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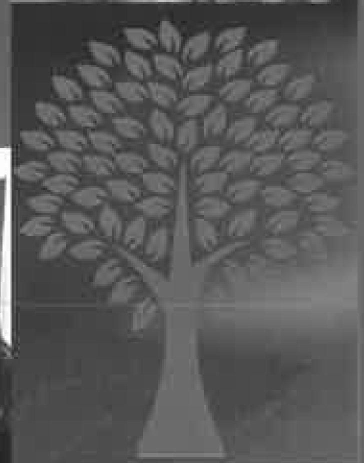

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Guidelines for contributors

Contributions are welcomed and will be subject to anonymous academic and practitioner review. Main articles should normally be 1,000-3,000 words in length. They should be submitted to the editor by post or email at the above address. Taped contributions welcomed.

VT Careers Management

Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published on behalf of NICEC by VT Careers Management. VT Careers Management is a major provider of careers guidance to young people in the south-east as well as a publisher of careers materials and software products.

Aims and scope

Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published for:

- Career practitioners working in schools, colleges, careers/ connexions services, higher education careers services, adult guidance agencies, companies, community organisations, etc.
- Trainers, lecturers, advisers and consultants working with career practitioners.
- Individuals working towards qualifications in career education, career guidance and career management.
- Government departments and business and community organisations with an interest in the work of career practitioners.

It sets out to:

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

EDITORIAL

Flexibility and Identity

Anthony Barnes, Editor

The identity of careers education and guidance in English schools and colleges has come under renewed pressure in the last few years. Explanations may be sought at different levels. Curriculum developments are a factor. The need to accommodate some aspects of citizenship teaching (a new national curriculum subject since September 2002) in the already overcrowded PSHE and careers timetable ghetto has not helped. In many schools, careers education and guidance is already subsumed within PSHE. A parallel trend in some schools is to subsume careers education and guidance within work-related teaching and learning. In both cases, these are pragmatic decisions often carried out with little understanding or clarity regarding the distinctive purposes of careers education and guidance. Targets and league-table accountability pressures have also played their part. Senior managers see little immediate return in investing in careers education and guidance in terms of the standing of the school in the public's eyes. Similarly, overburdened teachers and tutors whose pay is now linked to 'hard' performance outputs are understandably more reluctant to put time and effort into careers work which is not susceptible to these kinds of measures and hence for which there is little obvious return. A third major factor is a shift in the policy on career guidance and the re-modelling of services as part of Connexions.

These threats to the identity of careers education and guidance should not let us overlook the fact that there have been opportunities in recent years to strengthen careers education and guidance by building a changed identity. The introduction of 'The Real Game' at Key Stage 3, for example, has been a significant development even if it now has to be justified as a citizenship rather than as a careers activity. The emphasis on guidance and support in '14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards' also provides a new opportunity to put careers work on the map. However, the dominant impression of the schools' careers work in England is that of a semi-professional field which lacks the capacity to seize the opportunity to latch onto mainstream educational agendas and demonstrate how careers education and guidance can contribute to their success. Careers specialists in schools and colleges generally have too little time, insufficient inputs and a training deficit. They have only partially won the hearts and minds of the people they work with, their external partners and the parents they serve. Those who stand to benefit most from effective careers education and guidance have not been persuaded to become its champions.

A more detailed account of the performance of the field is given in 'Improving Careers Education - An analysis of recent research and inspection findings' which is published in this issue of the NICEC journal by kind permission of the Connexions Service National Unit. I wrote this paper with Janet Donoghue and Jackie Sadler for the national careers education support programme. This programme was launched in November 2001 to generate activities and resources for careers staff in schools and colleges and those who support them. Its most visible manifestation is the support programme website (www.cegnet.co.uk) which provides news, teaching and learning resources, a helpline, links to relevant websites and discussion rooms. The paper published here is part of the research and consultation strand to identify the needs and priorities of careers staff and their supporters. One of the messages from this activity has been the concern about the break in the research and inspection evidence. The DfES has not commissioned any research into careers education and guidance since 2001 and the last national survey by Ofsted was in 1998. It is vital for policy-makers as well as schools and colleges to know how careers education and guidance is faring 'under Connexions' and what good practice is out there that we can build upon.

The theme of the identity of careers work is also taken up by Bill Law in his Points of Departure column. Bill reminds us of those who have written about the chameleon-like nature of careers work but urges us to stay in command of our own destiny and to use our flexibility to move forward with a clear sense of direction and purpose.

Two substantial articles in this issue relate to the processes by which young people establish their adult and occupational identities. Phil Hodkinson and Martin Bloomer discuss how Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is important for our understanding of career progression and the role of guidance. (The second part of this article will appear in the Spring issue.) Tim Oates who will be giving a keynote presentation at the forthcoming 'Cutting Edge II' conference in Coventry in April 2003 looks at the wider educational issues affecting identity formation in young people and the need for a more integrated and co-ordinated set of policy levers if the goal of unleashing more of young people's potential is to be realised.

Enjoy!

Improving Careers Education
An analysis of recent research and inspection findings

Anthony Barnes, Janet Donoghue and Jackie Sadler

Introduction

The report which forms the basis of this article was written for the national support programme for careers education. In November 2001, the Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) contracted VT Careers Management and the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers (NACGT) to provide a national support programme for staff in schools and colleges involved in careers education and those who support them.

The report considers schools and colleges separately. This reflects the different approaches to careers education of these two sectors. Important issues relating to special schools are discussed within the section of the report dealing with schools. There have been fewer studies of careers education in special schools and colleges.

The research findings for both schools and colleges are discussed in relation to the following key themes which have a bearing on effectiveness and improvement in careers education:

- **policy initiatives**
- **working with partners**
- **school/college-wide leadership and management**
- **curriculum provision and development**
- **evaluation, inspection and quality standards**
- **training and professional development**

The relationship of careers education to careers education and guidance

The emphasis in this report is on 'careers education' for 11-19 year olds. It is helpful to define careers education and its relationship to the other main components of careers education and guidance.

'Careers education and guidance' is the recognised term for the combination of curriculum-focused and guidance-focused processes and activities which enable young people to construct and manage their careers. It is concerned with helping young people to make progress in learning and work and to make sense of their experience of career. It also seeks to build on the informal and incidental careers education and guidance which takes place outside school and college.

Specifically, careers education and guidance helps young people to:

- understand themselves and the influences on them;
- investigate opportunities in learning and work;
- show initiative and enterprise;
- present themselves to others;
- make use of guidance;
- make career plans;
- make decisions;
- manage change and transition.

For practical purposes, it is convenient to identify three interrelated components of careers education and guidance: careers education, careers information and careers guidance. 'Careers education' refers to teaching and learning activities, usually provided in a group setting, which facilitate the career learning and development of young people. 'Careers information' refers to activities requiring information skills, usually provided in a careers library, and involving access to a wide range of resources (including people) and different media (including ICT) which improve the career knowledge of young people. 'Careers guidance' refers to guidance activities (e.g. advising and counselling) usually offered on a one-to-one or small group basis, which enable individuals to apply their career learning and development to the construction and management of their own careers. The effectiveness of careers education and guidance is linked to how well these three components are combined.

SECONDARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS
Policy initiatives

Policy is a major external influence on the purpose and scope of careers education and guidance in schools and colleges. It can be an important lever for change setting the agenda and driving developments through the provision of resources. However, the effects of policy are not clear-cut. Professionals change reforms as much as reforms change professionals. Ofsted (1998a&b) found that the impact of government initiatives was higher in mainstream secondary schools than in special schools. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were least likely to have benefited from policy initiatives.

The aims of careers education and guidance policy in the late 1990s were to raise the status and profile of careers education and guidance, promote good practice and fund

training for staff and careers information resources (DfEE, 1997a). The high profile of careers education and guidance at this time was linked to its perceived role in supporting the wider economic policy agenda. It was argued that better careers education and guidance would prepare young people for lifelong learning and employability and help them develop the skills needed for the UK to compete successfully in the global economy. It was also argued that careers education and guidance would improve the matching of people to learning and work opportunities thereby reducing course switching, failure and drop-out which were a drain on the public purse. These arguments continue to influence the policy debate on the role of careers education and guidance.

In contrast to the economic arguments for better careers education and guidance, the *Excellence in Schools* White Paper (1997) suggested, for the first time, that aspects of careers education and guidance had a role in promoting higher educational standards and more effective schools. The institutional argument was subsequently investigated by NFER for the DfEE (Morris *et al.* 2000) and the Department followed this up by publishing *School Improvement: How careers work can help* (2000b). Nevertheless, the impact of this policy thrust has remained relatively low key.

1997-98 was a turning point in the formulation of policy arguments for careers education and guidance combining the 'social justice' argument with the 'economic' case. Careers education and guidance was given a role in combating social exclusion. The first manifestation of this policy was the so-called focusing agenda in which careers services were asked to target their help on those who needed it most. This meant significant shifts in the deployment of careers service resources to education, with gains for some schools but losses for others. A study for the DfES found that schools lacked capacity to compensate for the re-direction of careers service resources (Morris et al., 2001). This report also suggested that the gap was widening between schools with good careers programmes and those where provision was poor. Similarly, the QPID review of the effects of focusing (2001) found that few schools had made substantial reviews of their own arrangements in order to compensate for reduced allocations by careers services. This was also linked to schools' difficulties in responding to rapid and continuous change and a lack of clarity about the role and the desired outcomes of careers work. The careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.* 2000) also found confusion about the role and priorities of the careers service.

The current policy context for careers education and guidance in England is linked to the implementation of Connexions, a national strategy for improving participation and raising achievement in education and training by tackling obstacles to educational and social inclusion. Connexions is a universal and inclusive but differentiated service, offering and co-ordinating support for young people in all aspects of their personal, social, educational and career development. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of Connexions on careers education in schools, although evidence will emerge from Ofsted inspections of Connexions Partnerships. Two studies early in the history of Connexions provide limited evidence of the impact of Connexions. The NERU project (2001) found that there was general support for the 'philosophy' of Connexions but much confusion, uncertainty and anxiety among institutions, particularly in relation to how the career development needs of the majority of young people will be met if heavy targeting is introduced. The NFER study (Morris *et al.*, 2001) confirmed this view and articulated the concern that the 1998 focusing agenda had diminished the status of careers education and guidance by associating it with problem students. Both studies were sceptical of the assumption that ICT-based solutions could meet the needs of the majority of young people and provide a satisfactory baseline service.

The most recent policy initiative is the consultation document for the *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* Green Paper (DfES, 2002a). It suggests that careers education and guidance has a significant role in the provision of advice, guidance and support for young people. It aims to ensure that young people have access to impartial and independent help in formulating and maintaining an individual learning plan and are well-prepared for making relevant and appropriate choices. This initiative represents an important re-statement of the principle of meeting individual guidance needs through the provision of independent and impartial help.

Careers professionals and practitioners argue that careers education and guidance is frequently 'squeezed' by competing policy priorities such as the emphasis on standards as measured by examinations and assessment and the introduction of citizenship as a national curriculum subject. They also voice concerns that some of the policy objectives for careers education and guidance are unrealistic and inappropriate in relation to staffing, curriculum and timetable constraints in many schools. Further, careers education and guidance may be able to ameliorate the effects of social exclusion, but is unlikely to reach the roots of social exclusion which lie in the structural bases of economic and social disadvantage.

Working with partners

The English system is sometimes characterised as one in which schools provide a firm base of careers education while careers services (and existing Connexions services) provide careers guidance. This is an over-simplification of what happens in practice. The careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.* 2000) found that careers information was viewed as a joint responsibility, careers-related skill development was seen as a joint responsibility in some two-thirds of cases, and careers guidance was still held to be largely the role of the careers adviser with some school support.

Most surveys and inspection reports show that the relationship between schools, including special schools, and careers services is purposeful and reasonably effective. Ofsted (1998b) reported that sometimes careers advisers have insufficient specialist expertise and understanding for working with students with special educational needs. The NFER study on the delivery of careers education and guidance in schools (Morris *et al.*, 2001) reported that over half of senior careers service managers felt that the focusing agenda had led to strained relationships with schools and significant difficulties in maintaining the profile of careers education and guidance. The QPID review (2001) similarly reported difficulties arising from a reduction of resources allocated to work in education of 15-25% between 1998-2000, with larger reductions in post-16 work. They found that careers advisers in many schools were under considerable pressure to provide a level of service that exceeded the time allocated by their managers.

The QPID review (2001) also highlighted shortcomings in the way that changes in careers service priorities were communicated to schools. This too has implications for the implementation of Connexions.

