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**Higher Education Careers
Services and Diversity:
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Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal is published for:

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

It sets out to:

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

Editorial

Peter Plant, one of NICEC's international fellows, has edited a new collection of articles that provides an insight into Nordic and in particular Danish career guidance and counselling issues¹. He has organised 13 chapters around four key themes: Nordic practice and research in guidance; influences on choice and the implications for the way guidance practitioners do their work; the potential of ICT in career guidance and reflections on career guidance theory and practice.

What is fascinating, although not entirely unexpected, is the sense of shared understanding and mutual concerns of Anglo-Saxon and Nordic academics and practitioners that emerges from reading the book. How to harness parental influence and meet the needs of youth with no formal education are just two examples of the themes covered in the book that are of concern not just to Nordic guidance professionals but to all of us in Europe and further afield as well. Themes running through the book such as uncertainty about the concept of career guidance and the role of the guidance professional also resonate. What I liked about reading how the Nordic countries are tackling these contemporary issues is the intellectual rigour they bring to the task. The questions they ask and the frameworks they use provide a refreshing perspective on new ways in career guidance.

Facing up to challenging new contexts is very much the overriding concern of this edition of the NICEC journal. We pick up the threads of two themes of recent journals. In issue no. 16 (Winter 2006) we published the first part of Ian King's series on the career transitions of staff in professional service firms (PSFs). In the second part he considers the applicability of a range of established career development theories and models to the PSF sector; and begins to identify those which may be most relevant to PSFs in 'developing best practice when facilitating professionals' transitions.

We also re-visit higher education careers advisory services (HECAS) which was the theme of issue no. 17 (Spring 2007). James Williams examines some of the challenges facing HECAS as they organise their response to various Government initiatives and especially the 'widening participation' agenda. He highlights the tensions that can arise when trying to establish and develop collaborative working arrangements both internally (e.g. with academic departments) and externally (e.g. with employers, Connexions services, Aimhigher partnerships). Internally, HECAS are heading towards more integrated guidance, but 'pre-entry' guidance (linked to access) does not seem to be as important as 'on-course' guidance (linked to retention) or 'exit' guidance (linked to progression).

Continuing with the theme of the challenges now facing HECAS, Gill Cappuccini explores the issue of how services should respond to the needs of international students. She raises some important ethical dilemmas as well as practical ones relating to resources and professional role identities. The case is made that ad hoc responses are not sufficient and that HECAS need to respond in a holistic way that takes into account the needs of both international and home students.

Finally in this issue, Jonathan Reeve examines how far a case study approach can elucidate John Holland's ideas about how vocational personality types develop. Holland identified a range of variables that could potentially modify the main predictions arising from his theory including age, gender, ethnicity, geography, social class, physical assets or liabilities, educational level attained, intelligence and influence. Reeve raises a number of questions to stimulate further research in this somewhat neglected area in the UK. It would be particularly interesting to explore how person-environment fit approaches can be used in conjunction with approaches based on Bourdieu's ideas about habitus and cultural capital.

Anthony Barnes
Editor

¹ Plant, P. (Ed.) (2007). *Ways – On Career Guidance*. Copenhagen: Danish University of Education Press.

Transition in Organisations: 2 – Locating Career Models

Ian King

This paper continues my study into how professional service firms (PSFs) facilitate professional transitions. It explores a range of career development theories and considers some of the sociological determinants that may influence a professional's career choice. An understanding of these career models will help professional organisations – one of the principal sectors of the 21st century 'knowledge economy' – develop best practice in enabling the careers of highly skilled professionals.

Emergent 'career development' thinking in professional services

Let's consider some different career models and their implications for career education in PSFs. Many career development theories exist which have influenced the design and application of education and guidance programmes within UK-based organisations. The primary application of these have been within schools and educational settings – Harris (1999) suggests that career education is school-based and, citing Watts and Herr (1976), positions career education as '...an aspect of the curriculum which straddles the education-work transition and is concerned with preparing young people for the world of work and adult life' (Harris, 1999, p.4). This definition excludes career education from the ongoing work environment, which is a reasonable position to adopt as most young people will probably have made their career decisions based on the career education that they received whilst at school or in full-time education.

In an organisational environment, conversations around career advice and guidance are focused on considerations of job performance and advancement as opposed to information about the range of career options open to an individual; this aligns with Harris's distinction that guidance is provided externally by other career advisory services – either educational services or those provided within organisations. In the 1980s 'there was economic growth, particularly in the service sector which led to an expansion in the number of professional, administrative and clerical jobs available' (Marwick, 1982, cited in Harris, 1999, p.45) and, as a result of changing occupational choice, there was a greater need for career guidance in schools. The emergence of career education policy was driven by political ideology and as Harris notes '...it is clear that any critical discussion of the economic infrastructure and occupational structures which help shape young people's

entry into the labour market were of secondary concern' (1999, p.60). As a consequence, there has never been any mutual consensus about the requirements for adult careers advice for those within organisational settings.

In the absence of any direction, organisations have set their own policy that, in many professional environments, focuses on performance management issues rather than career guidance and, in many cases, the actual practice is far removed from the espoused intentions of career education for all employees. Another reason why organisations may be limiting their career guidance programmes is the global economic changes that are impacting on organisational careers today.

This means that organisations need to reinterpret the meaning of career and career theorists need to study different organisational career patterns. As Killeen (1996) notes 'one factor has been declining faith in the "predictability" of careers and in the "stability" or orderliness of adult working life. Associated with uncertainty is the "problematization" of adult careers' (p.37). This lack of 'adult career stability' causes organisations to search for new ways of thinking about their career structures and results in individuals experiencing new career trajectories. Whilst individuals and organisations strive to establish meaning, theorists continue to search for new models to explain what they observe in the reality of the contemporary business world.

However, let's consider what we already know – current career development theories may be looked at in different ways, but a common distinction is between psychological and sociological approaches. Law (1996a) describes the 'structured categories of self (suggesting the possibility of relatively stable relationships between self and work)' and 'interactive concepts suggesting that links change within self, and between self and community' (p. 50). This matrix (illustrated in figure 1) presents a helpful way of locating some different career development models and positions the various models covered in this paper.

	Psychological	Sociological
Structured	Trait and Factor (Matching) Theories	Opportunity Structure Theories
Interact	Self Concept (Developmental) and Career Learning Theories	Community Interaction and Social Learning Theories

Figure 1: Distinctions between different career development theories (adapted from Law, 1996a, p.50)

Another useful way to think about the emergence of career models is to consider some of the elements of careers or what Killeen (1996) describes as ‘the basic building blocks of career theory – the “agent”, that is the person who has a career, what are the “environments” in which careers are made and what is the nature of career “action”?’ (p. 23).

