently than the close-up-and-personal.

The local is asserting itself again. The Hay Group found it so, among effective head teachers willing to break the grip of central control:

'The most powerful characteristic shared by all our headteachers was a willingness, in some instances a delight, in challenging assumptions... A world of education with a pervasive regime or standards, statutes and regulations... can bring heads into direct conflict with the authorities. ... Some rules are bureaucratic restriction on the ability of schools to react appropriately to their unique circumstances.'

And the NICEC consultation notes how, modifying psychology-driven thinking imported from the US, Irish schools are now being encouraged to develop Connexions-like team approaches, involving home-school and community-based workers, as well as guidance counsellors. The University of Limerick training programme in Guidance and Counselling is a national leader for this trend - developing modules on career development in its social context and planning to train people in locally-rooted research. NICEC associate Rachel Mulvey looks after another version of such a programme - in the University of East London - where trainees are all engaged in locally based 'real-world' research projects.

Teetering, momentarily, towards grabbing at other people's solutions, the NICEC consultation noted the attractions of Welsh and Scottish developments. But, let's not apply for the import licence just yet: Connexions is a response to the intractability of social stratification - the process which traps people in their culture of origin. Connexions cannot work unless we can give more help to people who have taken from their culture a deep scepticism about the usefulness of

education. Such cultural habits-of-mind are deeply internalised in some English regions and neighbourhoods. If any nation needs a radical version of Connexions, England needs it. The Scots and the Welsh will speak for themselves.

It is often possible to predict reactions to Connexions on the basis of the political and institutional interests of the protagonists - strange how beliefs and interests coincide. We need a more thoughtful and independent analysis than that. As Hay, Limerick and East London demonstrate, practitioners - listening to their people in their neighbourhoods - are best able to inform it.

Where this dynamic of change kicks in, history restarts.

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Note

Bill has transferred his work on the careers café to a new site: www.hihohiho.com. The new site contains all of the practical material so far developed for the café and will shortly contain more. Bill is no longer associated with The Global Careers-work Café.

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NICEC NEWS

Congratulations to Bill Law on his appointment as Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Career and Personal Development (CCPD) at Canterbury Christ Church University College. Visit the career learning café at www.hihohiho.com

About NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) is a network organisation initiated and sponsored by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC). NICEC's aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research. It conducts applied research and development work, of national and international relevance, related to career education and guidance in educational, work and community settings. Career education and guidance consists of a range of processes designed to help individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their lifelong progress in learning and in work.

There is a NICEC home page on the CRAC web site: www.crac.org.uk/nicec

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Recent publications by NICEC members

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