This review also noted that careers services were finding it difficult to establish a leading, local role in the assessment and development of careers education and guidance. They found it easier to work in partnership with committed schools which were interested in improving the qualifications of careers staff, achieving the local quality award and taking part in new projects. Careers services lacked leverage to encourage schools to give sufficient priority to careers education and guidance, although some careers services endeavoured to use partnership agreement negotiations for this purpose. The QPID review noted that individual careers advisers lacked confidence and skills in taking on a curriculum consultancy role; and the careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.* 2000) commented that it was still rare for careers advisers to be viewed as curriculum consultants other than in an informal sense as the careers co-ordinator's critical friend. However, some careers and Connexions services have appointed staff to become careers education and guidance specialists. The study recommended that these services should develop organisational practices that ensure more effective links between these specialists and individual careers/personal advisers working in schools. They also recommended that the DfES should agree ways to ensure that Connexions partnerships provide consistent support for the development of careers education. The issue is further complicated by the need to harness the contributions of other agencies such as education-business link organisations and strategic bodies such as local education authorities and learning and skills councils.

Several research projects refer to the need for effective home-school links in relation to careers education. Morris *et al.* (2000) found mixed practice but concluded that links with parents and carers were generally underdeveloped. Ofsted (1998b) noted that special schools have good arrangements for liaising with, and involving parents in, career and transition planning. Semple (1994) highlighted the role of careers education and guidance in informing and updating parents and carers on changing opportunities and qualifications, but also in enabling them to hold careers-related conversations with their children. The NERU project (1999) noted that information relevant to the whole year group is communicated to parents but there is a lack of individualised communication. Ofsted (1998a) observed that schools make insufficient use of parents to help other people's children.

School-wide leadership and management

Most reports make the link between senior management support and the effectiveness of careers education and guidance (DfEE, 1998c; Morris *et al.*, 1999b; Morris *et al.*, 2000; Morris *et al.*, 2001). One of these studies (Morris *et al.* 1999b) suggested that senior management support for careers education and guidance has become increasingly overt. The survey by Morris *et al.* (2001) found that good structural support for careers education was evident in just under one-third of the schools in the study while the remaining schools displayed some major deficits in leadership and management capacity. Ofsted (1998b) reported that leadership and management was at least sound in eight out of ten special schools and good in over half.

The careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris et al., 2000) identified four distinctive roles for careers education and guidance which could persuade senior managers to pay it more attention. It could be seen as:

- an agent of curriculum and organisational change;
- a means of enhancing student self-esteem or motivation;
- a means of promoting lifelong learning and of reducing switching or drop-out; and
- a means of creating curriculum relevance.

The study also identified six key indicators of high status careers education and guidance:

- the seniority of the careers co-ordinator;
- the seniority of the staff teaching careers education and guidance;
- the extent of staff training;
- the allocation of administrative support;
- the allocation of protected time; and
- the extent of curriculum linkage and support (including accreditation for careers education and guidance).

This study also showed that some senior managers failed to involve careers advisers fully in the life of the school. Careers work was most effective when it was pro-actively managed, well-planned and connected with the wider curriculum in the school. Careers work was least effective

when senior management commitment was low, planning was poor and careers work was poorly integrated in the curriculum.

Another facet of effective practice highlighted by the Morris *et al.* study (2001) was the crucial importance of internal networking. They found evidence of effective networking with curriculum review and pastoral groups by careers co-ordinators or their line managers in nearly two-thirds of schools; but the study concluded that few schools were ready to implement Connexions. Most schools either lacked an integrated support system or were failing to make sufficient links between careers education and guidance and the wider curriculum including work-related learning, citizenship, key skills and PSHE.

The study of 30 schools carried out by Morris *et al.* for the DfEE (2000) provides a number of pointers as to how careers education and guidance should be managed at the school level in order to optimise its contribution to school effectiveness and improvement. The report concluded that there was no universal formula for achieving this benefit. School effectiveness was linked to multiple strategies rather than a single strategy such as better careers work. Nevertheless, there were discernible associations between effective careers education and guidance and some indicators of effective performance. The study found it easier to detect an influence on curriculum management, the enrichment of the wider curriculum and student transitions than on attainment and attendance.

The authors found that the impact of careers education and guidance on school effectiveness was most evident in eight out of the 11 most effective schools that had adopted a partnership or guidance community approach. They identified the key elements of a guidance community approach as the existence of enabling structures (e.g. to permit internal networking), senior management support and complementary working between careers professionals. Additional elements included the extent to which external partners such as business and community partners were able to contribute effectively to both careers education and guidance and the wider school curriculum. The harnessing of careers education and guidance by schools was most effective where there was a clear vision of its role and purpose shared by staff, clear and achievable aims and objectives, a firm grounding in 'information' (with links being made between target-setting, performance data and destinations data) and an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system.

The careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.*, 2000) also reviewed the role of the careers co-ordinator. They found that the careers co-ordinator is central to the way in which senior management support for careers education and guidance is marketed and promoted within the school. Most co-ordinators were still the conduit for information flows between the careers service, the school and individuals. Over two-thirds fulfilled the roles of networker (e.g. liaising with staff over the delivery of the programme) and curriculum developer.

It is still the case, however, that few co-ordinators have the brief for post-16 provision and few are 'leading professionals' actively involved in delivery. These findings have implications for how careers education and guidance is promoted, the design of training programmes for careers staff and the future development of the co-ordinator role.

Curriculum provision and development

The concept of a careers programme and the terms used to provide careers help are not always well understood by young people. *Talking about 'Careers' - Young people's views of careers education and guidance at school* (DfEE, 1998a) challenges professionals' perspective on careers education and guidance. Group discussions with 226 students in Years 11 and 12 revealed that few understood what a careers programme was or the respective roles of teachers, careers co-ordinators and careers advisers. This suggested that a re-think may be needed in the way that careers education and guidance is provided and developed in the curriculum.

Careers education

Several studies report that the most frequently encountered delivery pattern for Key Stages 3 and 4 in around 70-80% of schools is careers activities as part of personal, social and health education (PSHE) or its equivalent (Ofsted, 1998; NACGT, 1999; Morris *et al.*, 2001; NERU, 2001). Other forms of provision include suspended or 'block' timetable events, careers as a separate subject and careers teaching within subjects (cross-curricular careers work). The NERU study reported that the careers programme appeared to be most effective and coherent in schools which combined delivery through PSHE with suspended or 'block' timetable events. However, another study (DfEE, 1998a) found that careers work was perceived as a low status activity tainted by its association with PSHE. Morris *et al* (2000) reported that only one-third of the schools with effective provision had strategies to facilitate appropriate input into subject areas. Morris *et al.* (2001) reported that 95% of schools made some careers provision at Key Stages 3 and 4, and just under 90% of schools with sixth forms made similar provision post 16, mainly through the tutorial programme.

The same study found that the quality of learning in careers education and guidance was also affected by the annual amount of curriculum time for careers work which could vary considerably. In Years 10 and 11, for example, one per cent of schools allocated one session a year while four per cent allocated one or two session per week. The average figures were just under 10 hours for Year 9, 14-15 hours for Year 10 and 13-14 hours for Year 11. According to the careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.*, 2000), there is a trend to shift the focus of activity from Year 11 to Year 10. 14-19 developments could

lead to a further shift with a need for significant inputs in Year 9 and some inputs in Years 7 and 8. Ofsted (1998a) found that young people were engaging earlier than ever in career development planning.

The length of careers sessions also has a bearing on the effectiveness of the careers programme. Short sessions such as 10-minute tutorials were generally held to be ineffective (Morris *et al.*,2001). A survey by Ofsted (1998a) also showed that carousel arrangements could exacerbate low standards when students do not receive careers inputs at the right time. It is likely that carousel systems also depress standards where students swap teachers after a short time and there is no continuity of learning, assessment and support.

Consultation by the DfEE (1997) established that schools welcomed non-statutory guidance on careers education but wished to decide for themselves the content and the allocation of time. However, a number of reports provide useful pointers as to how the content of careers programmes needs to change in order to better prepare young people for the world of work and employability. Davies (2002), for example, surveyed young people and business and invited responses from a range of organisations. His research showed that young people were aware of the need to be more entrepreneurial in their careers but felt they lacked the skills and confidence to do so. He recommended that some of the time currently devoted to work-related learning, equivalent to five days in the course of a young person's school career, could be refocused to promote 'enterprise capability'.

DfES support for *The Real Game* has had a major impact on Key Stage 3 careers programmes, especially in Year 8. Over 10,000 packs have been produced and other 'games' in the *Real Game* series including *Make It Real* (for students in Years 6-7), *Be Real* (for Years 9-11) and *Get Real* (for post-16) are being promoted in the UK.

Several studies refer to the challenge of providing appropriate differentiation. The NERU project, for example, found that careers education was provided relatively uniformly by year group with some fine tuning for those not progressing into FE or HE. Some schools in the careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.*, 2000) claimed that differentiation was not an issue while others had made some specific attempts to differentiate their careers provision. Broader strategies for differentiation were not particularly evident and some needs, especially for targeted information, were not being met. Better use of independent learning approaches, incorporating greater use of ICT, and more flexible grouping strategies could be central to timing elements so that they fit in better with students' developing needs.

A number of studies have tried with varying degrees of methodological success to measure the impact of careers programmes on learning outcomes for students. Two studies by the NFER for the DfEE (Morris *et al.*, 1999a; Morris *et al.* 1999b.) found that appropriate careers education and guidance provision had an impact on young people's overall opportunity awareness, research skills and transition skills. The earlier skill building started, the greater the benefit to the young person. The most ambitious study was the SWA Consulting report on the influence of careers education and guidance on pupils in Year 11 (DfEE, 1998c). The research included an analysis of baseline and final questionnaires completed by 603 students in the East Midlands. The report found that only one in seven students received an acceptable level of careers education and guidance inputs which may explain why students appear to show little progress in career-related learning in Year 11. The report suggested that students may have already reached a high level of learning outcomes before the start of Year 11. On the basis of self-reported outcomes, students already appear to have achieved a high level of outcomes with some progress registered during Year 11 in their opportunity awareness, decision-making and decidedness. It also appeared that there was a stronger association between end of Year 11 outcomes and background factors (e.g. academic attainment and school characteristics) rather than careers education and guidance inputs. The report also found an association between the extent of integration of careers education and guidance in the curriculum and progress achieved, but concluded that the integration of careers education and guidance is at a less than acceptable level for most students. An NFER study for the DfEE (1998a) similarly identified the need for more coherent, better organised, continuous and integrated careers programmes. Two other NFER publications - *Staying On* and *Leaving at 16* (1998) - emphasised the need for more and better careers education and guidance on all the options available to young people at the end of compulsory education.

The publication of *Learning Outcomes from Careers Education and Guidance* (QCA, 1999), generated interest in demonstrating the impact of careers education and guidance on young people's career-related learning. Morris *et al.* (2000) found that only four out of the 30 schools they studied were using or moving towards an outcomes-based approach. Further guidance is still needed to promote more effective practice in relation to learning outcomes. There is also a need for further research to identify key learning outcomes in careers education and guidance and how best to optimise individual learning.

NFER (DfEE, 1998a) revealed the preferences of students in Years 11 and 12 for active and practical careers activities over information-giving in large classes. Students disliked disclosing personal information in front of others and failed to see the link between self-awareness activities and making career choices. They were also dissatisfied with computer printouts which offered strange job suggestions. While they valued comprehensive careers information, they expressed their concerns about limited and biased information on post-16 options, restricted access to IT-based information and poorly-presented written material. Students wanted and

valued more and longer work experience placements, open days and careers conventions, and contact with knowledgeable and experienced adults. These findings have implications for the design of careers programmes in schools.

Ofsted (1998b) found that in many special schools and PRUs that the careers education and guidance programme was insufficient, inappropriate and lacking in breadth. Although the progress made by students was generally sound and, in a few cases, it was very good, Ofsted noted that assessment of progress was not well developed. Students often had unrealistic aspirations and limited career skills. They reported that work experience was often a strength of special school provision for careers education and guidance.

Some schools and national bodies are still unclear about the scope and value of careers education and guidance and its relationship to other areas of the curriculum such as PSHE and Citizenship (DfES, 2000a) and work-related learning (DfES, 2002c). A number of schools still view work experience and work-related activities as separate from careers education and guidance (Morris *et al.,* 2000). The IES/ER study of pre-16 work experience in England (Hillage *et al.,* 2001) was positive about the impact of work experience on some aspects of students' learning related to careers education and guidance. Teachers felt that work experience promoted students' personal and social development, enhanced their maturity and helped them to develop an understanding of the world of work. Fewer saw impacts in terms of broadening students' career horizons which reflects a long-standing concern that work experience sometimes reinforces rather than challenges stereotyped thinking. Students felt that work experience gave them a good idea of what work was like in their placement and, to a lesser extent, helped them to decide about their career. Just over half said that after their placement they felt more interested in doing well at school. These and other findings in the report suggest that the two-week block placement still has a valuable contribution to make to careers programmes, but there is scope for improving the gains which can be made.

Broadly similar conclusions may be drawn from Ofsted reports. *Improving City Schools* (2000) found that work experience and community projects broaden pupils' experiences and form an important link with local employers and services. *Extending work-related learning at Key Stage 4* (2001) found that some schools did not appropriately match pupils' aspirations and aptitudes to work-related learning opportunities nor did it ensure that they have a clear pathway into the next stage of education and training. Many schools did not provide pupils in Year 9 with adequate guidance before choosing the work-related option and those which did often failed to follow up the career action plans which had been formulated. Ofsted recommended that more should be done to provide parents and pupils with careers information and guidance about the arrangements.