These building blocks lead to a consideration of the degree to which individuals have control of their career, the occupational environments they work in and the decisions they make when choosing a career. This elementary approach presents a framework for reflecting on the emergence of career development models and helps to focus on why these models are important for an understanding of individual career choice and occupational career patterns. In the following sections, I outline each of the principal career development models and discuss their application, relevance and appropriateness for professional organisations.

Matching individuals by using ‘trait theory’ to assist occupational choice

An early exponent of career matching theory was Parsons (1909) who proposed ‘that optimal career choices required three steps: knowledge of self, knowledge of work environments and some method of matching the characteristics of one’s self to those of the work environment’ (cited in Betz *et al.*, 1989, p.27). This quest to find congruence between individual preferences and organisational requirements led to the development of a number of career interest inventories based on measuring individual characteristics.

One of these, Holland’s ‘Career Typology Theory of Vocational Behaviour’ (1973, 1985) looks at the relative match between an individual’s personality type and their occupational environment. ‘The central postulate of Holland’s theory is that vocational satisfaction, stability, and achievement depend on the congruence between one’s personality and the environment in which one works’ (Betz *et al.*, 1989, p. 33). The six personality types are illustrated in figure 2 and identified as “Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional” (Betz *et al.*, 1989; Super, 1981) and are more fully explained by Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996). This typology helps to identify an individual’s preference for different occupational environments and, as such, is a useful tool for career education prior to organisational entry. Betz *et al.* (1989, p.33) note that two important predictions of the theory are the following:

1. congruent individuals will be more satisfied and less likely to change environments than will incongruent persons.
2. incongruent persons will be influenced by the dominant environment (that in which they are employed) toward congruence.

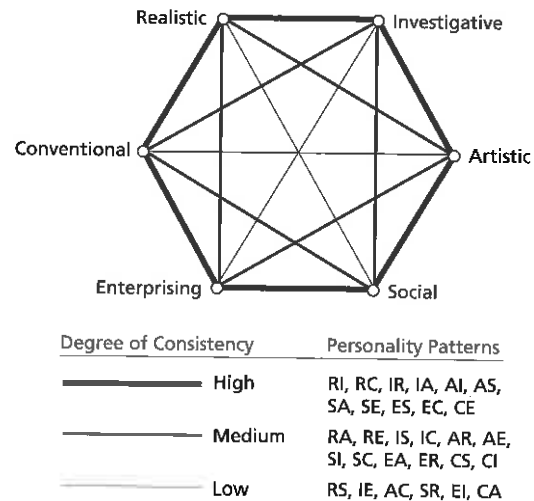


Figure 2: Holland’s Personality Type Hexagon
(Source: Sharf, 2006, p. 91)

The appeal of these trait-based approaches to career matching is that they are simple to administer, differentiate individuals, explain occupational preferences and are useful for predicting career congruence. However, they do have limitations. The focus on personality and interest, for example, whilst identifying an individual’s preference, does not give an indication of their ability to do a particular job. The static orientation of the model also doesn’t recognise the dynamic interactions that an individual is likely to experience in an occupational environment and as Betz *et al.* note, it pays ‘insufficient attention to sex, race, and socio-economic status’ (1989, p. 35).

Whilst acknowledging their importance, models such as Holland’s and its numerous derivatives, appear to have limited application within an organisational environment unless it is to explain why an individual is dissatisfied with their occupational choice and an attempt is to be made to help an individual determine a more congruent working environment. The comprehensive research conducted around Holland’s theory gives testimony to its perceived value, but some questions remain regarding its validity and usefulness in the workplace.

A personal approach to developing self through ‘life stages’

Early questions emerged concerning the validity of the ‘matching theory’ approach that led some theorists (Buehler, 1933 and Super, 1942 – cited in Super, 1981; Ginzberg *et al.*, 1951; Rogers 1942, 1951 – cited in Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996) to focus on ‘life stages’, as a framework for their interpretation of an individual’s progress through life. Evolving from this pioneering work Super fashioned his Self-Concept Developmental Theory based on the notion that ‘...people strive to implement their self-concept by choosing to enter the occupation seen most likely to permit self-expression. Furthermore,

Super suggests that the particular behaviours a person engages in to implement the self-concept vocationally are a function of the individual's stage of life development' (Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996, p.111). These 'stages of life development' are illustrated in figure 3.

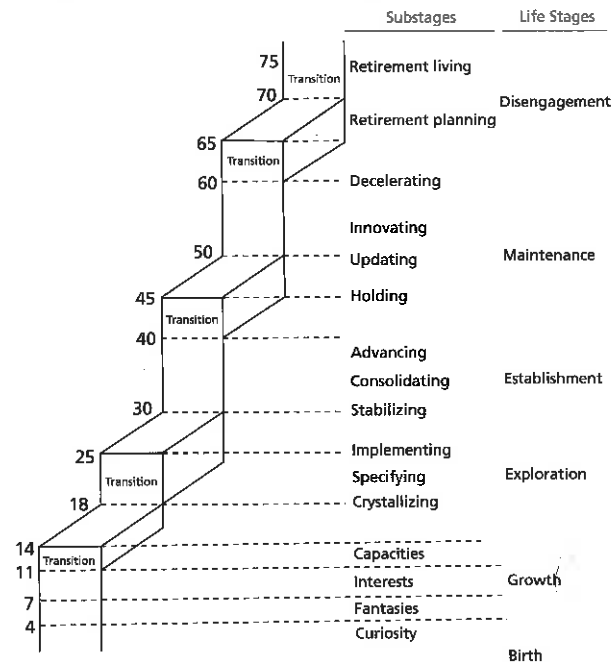


Figure 3: Super's Life Stages and Sub Stages (Source: Sharf, 2006, p.210)

This model suggests that people progress through each stage and achieve those tasks necessary to cope with the stage through which they are passing, but, as Super and Bohn note, 'progress through these life stages does not take place in a linear, uniform manner' (1971, p.141) for all sorts of reasons, both personal and organisational. In modern society, these changes in personal and organisational circumstances, or as Super and Bohn (1971) describe them, 'external (situational) determinants' (p.152), frequently result in fragmented career patterns reflecting the realities of their life experiences rather than the preferences for their career aspirations. This developmental approach is also illustrated by Super as a 'career rainbow' (1981, p.28) that identifies the roles that individuals have at different stages of their life. Super's career models emphasise the developmental tasks associated with each period during an individual's career and highlight the tasks and decisions required of individuals to achieve a satisfying career. In a professional service environment these 'career decisions' have traditionally centred on the dual perspectives of 'probable work and family events' (Guest and Williams, 1973, p.115).