Careers information

The Ofsted *National Survey of Careers Education and Guidance* (1998a) showed that 10% of schools lacked a dedicated careers library and that in one-quarter of schools the quality of careers information was unsatisfactory. Access to the library for one in four students was poor and over half of schools did not make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) for careers work. The situation was even less favourable in special schools and PRUs (1998b). The findings of the QPID review (2001) suggested that little had changed since 1998. The publication of good practice guides such as *Careers Information in Schools and Colleges - Guidelines* (1999) in the *Better Choices* series has been one strategy for promoting improvement. Ofsted reported that good practice guides such as this were being used effectively in 70% of schools - the problem is how to reach the remaining 30%.

Developing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in careers work is currently the focus of considerable interest. This is a reflection of the potential of ICT to provide young people with easily accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date careers information as well as e-learning and e-guidance. A start has been made on developing a national Connexions website and helpline for young people. Many careers/Connexions services have developed ICT-based services and some schools and colleges are beginning to develop intranet and web-based provision. Software publishers are upgrading existing programs and launching new ones. BECTa produced *Connecting Careers and ICT* (2001) for the DfES with an associated web site (www.becta.org.uk/careersict). However, recent research by NFER (Morris *et al,* 2001) found that teachers' levels of satisfaction with ICT provision were generally lower than those for careers library and paper resources. This was related to concerns about difficulties of access and use, the quality of content and how it is structured.

An *Evaluation of the use of Information and Communications Technology to support Careers Education and Guidance* by the Northern Economic Research Unit (NERU) at the University of Northumbria (2001) argued that a key outcome from handling careers information, especially that mediated through new technology, should be the acquisition and development of data and research skills so that students could become self-directed managers of their own careers. The NERU study of 25 schools and colleges in particular highlights the potential of ICT to provide differentiated, personalised and relevant careers information which students can access when they are ready to engage. The study identified a number of key factors affecting the effective utilisation of ICT including: the existence of a strategy, the integration of the use of ICT in the careers programme, time to manage the increased flow and range of information, access to and reliability of hardware, costs and funding, timetabling flexibility to organise small group work, mediation and debrief, students' home access to ICT,

the quality of software and websites, and the level of ICT expertise of careers co-ordinators. The study reported few developments related to the use of mobile phones, internet-enabled TVs, internet cafés, video-conferencing and chat rooms. It also suggested that further research is needed into issues such as how to improve the use of ICT in career planning, how to improve localised labour market and course information, and gender differences in the utilisation of ICT in careers work (also raised by Morris *et al.*, 1999b). The study also mentioned that the quality of software products could be improved if young people and not just careers and ICT experts were involved in their development.

Several reports refer to unresolved difficulties over the provision of information on post-16 options. The study by SWA Consulting (DfEE, 1998c) reported that information was at an acceptable level of quality for less than half the students in their survey. Ofsted (1998a) found that 25% of students in schools with sixth forms do not receive impartial information and advice from teachers. Colleges particularly value the role which the careers service has traditionally played as a source of impartial information and advice to school students (DfEE, 1999). It is likely that the situation with regard to information on post-16 options has changed little and that further strategies to ensure independent and impartial information and advice will need to be considered if the vision for 14-19 education is to become a reality.

Careers guidance

The most recent NFER study for the DfES (Morris *et al.*, 2001) reported some tension between schools and careers services over the way careers services prioritised students for interview. While schools supported the principle of meeting the needs of the disaffected and those at risk, they were unhappy that the majority might lose out. Careers co-ordinators expressed their lack of confidence, and a lack of capacity, in their ability to provide individual guidance to students in Year 11 who were outside the focusing agenda target group. Another concern was that only half felt confident that all staff knew how to identify and refer young people for specialist careers advice. This is linked to a reported increase in drop-out from post-16 academic courses, said to be partly the result of insufficient preparation of Year 11's outside the target group, with consequent poor decision making. The *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* Green Paper (DfES, 2002a) recognises the need for earlier and better guidance provision.

The QPID study (2001) noted a trend to meet the needs of students who are not part of any target group by providing access to information, group work and self-referral arrangements such as clinics; but they also reported that group work and group interviews were often found to be unsatisfactory by both practitioners and students and that there was a continuing demand for individual guidance interviews for all young people.

The authors of the QPID study recommended that further work was required to address issues such as a differentiated approach to guidance needs, the design and use of diagnostic questionnaires, how to track and record students' career decisions, their participation in guidance services and their destinations.

A key issue is the relationship of curriculum-focused and guidance-focused approaches to young people's career development. The report by SWA Consulting (DfEE, 1998c), for example, claimed to identify a link between many aspects of learning outcomes and good individual and group guidance interviews. The report by Morris *et al.* (2001) found that systems to facilitate the sharing of information about the outcomes of guidance interviews were missing in two-thirds of schools.

Another report by NFER (DfEE, 1998a) also found that careers guidance worked best when the adviser was someone who was known and trusted by students, who listened to them and who was responsive to their changing preferences.

Progress File, the planned successor to the National Record of Achievement, is a guidance system and set of materials designed to help young people with their career planning and transitions. The evaluation of Progress File demonstration projects by Ofsted (2002) reported that in schools where careers programmes were generally good, Progress File activities made a good contribution especially by improving the option choice process. However, they found that Progress File had little impact on raising career aspirations. Despite more effective use of Progress File in special schools and pupil referral units, the report concluded that the potential of Progress File is yet to be realised in most schools. The reports to date suggest that further practical advice is needed to help schools and colleges make the most of Progress File in their careers education and guidance provision.

Little research has been carried out into the career development and guidance needs of gifted and talented students. A few careers/Connexions services have developed and locally evaluated careers-related activities for gifted and talented students as part of wider education initiatives including the Excellence in Cities and summer schools programmes. A database of resources for gifted and talented students has been created on the DfES-funded Xcalibre website. Further support for schools on meeting the careers education and guidance needs of gifted and talented young people would be helpful.

Evaluation, inspection and quality standards

A key issue for action identified by Ofsted in their national survey (1998a&b) is that headteachers and careers co-ordinators should be more active in regularly monitoring and evaluating careers education and guidance to raise

standards. There is little evidence to suggest that the situation has changed much since the survey. However, the planned publication by Ofsted of guidance on the inspection of careers education and guidance 11-19 in 2002 will assist self-evaluation by schools and colleges providing for this age group.

The careers education and guidance and school effectiveness study (Morris *et al.*, 2000) reported that schools had adopted two key strategies for checking the effectiveness of their careers programmes. The first strategy is to accredit careers education and guidance outcomes for students but this practice is not widespread. The second strategy whereby schools work within a quality framework or gain a local quality award or framework is more developed. While such awards and frameworks were credited with helping schools to improve curriculum planning and management, they did not appear to have had a major impact on helping schools to move forward in terms of reviewing or re-focusing the rationale for their programmes. The NACGT survey (1999) of 1500 schools identified over 40 local quality awards and reported that 15% said that they had gained an award while a further 28% claimed to be working towards one.

The QPID review (2001) highlighted the lack of consistency in the way Ofsted reports on the effectiveness of careers education and guidance in school inspections. Careers service managers cited reports which either gave a positive assessment or failed to comment on schools where they regarded the careers education as poorly developed. There is a need to rationalise Ofsted's approach to the inspection and reporting of careers education and guidance in order to secure and improve its judgements.

A review of the research literature on careers and gender (Askew, 2002) suggests that careers programmes have had little impact on tackling equal opportunities issues such as stereotyping, discrimination and under-achievement. Schools' efforts are often simplistic but there are gaps in our current knowledge and more research is needed in how to challenge inequality and unfairness through careers education and guidance.

Training and professional development

Surveys by Ofsted (1998a) and NACGT (1999) showed that one-third of careers education practitioners, encouraged perhaps by the availability of generous inset funding, have gained a professional qualification in careers work such as a certificate/advanced certificate or a diploma. The challenge now is how to encourage and enable all specialists involved in careers work to gain an accredited award.

A recent survey (Morris *et al.*, 2001) found that a higher proportion - nearly half the co-ordinators surveyed - had achieved a nationally recognised qualification in careers work. They also reported that provision and practice were more effective in schools with a qualified careers specialist. However, few of the non-specialist staff involved in careers work had a qualification or access to one. Ofsted (1998b) expressed concern that a significant number of careers co-ordinators and teachers in special schools had not taken up INSET opportunities for a number of different reasons.

As a result of current funding arrangements, careers/ Connexions services have a key role in promoting in-service training opportunities for specialists and non-specialists involved in careers work in schools and colleges. Further guidance for careers/Connexions services on the effective use of this funding would help to increase the supply of trained specialists and non-specialists.

The current lack of a national framework for the training of staff involved in careers work is a deficiency. A framework of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed by careers practitioners would help training providers and awarding bodies to design courses and qualifications and make it easier to modularise training and equivalence qualifications. The basis for this work already exists in the national occupational standards for careers work which have already been developed; but it is significant that there has been little demand for an NVQ award based on these standards. It would be helpful to review the reasons for the lack of demand for an NVQ and to base recommendations for action on the outcomes. It is possible, for example, that smaller qualifications based on a single NVQ unit or a cluster of units may be more popular.

Currently, there is very little opportunity for newly-qualified teachers or those undertaking initial teacher training to find out about the role of all teachers in careers work or, if they are interested, to develop careers work as a specialism. The findings of the Teachers' Awareness of Careers Outside Teaching (TASCOT) Project (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 1998) help to make the case for opening a debate on the part that careers education and guidance should play in ITT and NQT programmes. The project found that most secondary teachers were engaged in careers education although they were unwilling to acknowledge responsibility for the role they played. Their perception of careers education and guidance was misguided and their careers knowledge base was often unreliable.

The NERU project suggested that the roles of careers staff may need to change to support the increased use of ICT in careers programmes. Careers teachers, for example, may need to be available on demand to facilitate, enable and mediate students' individualised career learning. This has implications for the training needs of careers teachers. The authors also suggest a possible future role for trained careers assistants in supporting individuals' careers-related activities. These 'para-professionals' could be recruited from suitable people already working in the school such as IT technicians, librarians, learning mentors and parent volunteers. This development could be linked to the Government's initiative to increase the supply of support

staff to work alongside teachers. Currently, careers staff in nearly two-thirds of schools have access to administrative assistants who perform tasks such as organising work experience, although the NFER study for the DfEE (Morris *et al.*, 2001) questioned the adequacy of the support available.

COLLEGES

In the college context, it is not always appropriate to group careers education and guidance together. They are sometimes treated as two separate areas. In most cases, careers guidance has been developed more fully as suggested by the number of college staff who are working towards or have achieved qualifications in guidance. Careers education has often been less well developed. Recent developments such as GNVQ and enrichment funding for tutorials appear to have brought careers education back onto the agenda.

Policy initiatives

The policy agenda in colleges is dominated by two key issues. The most important college-wide issue is retention and achievement, linked to unit funding. This is closely related to the issue of inspection requirements, especially the new emphasis in the framework on educational and social inclusion. These two issues largely determine colleges' approach to careers education and guidance (Sadler, 2002a&b).

Curriculum issues for the 16-19 age group tend to be dominated by curriculum 2000 and Key Skills.

The impact of *Success for All - Reforming Further Education and Training* (2002) is also likely to influence colleges' approach to careers education and guidance.

Senior management teams in colleges are more likely to develop the role of careers education and guidance when they perceive that it is one of the strategies which can help the college respond to government initiatives and achieve its priorities. Where this connection has not been made, careers work is less well developed.

Working with partners

The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) identified as a strength the partnership agreements and joint working arrangements between careers services and colleges for the shared delivery of careers education and guidance. The report suggested upgrading the partnership agreement process and extending course tutors' awareness of it.

There is little research evidence relating to the impact on colleges of recent policy changes affecting careers service priorities. The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) reported that the early impact of the refocusing policy had been mixed with some colleges identifying negative outcomes and others able to identify positive outcomes.

There is also little research evidence relating to the effectiveness of links with employers and parents to promote careers education and guidance. The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) found that colleges in their self-assessment reports generally had little to say in this area, but where it was mentioned, it was usually to highlight good practice. The reticence of colleges in this area may be related to the fact that employer liaison is mainly done through programme areas rather than student services or tutors.

College-wide leadership and management

The diversity of institutions within the college sector is associated with a wide variation in careers provision and practice. A broad distinction can be made between sixth form colleges and further education (FE) and tertiary colleges. Sixth form college arrangements still tend to reflect the legacy of being under schools regulations by having a careers co-ordinator, tutor-delivered careers education activities for all, externally-provided specialist careers guidance activities and a careers library. FE and tertiary colleges are more likely to have a head of student services, tutor-delivered careers education activities for some, guidance by a careers adviser in the student services team supplemented by the inputs of external specialists and a careers centre. Inevitably, the picture in practice is a great deal more varied and complicated.

The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) noted that few colleges had a statement of policy on careers education and guidance and that this was linked to a lack of coherence in the provision. It recognised the problem of the uneven response from different curriculum areas within a college to the support offered by careers staff.

The NERU study (2001) identified a number of key challenges including how to provide cost effective access for students based in outreach centres or on other sites where resources are concentrated centrally in student support facilities. The authors also discussed difficulties relating to how students are targeted for help, how their needs are diagnosed and how their progress is tracked. Reliance on self-referral mechanisms may allow some young people to slip through the net. They noted the current priority given to those who are disaffected or 'at risk' rather than prioritising on the basis of the individual's experience of careers education and guidance to date or the existence of practical plans for education or employment in the future.

The DfEE/FEFC survey (1999) recognised the importance of the commitment of college senior managers to the success of careers education and guidance.

Curriculum provision and development

Careers education

The 1997 FEFC *Good Practice Report - Careers Education and Guidance* concluded that colleges increasingly recognised the need to provide careers education and guidance of high

quality but that it was rare to find all the aspects of good practice identified by FEFC operating in one college.

Most colleges include a statement of entitlement to careers education and guidance in the information they give to prospective students. The 1999 inspection survey recommended that colleges and careers services ensure that during induction students are made aware of the careers resources available.

The DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) highlighted some good practice in support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially in specialist colleges. The features of effective practice in this area included work on progression, action plans and annual reviews, work experience, maintaining individual contact, close working with and support for parents, and effective links with the 'home' careers service in the area where the student lives. The weaknesses in provision in both specialist and general FE colleges relate to the lack of a co-ordinated or fully understood approach to careers education and guidance.

The same survey found that the most usual format for the delivery of careers education and guidance programmes was through a combination of group sessions focusing on a specific topic of general interest, and one-to-one sessions which offered guidance and advice to the individual student. This provision was more effective when it was well-planned.

The NERU study (2001) noted that one case study FE college had designed its services on the assumption that schools had already taken care of the 'education' part of careers education and guidance. Although colleges put a great deal of effort into pre-entry guidance, the authors of the study commented on the shortcomings of this view given likely differences in provision between feeder schools and students' varying levels of motivation to engage.

College documentation on careers education and guidance frequently emphasises the objective of increasing students' awareness of options and progression opportunities. The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey found that this aspect of provision was more developed than activities to provide students with the opportunity to develop the skills, understanding and self-awareness they need in order to make decisions and manage their careers effectively. They noted that there were indications that this aspect of careers education and guidance was now receiving more attention.

One shortcoming identified by the DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) was the significant number of part-time students who could benefit from careers education and guidance but whose needs were not being met.

Most surveys suggest that information and advice about higher education applications is more highly developed than information and advice for employment seekers.

Careers information

As in schools (Ofsted 1998a), the careers library initiative is credited with having a positive impact on the comprehensiveness and currency of the materials available.

The DfEE/FEFC survey (1999) praised the extensive and varied range of materials available in most college careers libraries but criticised the under-use of these resources. Specific shortcomings included out-of-date and unattractive displays and variations in quality between sites. The survey recommended that colleges improve their monitoring of the use of resources.

Careers guidance

The DfEE/FEFC survey found that accommodation was generally good: attractive, accessible and highly visible. In some cases, interview facilities were less satisfactory.

The same survey also found that students' positive comments about the helpfulness and value of the groupwork sessions and guidance interviews they had received far outweighed critical comments. However, the report identified weaknesses in the targeting of individual support, especially guidance interviews which could be compounded through students failing to keep appointments and through inadequate arrangements for sharing information on students between careers and teaching staff. This wastage was most likely to occur where careers education and guidance was not given a high profile in the college and where the rationale for guidance interviews and the systems supporting them were not well developed.

There is some evidence to suggest that pre-entry guidance has continued to improve since the joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999). This has been linked to a growing trend to centrally organise this aspect of guidance provision.

The NERU study (2001) noted that college lecturers on vocational courses have specialist knowledge and networks of contacts in their particular vocational areas which they make available to students through the careers-related content of their courses, supplemented in some cases by presentations given by careers staff. The authors also reported the view in the case study colleges that teaching staff in general (as opposed to those on vocational courses) were under such pressure that they could not be relied upon to offer careers guidance. There is some anecdotal evidence that students on general education courses may find it difficult to gain access to advice and information from lecturers in different vocational areas unless careers staff in student services have built strong networks to enable this to happen.

The earlier DfEE/FEFC study had noted that uneven joint working between careers staff (including careers service staff) and staff in different curriculum areas was a major weakness in provision.

A recent study by Martinez (2002) found that students drop out from college courses for reasons which are mainly to do with their studies and the institutions they are attending. This seems to confirm the findings of the MORI study on post-16 switching. Significant factors include: the suitability of the course for the individual, its relevance to their career plans, the course's intrinsic interest, the overall quality of teaching and the help and support received from teachers, e.g. in moving into a job or higher qualification. Studies such as this suggest that careers education and guidance could play a significant part in strengthening retention and achievement by reducing the mismatch of students to courses at the pre-entry stage and ensuring that course switching is managed effectively 'on programme'.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the reduction in access to guidance for some students at Key Stage 4 has led to an increase in the number of college applicants without well thought out career plans.

Evaluation, inspection and quality standards

The DfEE/FEFC survey of 30 colleges (1999) identified weaknesses in colleges' own monitoring and evaluation of provision to inform quality assurance arrangements and to improve standards; but the survey reported that self-assessment and action planning were of considerable value to both colleges and careers services. Some colleges benefit from contributing evidence to and sharing feedback from careers service quality assurance activities.

The report also signalled an important change from quality assuring processes and organisation to evaluating the impact of careers education and guidance on the user, although evaluation of learning outcomes was still a relatively new approach.

Many colleges have adopted the national quality standards developed by the Guidance Council, relaunched in 2002 as the Matrix standards. However, these standards do not include quality criteria for the assessment of careers education activities.

Training and professional development

The joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey (1999) noted that college careers staff were increasingly undertaking relevant qualifications such as NVQ levels 3 and 4 in Guidance.

The same survey also found that college tutors and teachers showed insufficient awareness of the partnership agreements and insufficient clarity and understanding about roles and responsibilities. The survey encountered some instances of a lack of trust between careers staff and tutors and recommended that steps should be taken to ensure that tutors receive the support and development needed to deliver careers education and guidance effectively. Such training should focus on the skills needed to deliver careers education and guidance rather than simply briefing tutors on college systems for providing it. However, some studies point out that some tutors contest their role in careers education and guidance.

CONCLUSIONS

This review highlights the progress and continuing improvements made by a significant minority of schools and colleges that have a well-established commitment to careers education and guidance. It also confirms the existence of obstacles to progress and improvement in many schools and colleges. The reasons are complex and diverse. The schools research commissioned by the DfES between 1998 and 2001 is extremely useful in illuminating these reasons and providing insights into the factors which will be critical for the successful implementation of Connexions. It is important that this record of practical research is maintained and extended into areas about which we currently know little.

Current educational initiatives offer considerable scope for developing the contribution of careers education and guidance to meeting young people's needs and improving schools and colleges. It is up to careers education and guidance professionals and practitioners, both nationally and locally, to make the most of these opportunities.

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Cultural Capital and Young People's Career Progression Part I: Daniel Johnson and Tamsin Roorke

Phil Hodkinson and Martin Bloomer

Introduction

Underpinning much contemporary UK policy are assumptions that career progression should normally form a linear pathway where good education and good guidance will result in successful adult lives. But the careers of young people often do not fit such assumptions. Instability, pragmatic rationality (Hodkinson *et al.*, 1996) and unpredictability are commonplace, and career progression is intricately bound up with a wider life experiences. One way of understanding some of the less visible processes at work is through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital.

In two linked articles, we draw upon data from a four-year longitudinal research study which commenced in 1995 and was funded by the then Further Education Development Agency (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997, 1999, 2000; Hodkinson & Bloomer, 2001). The focus was upon young people's experiences of their learning within three further education colleges in different parts of England. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with 50 young people in their final year of compulsory schooling and on a further five or six occasions at six- to twelve-monthly intervals. Here we present the stories of two of them. In part 2, we show how cultural capital can help explain the similarities and differences between these stories and draw out some implications for the role of guidance.

Daniel Johnson

Daniel came from an educated, professional, middle class family and, until the age of 13, had attended a fee-paying private school.

> Then ... our whole family went over to Australia for a year. And I went to school for a year there and I saw a different world, ... I saw there was something bigger than my little school. And then I went back to this private school and it was like, "Oh no, I can't cope with this. It's so small and narrow-minded." So I said, "I want out."

Throughout our research, Daniel described close family ties and the strong support of his parents: "they're always there and they always support me; they're always bailing me out." In a discussion about how his schooling might have prepared him for life, Daniel insisted, "No! I think that probably most of that has come from the family and friends." Elsewhere he spoke with confidence about finding his way and discovering himself. He was an avid reader, for reasons he again linked to his parents. "I think quite a lot of that has got to do with parents and how much they encourage it or how much they read themselves."

On his return from Australia, Daniel transferred to a state school. He was starting to develop a keen interest in writing and music, particularly rock and roll. His views on learning set him apart from many of his peers:

> [I'm more concerned with] what I'm learning now and how it's going to affect me in life than how it's going to affect me in two hours of GCSEs because I don't approve of them: examinations.

Six months later, Daniel had deepened his interest in music and was seeking opportunities to perform in public. He opted to study A-levels in English, theatre studies and sociology. The reasons he offered for continuing his studies were intrinsic.

> I think being alive is all about taking in as much as you can and trying to make some sense of everything, and trying to play around getting some order. So I think that you should take influence from everything, good or bad. You should look at something and you should try and take something from it. . . . I don't know that you can ever stop learning. Or you shouldn't, y'know?

Daniel regarded his English teacher as excellent and had taken a keen interest in poetry. He thought theatre studies involved too much writing and critique and too little practical creativity while sociology was problematic:

> At the moment, I've written [sociology] off. But that's not to say that I'm totally shutting out the possibilities that it could interest me.... At the start we had a choice of the different parts of sociology that we could do ... I wanted to do power and politics, and they chose the family - which is what we're doing at the moment - and I'm just finding that so tedious.... Every time I voted for something, I was the only person voting for it.

Daniel's emerging identity as a musician was beginning to impact strongly upon his learning. "Music is . . . the major focal point of my life. That's what I live for. But, as with everything else, my focus in what I'm appreciating in music has changed." His enthusiasm for poetry stemmed from the fact that it helped his song writing; his quest for more

practical creativity in theatre studies had arisen because of his need for help with his public performance and presentation of music; while his interest in politics in sociology related to the protest music he was seeking to create at that time. Daniel's emerging identity found expression in other ways: he donned an army surplus trench coat, began to roll his own cigarettes, had his ear pierced and his head shaved.

While he could see some tangible benefits from his studies for his hoped for musical career, Daniel's approach to studying, which included largely ignoring course work and essays, was causing problems.

> The way I'm learning it is that I won't be able to do the exam and get a good grade.... It's making the rest of my time at college seem pointless.... I'm thinking now, at this point, "I'd like to quit college." After having done a year and a half of it, I feel that if I stayed on to do the exams I wouldn't be able to do what I'd learnt justice.

Throughout all of our interviews, Daniel displayed a confidence in his own capabilities that was seldom visible in his peers, even those who enjoyed demonstrable success in their formal education. Moreover, compared with others, he seldom displayed a great concern for utilitarian matters, including plans for a future career. The account he offered in his final year of schooling, for instance, carried little conviction: "Essentially, I'd like to do something with music.... I'm looking for being a prison psychiatrist if I can't make it anywhere else."

It was something of a surprise when, in the autumn of the second year of his A-levels, Daniel announced,

> I've also got an idea for an occupation sort of lined up.. .. I was thinking of doing a course in undertaking and funeral directing and if I quit college now I could start doing that course in January. ... If there's one thing that's always stuck in my head it was how people seemed to be losing their jobs all the time in the news. And my dad was always fussing about his job and I thought, 'what about a job with really good job security?'... Not many people ... can actually come to terms with seeing a dead body and putting it in a coffin and dealing with it. And since I've been along and had some work experience at a funeral director's, I know I can cope with it.

Despite the fact that Daniel claimed that it had always been "stuck in his head", this was the first occasion that we had heard him express any interest in security and the reason he should have done so at this stage in his career is intriguing. His exposure to funeral directing was the result of a work experience. There is an element of happenstance here, arising from the fact that Daniel had been assigned there rather than somewhere else. He was also buoyed by his parents' understanding and practical support: "because my parents have been putting money aside for my university and since I'm not going to that, they're going to spend that on the course [in funeral directing]." It is also likely that the realisation that he would not get a good grade in his A-level examinations, coupled with his growing awareness of the instability of labour markets, created the conditions under which his interest in funeral directing assumed importance. He was seriously contemplating abandoning his A-level studies to enrol on the specialist course in funeral directing. In the event, he decided to continue his A-level studies and planned to seek admission to the School of Funeral Directing and Embalming the following year.