This 'career decisions' approach gives a valuable overview as to how personal careers can be considered in professional settings and has the potential to help individuals understand how their careers have developed/could develop; but it offers little to enable individuals to actually make effective career decisions or to help organisations understand how best to manage and enable career education programmes to facilitate individual

aspiration with regard to organisational requirement. In fact, it can be argued that the focus on identifying the 'self-concept', although important, limits the potential for organisational application as it appears that the individuals have to make their own career choice/s.

However, in her work, Gottfredson (1981), whilst still focusing on 'self-concept', 'helps to explain how people see themselves in terms of society and in terms of their individuality (their values, their feelings and their interests)' by elaborating the two concepts of circumscription and compromise. These are defined by Sharf (2006, pp.156-157) as:

- 'circumscription – a process in which young people eliminate alternatives that they feel will not be appropriate to them;' and
- 'compromise – a process in which young people give up alternatives that they may like for ones that may be more accessible to them.'

She suggests that these concepts influence young people's career choices and they explain the social implications for individuals of the career decisions they make. She also recognises the importance that gender and prestige have. In her later exposition (2002), she describes how biological factors influence individual career choice and explains that 'the theory's aim is to help people prevent or reverse unwarranted constriction in early career development and thereby be more likely to obtain the "best fits" within their reach' (Gottfredson 2002, p.86). Her refocused consideration of how individual careers emerge strongly highlights the importance of 'social influence' on the decisions that individuals make about their career choice, but again it says little about how organisations might establish frameworks to educate and manage their employees' occupational aspirations.

Both Super and Gottfredson concentrated their research efforts on childhood development and, as a consequence, do not consider (in depth) the impact of their theories on adult development. However, when addressing the concept of 'compromise', Gottfredson (1981, p.571) does note that 'any mismatch between the abilities and interests of a working population and the jobs available to it means that some people will not be able to work at the jobs they originally preferred and for which they may be suitable'.

This 'self-concept' approach emphasises individual aspiration and takes too little account of the social environment from which an individual constructs their career interests and preferences.

The influence of sociological determinants in organisations

Whilst the 'trait theory' and 'self-concept' approach to career education are centred on psychological constructs, an individual's social environment strongly influences their occupational choice. A number of theories review from a

sociological perspective the influences on an individual's choice of career. These include:

Opportunity Structure Theory (Ken Roberts)

Ken Roberts (1977) asserted that individuals 'do not "choose" occupations in any meaningful sense; they simply take what is available' (p.1). He argues that an individual's social position determines their career choice and that they are conditioned to the decisions they make by their parents' occupational status and the opportunity structure presented by their local labour economy. Opportunity structure theory contends that 'people are thought of not so much as choosing work as being chosen for it. They do not need to agonise about what they want, because, it is argued, they take what is available to them. If they like their work, this is because they have learned to like what they can secure – through "anticipatory socialisation" (Law, 1996, p.48)'.

Although, traditionally, this career approach applied to those seeking employment in industrial and/or manufacturing organisations, it is increasingly relevant in professional settings as internal 'opportunity structures' adapt (through organisational restructuring and technological development) to reflect economic necessity. Individuals are more likely to accept those career opportunities that are available to them rather than those professional career appointments to which they may once have aspired. Perhaps organisations should look at their internal 'opportunity structures' to understand what they are and how they influence their employees' career attitudes.

Community Interaction Theory (Bill Law)

Whilst the work opportunities available in the local economy present one decision for an individual to make, Law suggests that the community provides another significant influence on individual career choice. He contends that 'people act, it is argued, for and in response to other people; encounters with and attachments to individuals and groups are both the cause and the effect of career development' (Law, 1996, p.48). This influence is more likely to impact on an individual where they are a member of a family community with a higher number of professional persons and the expectation to achieve professional leadership and the associated rewards. However, this theory also applies in industrial and ethnic communities where the members instil their attitudes and beliefs onto their younger community members. In making a career choice, Law suggests that '...developing a point of view is not an introspective event but a series of selective responses to other people's points of view' (1996, p.60). So individuals construct a career through interaction with their familial and neighbourhood communities. This theory is less likely to have an impact within organisations except, perhaps, where strong 'group bonding' occurs, perhaps as a consequence of organisational change, and influences the career choices of its members.

Social Learning Theory (John Krumboltz)

As acknowledged by Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) this approach to career counselling 'derives from the far more contemporary general social learning theory of behaviour' (p.234) originally promulgated by Bandura (1971). In his theory, Krumboltz recognises that people learn from their experiences and adjust their behaviour to reflect the outcome of those experiences – in other words people will look to repeat favourable outcomes whilst seeking to minimise or avoid those experiences with less favourable outcomes.

He identifies 'two major types of learning experiences that result in individual behavioural and cognitive skills and preferences that allow people to function effectively in the world' (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1996, p.234):

- 'instrumental learning experiences – which occur when a person's behaviour is positively reinforced or negatively punished as a consequence of that behaviour; and
- 'associative learning experiences – which occur when a person associates an event with a previous event that has significant emotional overtones for them.

Krumboltz suggests that people will make occupational choices based on their learning experience within given social environments. In the world of professional work young professionals will model themselves on their seniors in order to acquire those skills and behaviours associated with successful consulting, i.e. those roles in which they see others succeed and subsequently rewarded. Most PSFs facilitate career conversations through their performance management programmes so employees' experience of these career interventions will influence how they approach and manage their career transitions.

The organisational setting often also supports many other opportunities for learning (online learning, training workshops, seminars and work mentoring/shadowing etc.) that can also have an impact on an individual's career decisions. Recognising that social learning theory explains how a person's career path has evolved, but doesn't help career counsellors understand how to help an individual develop their career choices going forward, Krumboltz 'developed the learning theory of career counseling' in which he 'proposes that people choosing careers in modern society must cope with four fundamental trends and that career counsellors must be prepared to help people in that effort' (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1996, pp.250-252) These four trends are that 'people need to:

1. expand their capabilities and interests, not base decisions on existing characteristics only,
2. prepare for changing work tasks, not assume that occupations will remain stable,
3. be empowered to take action, not merely to be given a diagnosis', and that

4. 'career counsellors need to play a major role in dealing with all career problems, not just occupational selection'.