Three events were significant in this decision. First, he visited the USA to see his sister:

> I saw this girl who had no money, no amazing job and no amazing future career prospects but she was really happy, you know. Everything was sorted in her life and I came back and I started thinking, you know, 'Shit! I want to be like that.'

Then there was the start of a new relationship:

> I got a kind of renewed interest for it [A-level study] when I came back from America because I got a new girl friend who was in one of my groups and she kicked my arse in gear and made me work. And I started working and enjoying it, basically, because she was giving me a kick up the arse, which is what I need to do work.

Thirdly, the School of Funeral Directing and Embalming opened a September-entry course, enabling Daniel to progress directly there after completing his A-levels.

So Daniel continued with his A-level studies. If any of these three events had not occurred, he might have made a different decision. This judgment was reinforced when, after two further months, he broke up with his girlfriend.

> But when that relationship finished, that kick up the arse went and I was right back to doing fuck all again and it was the wrong time of the year to be doing that.

He left college and obtained a full-time job in a hamburger bar.

> Suddenly, I kind of thought, 'Oh shit, I'm 17 and I don't have a clue what I want to do. Maybe I don't want to do funeral directing.'

Three months after withdrawing from his A-level course, it was difficult to discern any clear aspirations. "What I'd like to do is, if ever I got into a position where I had a lot of money, I'd like to start up a business and just be in charge of it business-wise." Six months later he said:

> I still have no idea where I'm going. Still the only thing that remains constant with me is music, and that's all I

> want to do. All the rest is just, 'Balls to it! Give me the money in my pocket so I can go out drinking or whatever.'

Two years later, there were changes in Daniel's aspirations. He talked about his work in the kitchen of a pub, as "a sort of trainee assistant":

> I do really love this job. It's such a good chance to have responsibility.
> *So life is good?*
> It's on the up in terms of I've got a career. If I stay with it and work hard and I don't drink all my money away ... then I've got a career and I can make a good go of it.. .. I love working in kitchens because I've spent most of my time working in kitchens in most of my jobs. . . . Now that I've got the basis of a career, I can certainly better achieve the whole thing of getting married because no one's really going to want to marry you if you've got zero prospects, as I had this time last year.

He had also now positioned "getting married" at the focal point of his life.

> I don't think I'll ever be content until I retire and only then providing I've retired with a wife. Sounds silly but one of my major goals is to be married and have kids and in fact that would probably be as equally a perfect ending to my life as becoming famous from music. I couldn't say which one of those. I'd like to have both but if I had one and not the other, it would do.

Tamsin Rooke

While Tamsin's family gave her encouragement to pursue her studies and celebrated her successes, they were not able to offer much practical support. Through most of our research Tamsin lived with her grandmother, as that was the only arrangement that would enable her to have a bed of her own. She also suffered from myopia, for which she was prescribed thick-lensed spectacles. However, as her tutor reported, "she rarely wore her glasses initially, or her glasses were always broken and she couldn't afford to have them replaced." Her mother and three younger brothers and sister were regularly unemployed. The family had no prior experience of education beyond the age of 16 or of any substantial educational success.

> I sort of looked at my family and a lot of them are on the dole or doing jobs they don't really want to do. ... It's just like, I come from a working class family and my mum didn't really work, hasn't got any qualifications, so I just want to do better y'know. ... It's like my brother and sister are both expecting children: my sister could be dropping [giving birth] any day now and my brother's child will be born in April and they're both younger than me. ... My sister, she didn't want a family at all. She wanted to get into the RAF or whatever, fighter pilot, whatever. And my brother, I don't know: football or something. ... My sister's goals have completely gone out of the window, which I think is such a shame.

Having left school with low GCSE grades, Tamsin's options were limited. She was determined to work with children and enrolled on a pre-nursing course. She soon learned that while there were a number of opportunities open to graduates of the pre-nursing course, these did not include access to nursing.

> So I thought, 'Oh yeah, it's to do with nursing.' ... There's about ten of us that thought, 'Yeah! Y'know, they're gonna go straight to nursing after', which you can't. You need two A-levels or whatever after it so a lot of people were quite gutted.

Tamsin resolved to continue her studies to the highest level possible in order to work with children. She passed her pre-nursing course, and began a BTEC National Diploma in nursery nursing. "I thought, 'if I'm still going to do nursing, I'll do it with children.'" However, even before she commenced the course, she had formed the view that she would probably not excel.

> I'm going to get a 'Pass'. I'm one of the worst in the group. ... I'm never going to be top of the class. I know that. I'm always going to be an average person and I realise that now. I'm not trying to go higher than I can but I'm pushing myself gradually, not expecting it to be brilliant altogether.

This resolve to succeed was expressed repeatedly in successive interviews, but was severely tested under the pressures of the course.

> Like yesterday, two people cried! One girl was stressed out about her assignments and the other girl was like, "Why am I here?" All upset.
> *Have you ever felt like that?*
> Yeah, definitely! Sunday, I was going to leave again. All these problems and I think, "Right! I'm going to leave." But I never do.
> *You've never mentioned this to me before. Can you tell me how it came about?*
> What it is, is just being a student. I want some money, you know. I hate doing the assignments, I really do. And I want - it sounds really stupid - but I've always wanted to work with monkeys. But, 'cos people take the mickey, so I never did it. And then I had a careers interview about three weeks ago and we talked about it and he said that he could get me an NVQ level two at a wildlife park and I'm still waiting to hear from that.

As in Daniel's case, there was no single factor pushing Tamsin to drop out. She endured financial hardship and her achievements on the course were relatively modest but

these were not the causes of her impending withdrawal, they were the conditions under which she contemplated it. The possible opportunity to work with monkeys prompted her to reconsider her commitment to the BTEC course and to working with children.

Three days later, after reflecting on her family's circumstances, and still not having heard from the careers officer, Tamsin reassessed her situation again.

> Like, on Sunday, I was thinking I was going to leave. But then you talk to yourself and it was like, 'What am I going to do if I leave?' I sort of looked at my family and a lot of them are on the dole or doing jobs they don't really want to do but they had to do it because of the money.

Tamsin did well in her work placements, but struggled in her assessed assignments. Her tutor encouraged her to accept that "some people do better at theory but you are much better with the practical . . . and you might not get any higher."

> But I didn't want to be just a Pass. So you just, I don't know. After you have the talk, a couple of us had the talk, and some people just stay as Pass. And ... I thought, 'I'll show you.'

As we have noted, Tamsin earlier remarked that she hated assignments. When we enquired further about this, it became apparent that she quite liked the assignment-based approach to learning but that assignments consumed valuable time, which she wanted for her expanding social life. In these circumstances, her college work suffered. Once she had resolved to "show them", she had either to cut down on her social commitments or soften her resolve to succeed. The friends with whom she was socialising were members of her course, and were experiencing similar problems. By the second term, several had left. Most of the students who continued did so knowing that work had to be balanced with their social lives, if they were to complete the course satisfactorily. Situations like this encouraged others in our sample to leave, as in Daniel's case. But Tamsin signed up to the limited social life of her remaining classmates.

> My social life was too important for me then . . . but now I don't care, I think, because a lot of my friends don't go out a great deal now because they're concentrating on their course.

Soon after this there were significant changes in Tamsin's aspirations, and assessment of her potential.

> I'm not going to get . . . the Distinction but I could get that Merit if I try really hard. . . . In the first year, all I got was Pass, Pass, and now ... I've had two Merits and a Distinction and if I can keep that going then I may get to get a Merit. ... Yeah, I can see myself going on in a year or so, go on to University . . . but then if I do go to University then I'll have to still keep pushing myself.

Tamsin's end-of-course results were better than predicted: "I got two or three Distinctions and about five Passes and the rest were Merits, about seven Merits. So I did actually much better than I ever imagined I would."

Before she completed her BTEC course, Tamsin had taken a part-time job in a fast-food restaurant, Burger Bar, and, once she left college, this employment became full-time. She decided to have a "year out", working at Burger Bar to save money for university.

> I think it's awful. If money was no problem I would have liked to have thought that I'd have been able to be at university by now but it's terrible, it really is. Loads of my friends would like to go to university but they know they're never ever going to be able to afford it . . . because of this grant thing that people have to pay now.

This decision coincided with the replacement of the university maintenance grant system with an expanded loan provision, and the requirement for a student contribution of £1,000 towards fees. Tamsin seemed unaware that this charge was means tested, and that she would almost certainly not have had to pay. However, the wages from Burger Bar did not stretch very far:

> There's no saving whatsoever, the last five days. I get paid fortnightly and the last five days I've had no food. At the moment, Hovis bread and butter and I have some milk. It's hard paying all the bills but once we've settled in here then hopefully it will work out again, but I don't know.

Initially, Burger Bar was the means to an end. She was looking forward to a brighter future, "Not something like I'm doing at the moment where I hate it." However, six months after leaving college, she described her aspirations as follows: "Money, having a nice place to live, becoming higher at work [in Burger Bar] because that brings responsibility and I do like responsibility." She had set her sights on becoming a floor manager, which would provide her with an increase in pay and the responsibility that she sought. Higher education was still an ambition even though the planned 'year out' would probably turn into two. Later, Tamsin's university ambitions became further displaced.

> *Do you think that's something you might still go back and do?*
> Go to University? Yes, I really want to do it.
> *How far into the future might you be ready to do that?*
> I would say not for at least another four, five years. ... There's just no way I can afford it at the moment and when I do go it's going to have to be somewhere . . . like a bus journey away or whatever.

Tamsin achieved promotion from floor manager to shift runner. There were further changes. Her attentions had turned to homemaking:

> My friend, she'll go out and most of her money goes on going out to the pub and buying clothes while mine is, I bought plates this week. I only had, like, £20 left for that whole two weeks and I've already spent my money on plates.

Tamsin and her boyfriend were planning to set up home together. More subtle were those changes which Tamsin is best able to describe herself:

> I'm not so ambitious now.
> *Why's that do you think?*
> Because I've had too many fallbacks. Know what I mean? All my friends, like my friend Jo, she's at University, she's in her first year and she says she admires me because I'm very, like, she says, "Well, what are you going to do?" and I'm saying, "Well, I'll just go for whatever, where ever my path takes me."
> *Some people feel comfortable with a plan or reassured by it.*
> Exactly. I haven't got that at all. I only look for the next, I don't know, six months or whatever.

In part 2, we go on to explore the ways in which the concept of cultural capital can help make sense of these stories.

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The Limits of Public Policy - affecting change in identity formation in young people

Tim Oates

This paper explores the extent to which identity formation in young people has been affected by public policy developments in education and training. The analysis suggests that the aspirations of policy makers to encourage all groups of young people to reach high levels of initial education and training have been seriously compromised by a tendency to use a limited set of policy levers to determine options or 'routes' in general education and vocational education and training. In particular, the paper argues that a weakening of structures and rise in individualism as a means of explaining and encouraging participation has directed policy attention away from management of key dimensions of the economy and the education and training system. It suggests that these dimensions are managed more directly and successfully in other nation states. It concludes that identity and the tendency to participate in specific routes in the education and training system are deeply enmeshed, and that greater participation in effective preparation for the labour market is only likely to arise if public policy is more highly integrated and co-ordinated.

Agency and individual identity

A conception of the learner as individual actor pervades contemporary educational and training policy. The school improvement movement has emphasised close monitoring of individual learners (DfES, 2001). Flexibility in the curriculum has been advocated as a means of ensuring that both the school and post-compulsory curriculum meets individual needs – and by optimising motivation, encourages maximal attainment (DfES, 2001). The importance of engaging with individuals' 'preferred learning styles' has been promoted as a means of enhancing pedagogy and learning at all stages of education and training. Flexibility in the form of qualifications and certification – for example, modularisation and credit systems – has been promoted on the basis that it allows greater access and less formalised patterns of education and training (DfES, 2001). Lifelong learning has emphasised the importance of individuals 'taking responsibility for their own learning' (Coffield F, 1999). Relaxation of central prescription and an increase in decision-making and financial control at the level of individual schools and colleges has been viewed as a mechanism for improved performance (DfES, 2001). Debates on funding mechanisms for post-compulsory education and training have centred on issues of shifting towards demand-led systems, with consumers impacting on quality through exercising choice in providers and type of provision (Robertson, 1996). The New Deal has at its heart a core value which suggests that people should take greater personal responsibility for participation in the labour market and thus hold greater personal control over their prosperity – a weakening of public support infrastructure and a strengthening of individual agency as a key to personal and societal goods (Wesley, 2001). All of this takes place in a wider commercial and industrial context of shifts to demand-led approaches, greater tailoring and focused marketing of products, all of which feed higher expectations of choice and meeting individual need.

The extent to which policy in each of these areas has been successful is not the focus here. Rather, the focus is on how this pervasive emphasis on individualisation affects the personal identity of learners of 16-19 years of age, and whether this is compromising rather than enhancing participation in vocational education and training.

Policy in the area of post-compulsory vocational education and training manifests deep tensions: policy statements include strong exhortations and ambitious aims - which are accompanied by weak instruments to realise them. The rhetoric is of high participation in vocational options, yet the levers to secure this are distinctly limited. The emphasis on individual agency is pervasive. The policy urges young people to make very specific choices – to participate in continuing education and training provision. But this paper argues that structures of incentives are weak. Study of this area reveals deep ambiguities about where the borders of state control should be drawn, and the precise location of the interface with individual liberty. Successive Governments have failed in establishing a mass-participation vocational route (Judd, 2002) despite strong policy commitments. The failure derives thus not from an absence of a desire to establish this route, but from weakness in policy instruments. Ambiguity prevails; in some areas, state control has been exercised through strong measures. For example, for young people, unemployment ('economic inactivity') has been closed as an option, through

restrictions on benefits. In the academic route, a different view of state control has emerged, delineating a different line between state control/intervention and personal liberty. Here, a rhetoric of personal choice and autonomy in choosing routes and options has been accompanied by more flexible qualifications and curriculum structures (QCA, 2002) – personal autonomy has been bolstered by policy and policy instruments. 'Flexibilisation' of the curriculum and of qualifications has consolidated more open processes of realisation of self, of identity formation (Rohrer, 2000). The new curriculum structures are intended to enshrine personal choice and endorse personal liberty and responsibility in exercising that choice. More people are staying on in education (the exhortation to participate) but in staying on are presented with structures designed to offer greater choice in curriculum options and combinations of qualifications. But in respect of the work-based initial training route, the strong exhortations to participate have been accompanied by very weak policy instruments. This gives a shape to the boundaries of state control like that of the coast of Norway – promontories stretching out where control has been extended, deep inlets where control has been held back. What characterises policy around the vocational route is the strength of the aspiration and exhortation to establish mass participation (Marshall, 1997) versus the reluctance to underpin this with resilient policy instruments.

This paper departs from more typical discourse in the philosophy of education in order to explore the mechanisms which might better underpin policy exhortation. The analysis is focused on highly pragmatic management of financial mechanisms. However, exploration of the interface between personal liberty and the state, and the oughts and rights of measures to deliberately channel or constrain identity formation in young adults run beneath all lines explored here.

The world of people of 16-19 years of age has undergone substantial change in the last 50 years, and with this, the way they see themselves (Wardeker, 2001; Donnelly & Millichamp, 1999). Structural changes in the family have been accompanied by increases in pressure to perform well in education (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997; Evans, 1999), alongside an increase in industry targeting youth markets. The question of personal identity is crucial to the choices of route, behaviour and engagement which young people make (Meijers, 1998) during initial education and training. These choices shape both the attainment levels achieved at the end of compulsory schooling and the objective and perceived 'route options' which they have on exit (SocEU, 1999). High attainment levels in academic qualifications are strongly correlated with greater prosperity and participation in continuing education and training (SocEU, *op. cit.*). In the mid-1990s, approximately 50% of British adults in the lowest social class had not participated in any education or training since the end of compulsory education. In contrast, the same percentage of the highest social class were participating currently or had done so in the previous three years (Sargent *et al.*, 1997). Within this, identity plays a significant role: key reasons for non-participation by 'long-term non-learners' centre on feelings of alienation from learning settings, and concern that they do not have sufficient ability to participate (La Valle & Finch, 1999).

Although largely unsupported by empirical evidence (Unwin & Wellington, 2001; Ashton & Green, 1996), rhetoric proclaiming accelerating change in the nature of labour markets has permeated recent education and training policy (SocEU, 1999; DfEE, 1999; CEDEFOP, 1998). Government has mobilised this in arguments exerting pressure on young people to prolong their participation in education and training - principally in full-time education:

"...as we move into an economy based more on knowledge, there will be ever fewer unskilled jobs. For this generation, and for young people in future, staying on at school or in training until 18 is no longer a luxury. It is becoming a necessity...."
(Tony Blair in *Bridging the Gap*. SocEU, 1999)

It is certainly the case that on most measures - and certainly in successive reports from OECD (OECD, 2001) - England has lagged behind other comparable nations in respect of post-16 participation rates. What is distinctive about the English policy response to this challenge is the emphasis on expansion of higher education - a target has been set for 2010 of 50% of 18-30 year olds participating in higher education (DfES, 2002). Against this backdrop, this paper argues that the full time work-based route is underdeveloped as a pathway in the education and training system. It argues that despite the fact that this pathway is consistent with styles of learning and learning settings which are highly congruent with many young peoples' sense of themselves and their aspirations, it remains of low social status and suffers from low participation rates. The analysis presented in this paper suggest that the causes of these problems seem to lie in a failure of public policy surrounding the full-time work-based initial training route.

Action and identity in an uncertain world

The portrayal of uncertain, volatile futures in a changing labour market (Hollinshead, 2000) has impacted on identity formation of young people, who no longer expect a 'job for life' (Unwin, 2001). Evans represents this as a 'sea of manufactured uncertainty' (Evans, 1999) – where young people are '...crossing and recrossing a number of boundaries in their navigations both during and after compulsory schooling: between school and part-time work, full-time work and college, work and social life. Yet, it has perhaps been overlooked that, although it is certain that such busy navigation is occurring, these young people are still hoping to find firm land on which to rest for part of the time. They are aware of the fragility of the labour market....but, we suggest, they should be entitled to some

stability during their formative years as young adults' (Unwin, 2001). The pressures on young people to be consumers, workers, learners, adult, self-supporting are significant. Finding direction in an increasingly diverse education system only contributes to the problems of overall identity formation and rational decision-making regarding progression (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997).

Identity and context: sociocultural analysis

The drive towards individualism marks a specific attempt to encourage a 'more responsive' education and training system which engages with the way in which people see themselves, with the intention of unlocking hitherto constrained abilities and aspirations (DfES, 2001). But this strengthens a conception of individual identity as something purely personal, a thing originating in and determined by the individual, with unclear relations to historical and social conditions. The relation between public policy and personal identity is thus cast as one where public institutions (education and training systems both compulsory and post-compulsory) are seen as needing to respond to personal identity rather than be formative of it. This paper suggests that this is a very serious error. But it is an error reproduced from the history of conceptualisation of identity within psychology. Erikson's founding work located 'identity' as: '...a sense of inner identity. The young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which he (sic) has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and expect of him...' (Erikson, 1968). The notion of 'self-chosen and positively anticipated future' (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995) which is embedded in this is consistent with notions of individual agency as crucial to decision-making and action in lifelong learning in England (Coffield, 1997). 'People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities' (Holland *et al*., 1998).

But many of those working to further refine Erikson's underpinning (Marcia, 1966) – including work on vocational identity - have focused on the extent to which individuals have progressed through various stages of identity formation. This has been criticised for locating analysis within issues of individual choices and agency rather than the interaction of the individual with the socio-political context in which they are situated (Waterman, 1988; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Indeed, Erikson's work emphasises the importance of changing context within adult identity formation (Erikson *op. cit.*). Contemporary commentators have developed a more sociocultural approach to issues of identity formation, theorising the cultural tools which individuals appropriate in order to construct and communicate identity within social settings (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). If young people see themselves and their futures in particular, historically-bound ways, and these representations both use and fuel conceptions located in contemporary culture, just what should we look at to understand the extent to which identity is, and might be, shaped by public policy in respect of education and training?

Widening the scope: social, economic and political determinants

The analysis in this paper goes beyond the work suggesting that proximal cultural influences are crucial in identity formation in young people. It suggests that an understanding at the level of political economy and legislative control are necessary to fully understand how young people conceptualise their options and opportunities.

The images of working life which are presented in guidance and in policy emphasise constant change, uncertainty and impermanence (DfES, 2001; Dearing, 1996). In the rhetoric of the knowledge economy (DfES, *op. cit.*; SocEU, 1999), work and labour markets are characterised as unstable and susceptible of constant change, with workers and employers entering into shifting relationships as specific skills and knowledge initially have high market value but swiftly become redundant (Hollinshead, 2000; Ladipo, 2000):

Labour as:			
raw material	**human capital**	**resource**	**individual agent**
to be used	to be measured and used carefully	to be developed	to be contracted with
commodity	commodity	changeable asset	unpredictable partner
pre industrial revolution	fordism	human resource development	learning careers
and industrial revolution	1950s and 60s	1980s and 90s	1990s on
words us and them(working) class	workforce training	human resource development	lifelong learning
images Germinal Hard Times Tess of the D'Urbervilles	I'm All Right Jack	The Cleese videos Educating Rita	The Navigators

The notion of a flexible, changeable labour market promotes the currency of qualifications with a wide exchange value – general qualifications (general credit) rather than qualifications which apparently limit movement to limited pathways (specific credit). For any young person who is uncertain about which direction they want to take, who wishes to defer choice and keep options open, staying in general education and accumulating general rather than vocationally-specific qualifications appears to be a very rational choice. Vocational qualifications suffer from two problems which consolidate this tendency. Firstly, they are typically taken by those young people who have lower educational achievement (NCVQ, 1995) – this is recognised by students in schools and college and present in the way in which young people describe their own groups and contrasting groups (Coles, 2000). Secondly, they are narrow in content (Prais, 1995). The German system, with 13 occupational fields and 370 different apprenticeships, appears from the outside to be narrow and restricting – but in practice over 40% of apprentices after completing their schemes find employment in an occupation other than the one for which they have trained (Prais, *op. cit.*). This results from the confidence which employers have in the quality of the nationally-agreed schemes, the long-duration nature of the training (3 years minimum), and the fact that the curriculum includes wider general education elements such as maths, foreign languages, etc.

The academic-vocational divide

'I didn't know what an A level was – you feel pressured to do it. There's all these people telling you you're smart, you'll do well. It's a big step to rebel if you've been hearing this since you were little. All these expectations. You don't want to fail.'
(Coles, 2000)

In contrast with England, in Germany (Steedman H, 1998; QCA 2000) only 13% of 18 year olds are in university education, while around 60% of 16-19 year olds participate in the Dual System apprenticeship route. In England, despite attempts at modernisation and marketing, only around 4.4% of 16-21 year olds are on workbased programmes akin to the German system (Steedman H, op cit; Unwin L 2001).

Modern Apprenticeship participation rates 2000/1
Starts 2000-01 Advanced MAs and Foundation MAs combined = 3.8% of the 16-21 cohort (of 3,646,800)
In training March 2001 Advanced MAs and Foundation MAs combined = 4.4% of the 16-21 cohort (of 3,646,800)

Background data: DfES

The work based route persists in being unattractive to young people in England. Higher education has assumed the position of a high status, 'reified' progression route (Morris, *et al.*, 1999; Deer, 2001). This reification has been consolidated by very dominant influences. For example, in justifying its move to student loans, the Conservative Government highlighted the greater return to those holding a degree - with an assertion that the increase in earnings over a working lifetime more than compensates for the costs incurred by the individual. The publicity highlighted the superiority of a degree as a high earning, job-related qualification. Notably, there was little examination of the fact that:

- the return figures were based on historical data from a time when far fewer 18 year olds were in HE, thus a degree was a rarer commodity;
- the figures were averaged; not all degrees have equal currency in the labour market, with some of the most popular courses having significantly lower return.

But the overall effect was one of highlighting the degree as a desirable labour market qualification. This was further reinforced in the policy community by studies showing greater return to academic qualifications, in contrast to vocational qualifications (Robinson, 1997). In addition, despite TVEI, the success in some schools of Advanced GNVQs (now AVCEs) and an emphasis on 'education *and* training' in Government policy statements, the perception in the majority of schools and amongst young people is that academic qualifications are of high status and vocational qualifications are of significantly lower status (Spours, 1997). The vocational-academic divide is a potent one (Hillier & Oates, 1997). Young people's accounts of their experience in education and training continue to emphasise both the differences in status between the (high status) academic route and the (low status) vocational route. In particular, learners in all routes emphasise the pressure which is placed on them to stay in general education:

'They don't tell you enough, it's all by qualifications these days, you've got to have A levels, you've got to have a degree, and you've no chance if it's a dead end job at 16.

'When doing A levels they tried to persuade me to go to university, until they realised when I said 'no', I meant it, and wasn't going to let any one change my mind that I wanted a job.
(Pye & Muncie, 2001)

During 1995, as part of NCVQ's evaluation of GNVQs, GNVQ learners who were asked about the status of the GNVQ relative to A levels were clear about the perceived lower status of the qualifications, but they recognised that the styles of learning were distinctive and more suited to the way in which they preferred to learn. This had figured in their decision to take the qualification. That the learning styles were indeed distinctive was established through further empirical study of classroom interactions (Meagher

et al., 1996). The differences were not simply located in a different balance of learning styles. They included an increase in autonomy, which brought positive gains in terms of identity as adults and 'responsible people' but also problems in terms of teacher-student conflict when work deadlines were not met in a context of lower close supervision of work. Alongside this, a different social dynamic obtained in the learner groups (Bates, 1998):

'GNVQ is more hands-on. You get out of school. With course work you can take more time. People give you more respect, trust you. It makes you feel more mature and adult'.

Students who do retakes and GNVQs are more down to earth. They think A level students have 'communication difficulties'. The 'A-star nerds' need to do something more than achieve academically. They were admired for their achievement but seen as 'sad and limited'.