This extension to social learning theory gives career counsellors a set of integrated guidelines to help clients address a range of other occupational issues that they face, including job advancement, motivation, relationships, retirement and stress. Social learning theory is highly appropriate and very relevant to professional organisations, but not all of them will appreciate its significance or enable their line managers to utilise its potential in the workplace. As Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2002) note, 'the strength of [the theory] is that it provides a description of factors influencing career decision making and identifies outcomes resulting from those influential factors' (p. 62). This overview of career models has given a framework within which to consider how different career development theories may assist PSFs to develop best practice when facilitating professionals' transitions.

Note

The final paper in this series will consider the appropriateness and relevance of these different career models and focus on the capabilities that professionals need to make effective career choices. It will appear in the winter 2007 issue.

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Higher Education Careers Services and Diversity: Perspectives on Collaborative Working Practices

James Williams

Recent reports have insisted that collaborative working by higher education careers services (HECAS) with both internal and external bodies is essential if students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are to derive greatest benefit from their services. This article investigates the role and impact of collaborative working practices by HECAS in support of diversity and the perceived barriers to such working. The study has been drawn from empirical research undertaken for the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) in 2003. The research was derived from recommendations 18 and 20 of the Harris review which argue that HECAS need to target non-traditional students at an early stage in their degree programmes. The study suggests that collaborative working is now viewed by higher education careers advisers as crucial to the future success of students from non-traditional backgrounds but it is considered as being essential to the provision of effective support for all students, whatever their background. Within institutions, the structures are in place, increasingly, for an integrated model of guidance as described by Watts (1997). In some higher education institutions, an embedded curriculum model is also being developed. Externally, collaborative working practices are patchier and tend to consist of local initiatives that depend on the input of enthusiastic individuals.

Introduction

As higher education institutions address the widening participation agenda, higher education careers services (HECAS), once viewed as the 'Cinderella Service' (DfES, 2001), have come under pressure to play a pivotal role in providing support for students from non-traditional backgrounds. The *Review of Higher Education Careers Services* (hereafter referred to as the 'Harris Review') states that 'Institutions should establish ways of identifying, within their first term of study, those students who are

particularly likely to need help and guidance from the Careers Service. Such students may include those from non-traditional backgrounds' (DfES, 2001, p.47). Several commentators have argued that, potentially, HECAS have an important role in the self-development of non-traditional students (Connor, 2001, pp.223-4; Dodgson, 2002). One of the principal ways in which this should be assisted, argues the Harris Review, is for HECAS to work collaboratively with other organisations both within and outside their own higher education institutions. They should:

'...establish working arrangements with other agencies to address the guidance needs of individual students and graduates who face particular barriers in the labour market e.g.: those with disabilities, those from certain ethnic minority backgrounds, older graduates and those who withdraw from Higher Education. Relevant documentary information needs to flow from Careers Services to those agencies to enable them to provide effective help to university and college leavers concerned.' (DfES, 2001, Recommendation 28)

The issues surrounding collaborative working practices in career guidance are not of course new. Watts (1997) stressed the need for HECAS to be embedded within the higher education institution and a move away from the older image of the service as an isolated department on the edge of the institution, both physically and metaphorically. Rayman argued (1999) that HECAS are the main interface between 'corporate America and the Academy'. Watts, Hughes and Haslam (1999) in their report, *Closer Working*, reviewed the working relationships between careers service organisations and HECAS. Maguire *et al.* (2005, p.18) argued that there is a 'need for HEIs to forge links with employers and a range of other external bodies'.

External commentators are explicit about the advisability of more fully integrating HECAS into academic study and wider support structures of their own institutions and also working more with external agencies that can provide specific assistance for non-traditional students (Dodgson and Connor, 2002). Indeed, Morey *et al.* argue (2003, p.5) that collaboration 'is increasingly being built into institutional strategies'.

In practice, the terms 'collaboration' and 'integration' are often used interchangeably and clarity is needed. In their study of working relationships between HECAS and other careers service organisations, Watts *et al.* (1999) developed a clear typology of different levels of working partnership

and this remains useful in discussing collaborative working between HECAS and external organisations but also, more powerfully, *within* higher education institutions (p.25):

- *Communication* – where no working patterns are changed, but efforts are made to help services to understand what each other offers so that they can, for example, cross-refer clients appropriately.
- *Co-operation* – where two or more services co-operate on some joint task.
- *Co-ordination* – where two or more services alter their working patterns to bring them more closely into line with one another, while remaining within their existing professional boundaries.
- *Cross-fertilisation* – where efforts are made to encourage services to share and exchange skills, and in effect to work across professional boundaries in ways that may re-draw the boundaries themselves.
- *Integration* – where the cross-fertilisation process is developed to a point which means that the boundaries between the different services disappear altogether.

HECAS work with other organisations in a range of different ways, depending on the type of institution, the level of support provided by senior management to the service and even the availability of space

Methodological approach

The data used in this paper is largely drawn from research that was carried out on behalf of the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) and published as a report (Morey *et al.*, 2003). The research, which was commissioned to address Recommendations 18 and 20 of the Harris Review, explored the ways in which higher education careers services reach out to students from non-traditional backgrounds.

The strict definition of the term 'non-traditional' follows that used by the Widening Participation programme, which targets students from families with no previous experience of higher education; in particular, from socio-economic classes III*m*, IV and V (classifications used in British government publications). However, this study is broader, taking into account definitions used by careers services, and includes groups such as disabled students, students from ethnic minority backgrounds and mature students (Morey, 2003, pp.9-10).

Data for this paper is derived from research carried out for interviews and focus groups at sixteen higher education institutions around the United Kingdom. On average, six interviews from each institution were conducted and included a range of staff members. Students' experiences were drawn from one or more focus groups held at each institution. In addition, 30 interviews were conducted with employers and human resources personnel.

Institutions were chosen in order to reflect regional differences, the type of institution (particularly traditional and post-1992 universities) but were tempered by practicality. Willingness on the part of staff within the institution to participate in the research was a factor. The staff who were interviewed included careers advisers, widening participation officers, student support officers and course directors.

Employers, as a much more diffuse body, were more difficult to select. The principal issue that emerged during the research at the higher education institutions was that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were thought to be less able or willing to recruit non-traditional graduates. SMEs are often elusive in studies such as this and were thereby approached. A number of large employers who are already engaged with the widening access agenda were also approached. The main staff to be interviewed were human resources officers, where available.