'In GNVQs you get assignments and it's up to you'. 'It's the way you work – whether you want to do it'. 'Basically you are your own boss'. ' It shows you've got the confidence'. 'If you need help, there's friends to talk to'. 'With GCSE and A level you've just go to get your head down – study, study, study. That's not very helpful for someone like me who gets distracted...'. '...if you don't do so well first time there's always another chance. With GCSE there's only one chance – unless you want to do it again...'
(Coles, 2000)

In the 1995 evaluation, the students were clear that the assessment processes in GNVQs (then, predominantly coursework assessment) had been a very strong attraction of the course. However, they also stated that the only way that they could see of increasing the relative status of GNVQs was to '...put in exams...make it like A levels'. This contradiction has been played out in policy as well as in the students' views of parity of esteem – the Dearing review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds (Dearing, 1996) and subsequent development of the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education to replace the Advanced GNVQ took the curriculum design of GNVQs towards the established A level model. Students had expressed how GNVQs had provided them with a clear alternative to A levels; an alternative which was motivating, and closer to their preferred learning styles and aspirations. They identified with the form and purpose of the provision and had a clear commitment to the difference of GNVQ – the styles of learning, the assessment modes, the closer proximity to the working world. However, they were clear that the qualifications carried the stigma of low status precisely because of this difference, and because they were particularly attractive to those who had become disenchanted with education (Hillier & Oates, 1997). With the stigma of low status hovering over the qualifications, progression statistics showed a very interesting picture. In terms of progression to HE, students on Advanced GNVQs were slightly more likely to receive HE offers than UCAS applicants in general:

GNVQs and Offer-Making 1994-1997

Year of entry	1994	1995	1996	1997
Numbers of GNVQ applicants	905	9555	19353	22853
Numbers of GNVQ applicants with one or more offers (percentage of total)	772 (85.3%)	8525 (89.1%)	17721 (91.6%)	21393 (93.6%)
UCAS offer-making - all applicants	76%	86.5%	88.4%	92%

Source UCAS

Not content with the objective success of GNVQs in securing progression into HE, policy-makers' efforts to achieve parity of esteem for GNVQs (Dearing, *op. cit.*) have been directed towards 'pushing qualifications...towards 'sameness', through using current common conceptions of high status qualifications as a principle for structuring the overall system of qualifications' (Hillier & Oates, *op. cit.*). Despite the calls for an alternative route, the vocational alternative has assumed the form of the dominant qualifications, particularly in respect of assessment. Many schools who had used GNVQs as an alternative route have since substantially contracted their GNVQ/AVCE offering – as a consequence of a reduction in demand, a concern at the constant change in the qualifications and/or a recognition that the qualification no longer offered anything particularly distinctive (QCA, 2002).

The history of GNVQs is thus one of a qualification developed as an alternative, in order to appeal to the distinctive identity (in terms of learning, of aspiration, and societal status) of a specific group of learners. Complimented by researchers as part of a genuine effort to construct a full time, high status vocational route (Steedman *et al.*, 1998; Spours, 1997), participation flattened off (at approximately 47,000 in 1988/9) at the point at which the qualifications were being more closely aligned with A levels.

Apprentices in England - determined young people

GNVQs and their successor, the AVCEs, were developed as vocational qualifications to be delivered in full time education settings. Modern Apprenticeships have been developed as a full time work-based route, combining on- and off-job elements. There are two very distinctive features of Modern Apprenticeships. Firstly, it is perceived by those young people on it as a high quality scheme, in contrast to schemes such as YTS which preceded it (Morris *et al.*, 1999). Secondly, those young people who make their way onto Modern Apprenticeship have frequently done so in the face of parental opposition, against the advice of educational providers, and in the face of peer opinion that vocational training is for the less able. The contextual pressures regarding identity are stacked against participation. Apprentices frequently cite how a range of people tried to dissuade them from taking the work-based vocational route, and to stay in general education. School teachers were cited as the most common negative influence.

'...yes everyone (tried to put me off) really. Well my careers advisor advised me to stay on doing A levels, because of my predicted grades, and my parents weren't that keen, because where it was, because I used to live very close to school, so it was so handy to stay on, but no one really persuaded me to, you know, go for it, but my parents supported me, they'd have preferred me to do A levels, but you know they supported me with what I wanted to do, so it's like my choice...'
(Unwin, 2001)

Studies have established that young people's recognition of the need for qualifications as a requirement for entering the labour and for increasing returns has increased in the last decade (Morris *et al.*, 1999). At the same time, the amount of part time working undertaken by full time post-16 students has increased significantly, as young people's consumption patterns have changed (Richards & Oates, 2001). Unwin's work with young apprentices suggests that there is a strong desire amongst them to combine job, pay, training/studying, and qualifications: '...the combination reflected the fact that young people looked to the workplace as a fresh site for learning, somewhere that would be different from school and somewhere that could unlock their potential...' (Unwin, 2001). The importance of provision within the education and training system of routes with different approaches to learning was also emphasised throughout evaluations of GNVQs (NCVQ, 1995; QCA, 2002). Apprentices on Modern Apprenticeship seek to continue with learning but also want to enter the adult world. They wish to make a managed transition into the labour market, a transition that marks a complex rite of passage with significant pressures and tensions in relation to identity (Beach, 1995).

However, alongside its positive image and the strength of commitment of the young people on the programme towards following a work-based route, Modern Apprenticeships have been troubled by poor completion and by poor attainment of qualifications requirements (Level 3 NVQs plus key skills, in the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship), and by the low overall percentage of the cohort (around 13%) which participate in the scheme. In Germany, 60% of 16-19 year olds progress into the Dual System of apprenticeship, with only 13% participating in Higher Education (28% in England) (OECD, 2001). The apparent specialisation of the 370 separate apprenticeship 'lines' is offset by the reality of 40% of apprentices gaining employment in occupations other than the one for which they trained. This is partly the result of the breadth of the curriculum, which includes three components – learning through working, training in the workplace, and an off-job component in colleges. The general education element includes foreign languages, social studies, physical education and pedagogics. The trainees express strong attachment to the Dual System whilst acknowledging the higher status of the academic route (Woodward, 2002). The feature of the Dual System which contrasts so strongly with the English scene is the level of participation (60% in the German Dual System, 10% of the cohort in Modern Apprenticeship in England) and the employer commitment to funding the initial vocational training system – the Government funds only the off-job element. By contrast, employer commitment has been elusive in the UK, with levy systems being discredited during the 1960s and 1970s (Finegold, & Soskice, 1988), and all forms of apprenticeship decaying dramatically during the industrial restructuring of the 1980s (Steedman *et al.*, 1997). In Germany, there has frequently been an excess of training places – something completely alien to the English training scene.

The key to high participation and employer funding lies in a complex set of relations between the quality of the scheme, the culture which has arisen around it (and its congruence with young people's aspirations and self-image), the internal scheme funding arrangements and labour market regulation. It is management through public policy of these relations which drives home a stark contrast with public policy directed at 14-19 year olds in England.

The Dual System in Germany - supporting robust pathways

The Dual System operates on the basis of a balance of incentives for all participants – employers, young people, and the state. The internal funding relations within the

scheme contribute towards stimulation of employer commitment and participation. An apprenticeship typically is three years long. Trainees tend to be less productive than an experienced worker for the first half of this period, but in the latter half of the scheme reach experienced worker productivity levels. This might suggest that the training is inefficient, since it continues after the point at which the learner has reached experienced worker productivity levels. YTS and YT were structured as 6-12 month schemes since this was considered the shortest time in which people could reach standards appropriate to entry in the labour market. However, the longer duration of the Dual System holds the key to the successful internal funding of the schemes. Since experienced worker productivity levels are reached during the second half of the training period, this pays for the first half. This plays a crucial role in the willingness of employers to make places available, and to train people who they may not ultimately employ. However, the only reason that this relationship obtains is that the training rate is held to 60% of the fully-qualified worker rate (although rates do vary somewhat in different occupational areas). In England, trainee worker rates rose during the 70s to be on average 90% of the fully-qualified worker rate. At this level, the positive relation regarding return over the period of training would evaporate, reducing employers' propensity to make training places available and to train those who may find employment elsewhere at the end of their training.

What this does not explain is the trainees' willingness to participate in the programmes. If the training is of long duration, includes general education components, and offers only 60% of the qualified-worker rate, why do young people simply not go straight into the labour market? The answer is that the labour market is strictly limited in respect of 'licence to practise'. Very few jobs exist which do not require trainees to be formally qualified. Legislation also states that no one who is unqualified can employ workers. The question of whether the Dual System is accepted by young people and is consistent with their emerging aspirations, perceived needs and self-image is not the leading factor; these follow from the system rather than lead it – all the incentives and levers are carefully lined up in order to strongly encourage mass participation.

It is this public policy approach which contrasts so strongly with the position in England. The importance of a vocational route was highlighted in the 1980 New Training Initiative (MSC, 1980), but policy has since then focused on stimulating higher levels of training through direct funding and provision of new forms of qualifications (Westerhuis, 2001). Concern at the consistent failure to increase participation and completion has led principally to constant revision of the curriculum shape and content of government-funded schemes, all within fundamentally the same government-subsidy oriented funding arrangements. One objective of the New Training Initiative was to remove 'time serving' from initial vocational training. This was a central doctrine – that long-duration training was inefficient and that the time taken for a young person to acquire a level appropriate for entry to the labour market could be reduced. This led to short schemes (such as Youth Training) which contrast sharply with the shape of Dual System provision. The internal funding mechanisms present in the Dual System cannot operate within short duration training of this kind, leaving the schemes dependent on being popular with employers only on the basis of the level of subsidy they receive from the Government. This compromises stability in the supply of training provision in the medium- and long-term, fails to encourage mass provision of large numbers of training places, and fails to create conditions where employers feel a sense of ownership and responsibility in terms of structural provision of initial vocational education and training. The English system is thus driven by Government funding – remove direct subsidy and the levels of training are liable to contract (Finegold & Soskice, 1988). This very different set of relations which obtains between employers, Government and learners is exemplified in the reaction of individual employers:

'...He'd been made redundant so he rang us up and said would I give him a position. I said I wasn't really sure about this, I didn't want anybody. However, he had previous experience for about a year with another sign company, so you think to yourself, well, right, he must have some basic skills. So I said I'd think about it, and then I rang him back about a week later. I said I've had a thought, if you can get onto New Deal I will take you on. If you can't, I won't, because I don't need anybody at this particular moment...' (Williams, 2002)

Although systematic studies of the German system have featured in transnational comparative work for a considerable time (Finegold & Soskice, 1988; Prais, 1995; CEDEFOP, 1984) the qualities of the provision have begun to be picked up in the popular press (Woodward, 2002), but with an interesting twist. In a report on Conservative shadow education spokesman Damian Green's visit to study the German system he has stated:

'(whilst being impressed by the provision) ... the bad thing on the evidence of what we've heard is the degree of micro-regulation from the government, in particular the idea that if you want to teach something it has to be a recognised profession...if we introduce a reformed system into Britain I'd certainly want it to be much more flexible, much more fast moving and much less under the detailed control of a central government apparatus...' (Woodward, 2002)

But this entirely misses the point in relation to the co-ordinated policy on curriculum structure, funding, wage control, and labour market regulation on which the success of the provision depends. A failure to recognise this reproduces the shortcomings of strategy on vocational and work-based provision from the New Training Initiative (MSC, 1980) onwards.

This analysis may seem remote from the issue of youth identity; but the links are important and profound.

Expanding the limits of public policy

Young people in Germany are presented with much more limited choices and those choices are deliberately limited by public policy. German policy moves slowly (Woodward, 2002). However, the range of options which they are presented with are clearer and more widely understood by parents, young people, employers, etc. who benefit from the stability of arrangements. Furthermore, those options offer clearer progression in the system, and even seemingly-limited vocational options provided by occupationally-specific apprenticeships allow for considerable labour market mobility. By contrast, English 14-19 year olds experiencing complex issues of identity formation are presented with an array of choices, a story of uncertain and volatile futures, a polarised high status-low status academic-vocational divide and apparently flexible but essentially weak set of structures in the work-based training route. The greatest impact of this is on marginalised groups (Kerda, 1998) where identity includes receptivity to work, but where current incentives do not result in high pressure for participation in full time long duration initial training (Yueh, 2001). Morris' 1999 study found: '...young people on the margins of society display the most negative attitudes to employment, in terms of their chances of gaining work, and the support and guidance they receive. No evidence was found, however, of an 'underclass' of young people, socialised into unemployment as a way of life; studies suggest that the vast majority of young people want to work' (Morris *et al.*, 1999).

The English Government's policy relating to 'welfare into work' is a confounding factor in relation to development in England of the same kind of regulation-based policy which drives mass participation in the German system (Williams, 2002). The policy of encouraging all groups into work and creating a larger number of work opportunities - including processes whereby excluded groups move into more marginal forms of employment (part-time insecure work contracts) - requires liberalisation of labour rates and labour markets. This is in strict tension with the type of regulation which creates mass participation in the Dual System.