Widening participation and employability

Widening participation remains at the heart of current higher education policy, reflected in the recent announcement by HEFCE and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Science that Aimhigher will receive funding until 2011 and in the Government's continuing commitment to a target of 50% of the 18-30 year old cohort having some experience of HE and its strategy of lifelong learning. The problem remains as to how students from non-traditional backgrounds can benefit from the total student experience.

Apart from academic achievement, higher education is about developing 'employability' skills such as self-confidence and networking (Yorke, 2003, p.8). Employability is about the development of a range of student attributes and abilities that equip students, incidentally, for the world of work but fundamentally equip students for life. Employability is not a commodity that can be obtained but a lifelong process of learning and development (Harvey, 2003). The emphasis of employability is not on employment but on ability to learn and make use of the learning, whether in employment or not. For many non-traditional students, it is difficult simply to raise their aspirations, even when they have entered higher education (Redmond, 2006).

The two parallel issues of widening participation and employability have tended, in policy and implementation, to be focused at the opposite ends of the higher education student experience. Widening participation concentrated, initially, on getting students onto higher education programmes while employability initially focused on finding ways to help students get jobs on graduating. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) *Paving the Way* report into 'under-represented' entrants to higher education found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that even at the pre-entry stage, non-traditional students were most in

need of support: '[The] sense of insecurity about employment as a graduate was not shared by the traditional students. They assumed HE study would enhance their careers and did not express any anxiety about finding employment after graduation' (UCAS, 2002, p.12).

Increasingly, widening participation issues have moved forward through the student experience from access, to support and retention to successful completion and currently towards job acquisition. Meanwhile, the emphasis of employability has shifted from job-market intelligence and job-getting techniques to developing a range of attributes through the learning process, with, latterly, some institutions taking an holistic strategic approach. The two processes are, at root, about both enabling students and empowering them to take advantage of their educational experience. There is a potential for organic convergence in the implementation of a forward-looking participation agenda that empowers students as successful learners and an employability agenda that has been developed by the national Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT), that sees employability outcomes as rooted in an empowering learning process that runs throughout the higher educational experience.

HECAS potentially have a crucial role to play in the link between widening participation and employability (Morey *et al.*, 2003). Barbara Graham (2002) suggests that 'virtually all' advocates of wider access 'agree that the most effective incentive for potential students is the prospect of better employment opportunities'. The success of providing careers support to non-traditional students depends on collaboration between HECAS and others both within and without their own institutions. Careers advisers should not be expected to become experts in all areas of supporting students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. However, they should be part of a network of support within the university (with external links where appropriate) that would facilitate cross-referrals. Careers services need to be a more integrated part of student services as a whole, without compromising their professionalism.

HECAS within higher education institutions

Within higher education institutions there is an increasingly formalised structure of collaborative working into which HECAS fit, which follows the integrated model of guidance developed by Watts (1997). This includes a wide range of levels of working practices from sharing of information to the development of a one-stop-shop of student support services.

Sharing information and retention

Sharing information between student support offices is an essential part of an increasingly effective co-ordinated student support network and this is recognised by some

support staff as having benefits to students from non-traditional backgrounds. The link has been recognised by at least one Scottish university, where a part-time post of student co-ordinator, responsible for helping students thinking of withdrawing, has been funded with widening participation money. Another institution, a Midlands university, places considerable emphasis on cross-referrals between services and incorporated the careers service into more general support. This might involve providing advice about possible career routes if a student wanted to change course or institution, or simply providing advice about future prospects to help students overcome temporary disillusionment with their studies. Where students have particular needs, careers advisers will be able to refer them to staff with appropriate expertise. One service, for example, referred cross-referrals to special-needs tutors.

Supporting students 'in a holistic manner', it has recently been argued, is essential in successfully retaining students from non-traditional backgrounds (Dodgson and Connor, 2002, p.11). HECAS are, according to one widening participation officer from the South of England, well placed to play a pivotal role in improving the retention rates by convincing 'young people that HE is a worthwhile investment, that it is for them and not just for someone else, that they're going to get enormous personal benefits as well as financial benefits out of it...that we haven't got an agenda. So careers services are critical.'

Several advisers who were interviewed in the course of this research commented that students who were considering dropping out or were considered to be at risk of doing so were referred to the HECAS. One careers adviser explained that his department worked with outreach and welfare offices in prioritising students who were considered at risk of dropping out of university. One particularly beneficial way of 'catching' these students was in fact through teaching modules at first year level: 'we actually have more contact with some students who are dropping out or who were on the wrong course, much earlier'.

Co-operation

Co-operation as part of the student services team has been responsible for specific initiatives to help particular groups of non-traditional students. At one Midlands university, for example, the HECAS and the student welfare department have worked together to establish a team to make the careers information library more accessible to disabled students. Similarly, at the same institution, the student finance office works closely with the job shop, based in the careers service, to help disabled students into temporary work to help them through their first and second years. Such a network of integrated support allows various services to contribute their particular expertise to helping a student while at the same time not being expected to address all problems.

Integration, co-ordination and cross-fertilisation

Watts *et al.* (1999) argue that 'integration' is where the divisions between different services disappear altogether. However, in this they appear to be at variance with the QAA's *Code of Conduct for Careers Services* (QAA, 2000: point 13), which is specific about the place of career education, information and guidance (CEIG) within the overall code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education. The code notes:

the importance of integration, coherence and internal collaboration as part of an institution-wide commitment to preparing students for their future career. This should be reflected in the institution's teaching and learning strategy and should include links between CEIG services and academic departments, personal tutors, admissions tutors, placement tutors, student employment job shops, and other student support and welfare services.

In practice, the depth of integration described by Watts *et al.* is seldom a reality. HECAS may be becoming closer physically and notionally to other support services: part of a one-stop approach to student support, but they are not fully 'integrated'; it is a mixture of 'cross-fertilisation' and 'co-ordination'. At Glasgow Caledonian University, for example, the careers service is now a part of the university's learning services department whilst at the University of Central England, the careers service is part of student services (UCE, 2007). This example reflects the situation in many if not most higher education institutions today where careers services are increasingly part of student services. This logically involves the service being situated geographically near to the institution's student welfare or widening participation office, and such physical proximity brings clear benefits to collaborative work. At one university in the South of England, the careers service is said by a senior careers adviser to be 'very integrated... and we work very much together as a team.' It should be noted therefore, that where the service has traditionally been allocated poor quality premises on the margins of the campus, staff do complain of a general sense of isolation. This reflects Rowley and Purcell's finding that some students complained of the low profile of their careers service (Rowley and Purcell, 2001, p.426).

Embedding career development in the curriculum

Embedding careers advice into the curriculum is one method of collaborative working that has been thought to be effective in reaching out to non-traditional students and is used by many of the institutions in this study and it reflects the popularity of the 'curriculum' model of institutional integration of career guidance suggested by Watts (1997). This has the advantage of both increasing the employability awareness of students from non-traditional students and that of those from more

traditional backgrounds. This is particularly pertinent in a context where many careers advisers, whilst aware of the need to help students from non-traditional backgrounds, are wary of 'overt targeting' of particular groups (Morey *et al.*, 2003, p.27). 'The best way', commented one member of academic staff in the North of England, 'isn't to actually target them... But registering all students into the system and making available to them a range of our services in a managed learning environment'. This reflects the more general concern in providing student services. As the report *Student Services: Effective approaches to retaining students in higher education* (Thomas *et al.*, 2003, p.14) argues, targeted, bolt-on initiatives potentially 'engender a view of non-traditional students as deficient and the perception that academic standards are at risk simply through widening the range of entrants to HE programmes'.

Despite the apparent pessimism of commentators such as La Valle *et al.* (2000), much progress in this area has already been achieved. The Harris Review recognised that an increasing number of higher education careers services were making 'substantial contributions to the academic curriculum, sometimes by directly designing and teaching modules, but also through establishing partnerships with academic departments' (Harris, 2001, para. 4.1.2.). Several universities have clearly given their recognition and support to internal collaboration between HECAS and academic departments. One careers adviser at an institution in the South of England commented that this was essential in making things happen: 'this will mean that all courses... when they go through their review and accreditation process they will have to show how they are making their students employable and careers will be one of the themes within that.' At an institution in the Midlands, developing employability for its students through 'faculty agreements' is part of the university's published mission. Such explicit support from the university authorities is essential in encouraging academic departments to take the career development of *all* their students seriously.

Links between academic departments and HECAS are variable, however. There are some particularly strong relationships. For example, every faculty in one university in London 'has a named appointed person within the HECAS. The careers advisers get together every fortnight within a staff meeting where we feed back'. At a Midlands university, personal development planning modules are conducted only where academic staff are interested as individuals.

Career development modules have typically been viewed as add-ons and as most careers advisers interviewed in this research are aware, this is not sufficient to reach all of the students who need such help. One career adviser from Wales commented that 'these things have to be integrated into the curriculum ... that's the only way it really works'. Indeed, some go even further: a careers adviser from the south of England commented that 'embedding careers in

the first year is crucial, but not...as a stand alone.' Individual modules, as Knight and Yorke (2003b, p.5) argue, 'risk being treated as marginal'.

In order to solve this problem, therefore, some careers staff argue that there is a need to make career development modules compulsory for all students and for the module to be accredited. One careers adviser thought that 'if that was compulsory for everybody, I just think there'd be a much more powerful interaction between the need for students to have this sort of input in this sort of institution, the academics' recognition that that's necessary, and for us to be taken a bit more seriously'.

In most institutions included in this study, careers staff are trying to get employability embedded into the curriculum: 'the main thrust of our work is about getting careers into [academic] programmes' (careers adviser, South). The ideal scenario for many careers advisers would be for academics to provide careers advice as part of the curriculum. This is reflected in this comment by one senior careers adviser in the Midlands:

'[We] provide resources, which tutors can deliver themselves, we can teach them how to do it. Or we can just come up with a resource pack that has all the handouts, all the OHPs, all the exercises. We've got it. We do all these things anyway, and a lot of these things are already formally written up.'

Personal development planning

In particular, both government and university authorities have put their weight behind personal development plans (PDPs), a collaborative venture between HECAS and academic departments that enables students to reflect on the transferable skills that they have developed whilst at university. It would appear to be an ideal method of collaboration that works to the benefit of all students (Dearing, 1997, recommendation 20). For many careers staff the development of PDPs is crucial to enabling students to reflect on their transferable skills, and the 'careers bit is going to get very urgent' (senior careers adviser, Midlands). One careers adviser from Wales envisaged 'decreasing involvement from ourselves, but what we would hope is to integrate this personal development planning activity into some sort of taught module'. At the Open University, PDPs have been used for some time. Careers representatives in the regions work with faculties and are available at day schools and run special workshops. This occurs at the local level and there is now interest from some faculties in working together on employability issues (for example, in arts and technology). A generic PDP model is being developed, which will then be customised for each faculty. More research needs to be done into the overall effectiveness of PDPs, although work at the University of Surrey shows that PDPs tend still to be implemented by enthusiastic individuals rather than with institutional support (Centre for Learning Development, 2005).

Developing an institutional strategy that places employability and careers at the heart of the student experience allows for the incorporation of extant schemes so that initiatives are no longer duplicated and resources throughout the institution are used more effectively. One university in the South West of England 'pulled together the different activities which relate to employability: PDPs, web-based learning, careers, learning skills, information literacy skills... Basically they've all been agendas that have run simultaneously and contributed to overloading initiatives and what we've done is pull it all together and try to see it a bit more realistically'.

All this is part of a wider attempt (both nationally and internationally) to provide effective support for *all* students rather than specifically those from non-traditional backgrounds (Butcher, 2001). Indeed, many careers advisers spoken to during the course of the research commented that they saw their role as providing support to all students, whatever their background, and advice that is tailored to the individual rather than to those of particular backgrounds. Geoff Layer has argued (2003, p.14) 'most HE careers services operate a universal service on a demand-led basis'. This may be viewed as problematic because much research has suggested that 'traditional' second generation students are more likely to take advantage of the opportunities made available to them (Woodrow *et al.*, 2002).

Barriers to internal collaboration

Although careers advisers at the sample institutions appear to be generally positive about collaborative working within an institutional context, there are barriers. Such barriers were viewed by careers advisers as problematic as a whole and affected the support they could give to all students. Academics are often perceived as resistant to the idea of supporting careers advice. One head of careers at a Scottish university commented that there was a 'perception of careers breaching boundaries' by trying to reach students via their courses. Another senior careers adviser, based in the North East, noted that academics 'don't really respond... A lot of the time they are more interested in the teaching of the subject rather than getting [their students] into jobs. ... if they were more career minded it would work to the students' advantage a lot more'. In a minority of cases, however, the reason is a fundamental resistance by teaching staff to the process.