The need for policy apparatus which matches policy objectives

Current Government strategy is to promote the full-time education route through scheme revision, provision of recognised qualifications and marketing (La Valle & Finch, 1999). Increased emphasis on the full time vocational route is to be welcomed. But simply making young people more aware of the provision and increasing curriculum demands is unlikely to increase participation significantly. Young people's stories about their feelings and self-perception when faced with choices of route at 14 and 16 are full of angst and uncertainty (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997; Coles, 2000; Evans, 1999; Unwin, 2001). Flexibilisation increases rather than decreases uncertainty and choice. How much part time work should a young person do when they are studying full time before they compromise their examination grades? (Richards & Oates, 2000; Manning, 1990). Should they give into pressures to try for the higher education route even though the work based route provides the adult world which they are anxious to enter? (Nyyssola, 1999). With uncertain personal aims, in a context of rising and uneven graduate unemployment (OECD, 2001) should they just try to aim for the highest qualification possible irrespective of subject?

In the English context, the policy of increased flexibilisation and diversity in education and training provision provides a mass of routes with weak incentives and ambiguous cultural labels, in which marketing and guidance are insufficient to diminish young people's uncertainty or guarantee robust and informed choice. Analysis of the operation of the German system demonstrates how public policy can be developed to maximise participation and encourage provision of a high volume of training places. If policy aspirations to increase participation in high quality training are to be realised and identity formation in young people better supported, then the nettle of more co-ordinated and wide-ranging policy mechanisms may need to be firmly grasped.

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You say 'Exclusion' and I say 'Bananas!' Why careers work must not concede command of its language

Bill Law

The trouble with our work is - as one commentator once observed - it is 'malleable'. Over the years it has certainly been moulded into different shapes, by different groups, for different purposes.

The difference between 'malleable' and flexible, is that 'flexible' knows which way is forward. It can, therefore, conceive purposes, deal with pressure, and adapt to change without losing direction. In that process, it is easy to underestimate the importance of words.

Bill illustrates how that is so.

An ancient Chinese document, *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, offers - among other helpful things - a classification of animals.

'Among animals, know the difference' it, advises, 'between' ...

...*'those that belong to The Emperor'*
...*'embalmed ones'*
...*'those that are trained'*
...*'suckling pigs'*
...*'those that tremble as though they are mad'*
...*'those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush'*
...*'those that have broken a flower vase'.*
...*'those which at a distance resemble flies'.*

Good advice? Oh yes! This is no mere academic taxonomy, it is intended to inform action. It is helpful to know the difference between trained animals and 'tremblers'. And ignorance is no defence if you're caught messing with the Emperor's animals. And so, ancient Chinese person, knowledge is power.

Not calling the whole thing off

Linguistics expert David Crystal shows how much of what we call knowledge is explained in terms of the words we use. Words signpost experience. For example Helena Drysdale argues that language is not just a neutral tool for communicating, it is our way of setting out the ways things are. That is why, when one way of talking is replaced by another, something is always lost in translation.

Signposts, both on the roads and in our heads, do get changed. Think of the attempt to eliminate *Cymraeg* in Wales. On the surface, that means no more than the inconvenience of having to learn *Saisneg* in order to be okay at school, to fill in forms, to go shopping and to make long journeys. But, at a deeper level it changes the terms in which people understand themselves and their world. It took a French philosopher, Michel Foucault, fully to realise the ways in which 'knowledge is power'; the French understand, better than most, how their words shape reality.

The working world is a veritable grid-lock of changing signposts. What was once the firm's 'reduction' became, first 'downsizing', then 'rightsizing', recently 'house-cleaning'. Whatever, it leads - not to 'dismissal' - but being, at best, 'outplaced', at worst, 'let go'. The consequence is not to be 'unemployed' but a 'job-seeker' and - this is really imaginative - 'at liberty'! It's not hard to learn the new words, in some ways it makes life easier so to do; it polishes one's conversation to a contemporary gloss.

But this is not just cosmetics: it changes the terms in which we understand what is happening. At worst, it renders the unacceptable acceptable, invites trust for the untrustworthy, seeks compliance with what should be resisted. It is intended to change how we behave.

Words are, therefore, a battleground. You say 'downsizing', I say 'dismissal'- does that mean we're going to have to call the whole thing off? Maybe not; but this is certainly true: the weaker must struggle to protect their language from the stronger.

Business journalist Paul Kingsworth illustrates how management-speak can take over minds. He reports a WTO speaker, billed to speak at a 2001 management conference in Tampere, Finland. His USA-based group has already reported thought-experimental work on how William Wilberforce and Mahatma Gandhi might, by harnessing market forces, have more effectively resisted slavery and imperialism. The group has also outlined methods, more cost-effective than elections, for representing commercial interests in governments.

At the Tampere conference the speaker demonstrated a productivity-enhancing management tool. Called the 'employee visualisation appendage', it communicates with transmitter-receivers located on employees. The

transmitters send a read-out on performance; the receivers give trained manager administration of calibrated electric shocks to less-efficient workers.

It was, of course, a spoof. But the 'WTO' speaker reports to Paul Kingsworth that the managers in the audience showed no sign that they suspected anything. He got a polite round of applause - no resistance, no doubts, not even a query.

The words did their work. If a speaker flavours his PowerPoints with key words - 'skills', 'trained', 'business', 'choice', 'market', 'management', 'cost', 'standards' - not only do we not ask, we don't realise that there might be a question worth asking.

Walking the walk and talking the talk

Guidance needs signposts for the contemporary world. 'Opportunity awareness', and points west, have survived surprisingly well. Indeed, with minor amendments, they have been re-erected by the QCA.

And there are new signposts. Professor Ken Roberts, long-time critical friend to guidance, is worried about the signposting of 'social exclusion'. It points, he argues, to no recognisable reality. To settle for the word, rather than attend to the reality is - Ken reminds everybody - the sociological sin of 'reification'. The perpetrators of 'social exclusion' are guilty. For, 'the excluded' are not just the people without work, they are the poor and the underclass. Some are desperate, some hopeless and some fearful. They may be a net cost to the economy; but that may mean being unready, disengaged or just bored. There is every chance that they are humiliated, loyal to those who understand them, angry with everybody else - troubled and troublesome. Few people rate all of these descriptions. Most rate some. By no means all are whom the Connexions Unit thinks it means by the 'socially excluded'. There is no single reality signposted here. It is a labyrinth.

Reification tidies unwelcome complication into manageable simple-mindedness. We should worry about that. Because in order to help we must know, and knowledge depends on words. If we mean to walk the walk, we must learn to talk the talk.

The worst effects of not doing so would be that we hurt the people we seek to help. Learners become elements in other peoples' purposes - commodities. There, is in the name of 'standards', a current proposal to subject 7 year-olds to 117 learning assessments. The perpetrators of the 'employee visualisation appendage' were kidding. The perpetrators of 117 test for 7 years-olds are not.

When words point us towards the possibility of harm, or when they do not fit the reality, or just get out-of-date, then we must be free to change them. For that we need command of our own language. Helena Drysdale regrets the way in which people have, so often, acquiesced in the loss of their own language. It was bad enough that the children of the Welsh were - in their own schools - made to wear slates commanding *Dim Cymraeg*. It is worse to hang the slate around your own neck.

Being malleable

The past is only worth visiting if it helps us to understand the present. Sometimes it does. The Schools Council Careers Education and Guidance Project, active in the '70s, was one of the most creative - and least understood - initiatives in careers work. A key element was a series of simulated newspapers, with news items, quizzes, self-help questionnaires, games, correspondence columns, pictures and features. That was probably a better idea then, than it would be now; but the point is that it raised issues for working life - how it works, who does what, and what work is like for people. The designers wanted not just to equip learners to fit in, but to understand - and to be active. A criticism at the time was that teachers could not, safely, be left to engage young minds in such dynamics.

The project became one of the first places where education, business and political interests first came into serious conversation with each other. One of the most telling remarks about that process was, at that time, made by evaluator Inge Bates; careers education is, she said, 'infinitely malleable'. If she was right about that, careers education will, since then, have proven capable of taking on whatever shape whatever strong hand cares to press upon it.

Researcher Suzy Harris' says that it has, because, she says, careers education is a 'contested concept'. Her book is a much-needed history of influences on careers education. She describes how economic change impacts policy which seeks to influence careers-education. She argues that careers education has been bounced around because it lacks a robust intellectual foundation - she makes little reference to the intellectual life of the NACGT. Suzy also misses the fact that careers education has been a happy hunting ground for the '...ologies' - all the way from neurology to sociology. But she is right to point to powerful political attention. And she is also right to suggest that - so far - careers education has not been able to find a clear forward route through the labyrinth of initiatives.

But it can be done: careers educators were among those who made the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative workable in educational terms (TVEI's demise had nothing to do with its worth). We must hope that personal advisers and their partners can do the same good job on Connexions.

It will need flexibility rather than malleability, because - in order to move on - we need to know which way is 'forward'.

Moving on

Our professional associations and institutes signpost the journey. But there is an issue here: they are what political commentator Professor Paul Hirst calls 'communities of choice' - we associate with them in order to be with people like ourselves. And, in contemporary society, communities of choice seek less-and-less contact with alternative points of view. Paul Hirst argues, that their talk has been 'hollowed out', removing conflicted accounts of what can and should happen, and speaking only of consensual and pragmatic bases for action. Hard decision making is left, he says, to managers, fewer searching questions are asked, systems become increasingly 'top-down', the point-of-delivery becomes increasingly biddable.

That ally of Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, points to a harder route; we need, he says, to extend 'horizons of thought' if we are to deal with historical change. History is not just a branch of the entertainment industry, it is a tool. The present reflects the past. Check this out....

'The day is coming, if I do not misread the signs of the time, when teachers of our schools will have to choose between making a bolder use of their freedom and having it ruthlessly abridged.'

Edmund Holmes, Chief Inspector of Schools (1905)

And...

'Schools need to believe that they have the freedom to determine the nature and structure of the curriculum, within and beyond the statutory framework. But they have to regain the initiative and not see themselves as helpless victims in the context of instructions from above.'

David Bell - Chief Inspector of Schools (2002)

Reading the signs of the times requires that Suzy Harris's work is paralleled by David Peck's forthcoming history of the careers services. We need all the signposts we can get in working out what careers work can do, what it can do better than anything else, what can only it do - and, perhaps as much as anything - what it *cannot* do.

Paul Hirst argues that this needs new forms of open and pluralistic community. The possibilities for careers work are developed as my next 'Points of Departure'. I assume that you are not ready to have a slate hung round your neck, and you see nothing wrong in arguing with emperors.

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Note

'Bongos, Jockeys and Young Victors - why we need a think-tank for guidance' - Bill's next Points of Departure' will appear in the Spring issue.

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NICEC NEWS

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

Congratulations to David Andrews who has been awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List for his services to careers education. David is a NICEC Fellow as well as a past-president of the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers. He is also currently a part-time adviser to the DfES on careers education and guidance.

Tony Watts has completed his 13-month contract at OECD and is now based back in Cambridge. He is continuing to work on a consultancy basis on OECD's 14-country Career Guidance Policy Review, and is also Lead Consultant on a World Bank project on career guidance policies in seven middle-income countries (Chile, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Turkey).

Charles Jackson and Wendy Hirsh gave a presentation on their research on the career guidance needs of doctors in training to the British Medical Association Junior Doctors Committee. This research report, 'Informing Choices: the need for career advice in medical training' by Charles Jackson, Jane Ball, Wendy Hirsh and Jenny Kidd is expected to be published early in 2003. The project was funded by the Department of Health under their Human Resources Research Initiative.

Hans Hoxter Tony Watts writes:'Hans Hoxter died on 18 November, following a road accident. He was 93. He was a remarkable man, who played a major role in the development of guidance and counselling services both in the UK and internationally.'Geoff Ford adds:'Hans Hoxter was a regular attender at ICG Conferences in the '60s and '70s and a lovely and very committed man who achieved a great deal, especially for refugees. (He was, of course, himself a refugee from Nazi Germany). For the young careers officers at the time, me included, Hans was very much a father figure - and certainly for us the UK father of in-depth counselling applied to vocational guidance.'An obituary tribute to Han Hoxter appeared in the Guardian on 29th November.

Recent publications by NICEC members

Wendy Hirsh, 'Careers in Organisations - time to get positive' in 'The Future of Careers', CIPD, May 2002.

A Danish translation of Charles Jackson's book, 'Understanding Psychological Testing' has just been published by Psykologisk Forlag of Copenhagen.

Watts, A.G. & Dent, G.: "'Let Your Fingers do the Walking': the Use of Telephone Helplines in Career Information and Guidance". British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, Volume 30 No. 1, February 2002.

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Watts, A.G.: "International Comparisons: Drawing the Strings Together". Career Guidance Today, Volume 10 No.5, September/October 2002.

Watts, A.G.: "Guiding the Learner's Journey". Learning and Skills Research, Volume 6 No.1, Autumn 2002.

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