The most widely expressed objection to incorporating careers modules into existing courses is the understandable problem of finding space in the curriculum. One senior careers adviser, based in a higher education institution in London, reflected this problem by noting that 'some lecturers are very willing to let us have part of a lecture slot, others will say I haven't got enough time to teach what I've got to teach anyway. So, there is a tension there'. However, time barriers are not always insurmountable. A departmental careers adviser at a

southern university explained that she has learned to be sensitive to academic schedules and in doing so has elicited a more accepting attitude from academic staff: 'Planning has been a key learning point because you understand that academics are very busy at certain times of the year and other times are quite good so the summer seems a good time to sort of plan for the following year, and they are more receptive to what can happen during the following complete year that we've planned for.'

One way to overcome department heads' scepticism is to fit in around major lecture slots: 'If they timetable our session in between two lectures, that can work well'. The same careers adviser also recounted, however, that 'there are times when I arrange to run a series of workshops, perhaps over three lunch times, and I remember, with one department, no student turned up for any of them' (careers adviser, London). Such experiences are not uncommon. It is, therefore, important to deliver careers support at times when, even if it is essentially 'add-on', it is not seen as such by appropriate use of scheduling.

Several careers services spoke about the enthusiasm of individual academics for incorporating careers support into their courses: 'a lecturer came to one of our workshops, and I've set up something to do with her students, she's really keen to do something, which is brilliant' (careers adviser, North). Arguably, such individual enthusiasms need to be nurtured by careers services and built into something more substantial.

While there might always be academics who are fundamentally resistant to linking careers support and study, this stereotype is not as widespread as it is sometimes thought to be. Nevertheless, careers advisers perceive reluctance on the part of academics to take on responsibilities for activities beyond their expertise. One Scottish careers adviser reflected this:

'The majority of our academic colleagues, if they actually had time to sit down and think about it, would say "Oh no, careers is a good thing, a good idea, but ideally can someone else please do it, because really it's not my forté, you know, that is not what I am professionally trained and qualified for".'

Careers services on their own, therefore, cannot dictate to academic departments how they should address employability issues.

Support from senior management

However, an institutional strategy, such as those described above, coupled with the ongoing efforts of careers staff to demonstrate to academic staff the benefits of an integrated approach to employability is the most likely strategy for enhancing students' career prospects. The success of career support as an embedded element in the

curriculum is, therefore, recognised by some advisers, at least, as being dependent upon the support of academic staff and management. As one senior careers adviser based in London commented:

'If the academic staff and the corporate management team think that that is a good way forward, then they can make it happen. If they don't want to make it happen there is nothing the careers service can do to make it happen and I just don't know how else you can get departments to take the issue of employability seriously.'

External collaboration for diversity

The typology of Watts *et al.* (1999) for external collaboration still holds true, but the structures of collaborative working practices are inevitably more varied and diffuse, as HECAS interact with employers, local authorities and other careers services organisations. Collaboration with external agencies is much harder to develop in an effective and consistent manner.

The structures of external collaboration are threefold. First, there are a number of government-backed collaborative programmes currently in operation that are designed to help people from disadvantaged backgrounds to go into higher education. These projects are designed primarily to raise awareness amongst young people of the value of higher education as a path to a desired career. Second, there is collaboration with local authorities. This is generally of a more immediate nature, satisfying the needs of equal opportunities. Third, there is collaboration with national and local employers. Maguire *et al.* (2005), following the lead of the Harris Review, argue that higher education institutions need to forge links with employers and whilst this does take place, links remain rather patchy and depend on local initiative. One human resources officer at a law firm in the North of England argued that she had very little time to approach HECAS and that employers would appreciate careers advisers getting in touch with them directly.

External collaboration is usually part of an attempt to raise awareness of higher education to potential students from non-traditional backgrounds (pre-entry) and the value to employers of employing graduates from non-traditional backgrounds (exit). However, there are examples of external organisations being involved in attempts to develop the employability of students whilst on their course.

Pre-entry guidance

HECAS are taking more of a role in pre-entry guidance for non-traditional applicants and the initiatives that are designed to support this can be divided into national and locally-based approaches.

Following the merger of Partnerships for Progression and Excellence Challenge in 2004, the national Aimhigher programme has been the umbrella heading for a multitude of national, regional and area-based targeted initiatives to widen participation in higher education. In October 2007 the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, announced continuation funding from DIUS and HEFCE for Aimhigher through to 2011.

Although higher education careers services are not specifically targeted in HEFCE policy, they clearly hold an important role as one of the groups of higher education staff that should go to schools and colleges to talk about the purpose of higher education. Careers services are working increasingly closely with widening participation offices to raise awareness of higher education and to raise aspirations amongst school children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme formalises a process that has been occurring in some institutions for some years. One south London university, for example, has, for several years, organised an annual event in conjunction with a local college and the local Connexions service. For one day each year, each secondary school in the borough is invited to send twenty of its year-eleven pupils to the event. The event, called 'Aiming Higher', asks pupils to consider their career goals and then helps them to investigate the possible routes to those goals. Another university careers service in the Midlands has developed links with a local further education college. A careers adviser works with some of the students who take part in a foundation course at the college.

The success of student ambassador schemes have yet to be fully evaluated but they have been clearly greeted with enthusiasm by some universities. At one university in the South West, for example, many aspects of partnerships for progression, outlined by HEFCE, are already operational. The university employs 280 students, mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds:

'to work as student ambassadors... school activities assistants. We employ students to work in our summer schools, residential experiences, when young people come on visits, for open days to see what's happening, we run a major school mentoring project from here. So we match students.' (Widening participation officer)

Not only does this provide role-models for schools pupils and an effective method of raising awareness of higher education, it also provides valuable work-experience for the students themselves. Nevertheless, there is discussion within higher education careers services as to the value of taking part in pre-entry careers advice. One senior careers adviser in the Midlands explained that:

'The only students we don't target are pre-entry... we're not equipped really to deal with them. We've chosen that our expertise is better aimed at current students - undergraduates - and that there are other

services - Birmingham careers and education business partnership or similar, Connexion services - much better equipped to do pre-entry. ... we still do end up with people coming in, and asking to see us, or ringing in, saying "we want to know how to get onto courses" or "I'm interested in this course, how do I get onto it?", and so you will give them starter information, and then basically refer them on'.

For this adviser, the issue was largely one of resourcing: there are too few careers advisers to work effectively at pre-entry as well as on-course guidance. However, as Watts *et al.* (1999, p.27) argue, there are other factors that limit the value of pre-entry guidance on the part of higher education careers services, such as the potential for partiality.

The Harris Review recommends much closer collaborative working with *Connexions* (Harris 2001, Recommendation 27). Although in a period of change, careers education and guidance in schools and colleges, and in particular the *Connexions* service, will continue to play a significant role in raising awareness of higher education and career development for non-traditional students at university in future. Hence, there is a need for careers as well as the widening participation office to be feeding into it. The widening participation officer of one south-western university, comments that:

'that's very important. It also means that our careers service here doesn't have to work in a vacuum. So although their major focus may be supporting students once they are here, they need to work with Connexions, they need to work with careers teachers in schools. Because unless we get early messages down the line about what higher education is and what it's for, then some of the early work careers won't happen.'

There are some specific collaborative schemes organised by universities and their local *Connexions* service. Liverpool Hope University, for example, has worked in partnership with Greater Merseyside *Connexions* on a scheme called Future Focus, designed to help raise awareness of higher education and career opportunities amongst the region's 16 year olds (Liverpool Hope University College, 2002).

At a more local level, there are careers service and local authority initiatives to support particular disadvantaged groups such as Black and ethnic minority students and children in care (Morey *et al.*, 2003).

Collaboration with employers

It is noticeable that as more funding has gone into employer engagement schemes since this research was carried out in 2003, HEIs generally have become much more sophisticated in their approaches. Collaboration between HECAS and employers tends to be regionally based and operate in two ways. First, there are work

placement and employer mentoring schemes that allow students from non-traditional backgrounds to make contact with companies outside university. These can be broken down into schemes that are organised by the local development agencies and those that are managed through agreement between the higher education institution and individual companies. A number of student placement activities in Wales, for example, exist as a result of Welsh Development Agency initiatives. Second, some institutions invite national and international companies to provide direct input into career development programmes. KPMG, for example, is involved in a number of ways with the new universities as part of their commitment to diversity. At one Midlands university, for example, it provides a session on assessment centres as part of the HECAS' careers education programme. Local employers who position themselves as having a clear commitment to supporting local graduate employment often contribute to university careers support programmes. One Blackburn law firm, for example, gives lectures at the University of Central Lancashire from time to time and runs work experience for students, as well as sponsoring one of the prizes for Blackburn College's law course. Departments of the City of Edinburgh Council are similarly invited to present guest lectures on careers in local government in social work and accountancy. These, however, are individual initiatives and depend upon the commitment of companies to promoting diversity.

Enterprise initiatives at various universities such as the Graduate Gateway schemes are designed specifically to help graduates develop their employability skills. The Graduate Gateway organised by the Careers Advisory Service at Salford University, for example, involves a large number of local employers and aims 'to enhance graduates' job prospects by developing their confidence, business awareness and job search skills' (Salford, 2003). It involves an extended work placement and can lead to graduate employment. One problem which we are not likely to solve easily is that employers have varied agendas (Purcell and Rowley, 2001, p.430).

Mentoring is one of the main methods by which diversity is promoted and this remains a preferred approach in many different countries, and many universities around the world offer mentoring programmes that link students from non-traditional backgrounds with local and national employers (Williams, 2007). Hall (2003, p.v.) warns that 'the UK literature reminds us that mentoring needs to be properly integrated into its organisational context and establish appropriate links with other services and opportunities'. Focused collaborative schemes include LINKnet, a Black and ethnic minority mentoring service. HEIs in the Edinburgh, Lothian and Fife regions, for example, work closely with principal employers in their regions to find mentors for black ethnic minority graduates. A human resources manager of one city council argues that the benefits of the initiative are that 'just being in contact with somebody, someone else who knows the system and how to apply for jobs in the council can guide the person through the system'.

Bridging the divide between higher education and local employers, particularly SMEs, is a key element in promoting diversity. For example, 'Graduates for Growth' (<http://www.graduatesforgrowth.co.uk/>), a non-profit organisation that is funded by Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian and sponsored by a number of local companies, involves all four Edinburgh universities (Graduates for Growth, 2003). The head of careers of one Edinburgh university argues that this is useful in promoting diversity in some respects: 'mature students may well have to stay in Edinburgh and therefore they may well be more interested in smaller and medium employers'. Such locally-focused collaboration is particularly useful to certain categories of non-traditional students who are often keen to remain in the local area after graduation.

Making connections between HECAS and employers

Students place considerable faith in the importance of links with employers. Many called for more talks from employers, careers fairs, work experience opportunities and so on. Careers staff were aware of such thinking, and often expressed frustration at the difficulties of persuading employers to become involved. Employers, for their part, often stated that they had not been approached by university careers services. Cold calling of employers is in fact a fairly fruitless task; more effective is building upon, and most importantly maintaining, links with employers. An important part of this is developing relations in such a way that links with an employer is not entirely dependent upon one individual since that often leads to a scenario where, if that person leaves the company, then the link breaks.

Utilising local networks of employers to spread the message about the benefits of mentoring, or coming in to give talks at universities is probably the most effective means of disseminating information. As this study shows, many graduates are looking to remain in their local area after graduation. Therefore, local public sector employers and SMEs could make much better use of the local graduate market than at present. One very interesting point a careers adviser made was that in some cases, asking employers to contribute financially to a mentoring scheme made them *more* enthusiastic about participating:

'Lots of our employers who've worked with us have said "it costs nothing, are you sure?", and we say "well, if you have a budget you could maybe sponsor the website", so they said "sure, here's a couple of thousand pounds, it seems crazy you are doing this for nothing". You know it's just the culture — it's nothing, it's free, and somehow they kind of, they don't devalue it, but it's like can it be any good if it's free.' (Careers adviser, North West)

Realistically, however, it is the responsibility of careers services to take the initiative. The human resources manager of one north-western law firm explained that she had looked at the local university's website but 'nobody

has ever contacted me from there', and, she admitted, 'to get employers on board you need to do the work for them, I am afraid'.

Conclusions

Collaborative working practices, both within institutions and with external bodies, are believed by a range of commentators and practitioners to be crucial for reaching and retaining students from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. It is increasingly being integrated into the practice of HECAS and higher education institutions as the most effective way of maximising resources. Internal collaboration between HECAS and other student services is increasingly becoming a reality with the co-operation of staff and senior management. HECAS are increasingly becoming part of a closer-knit community of student services that is physically closer to the centre of university life, by being physically integrated into a one-stop-shop student services. Institutions are clearly paying most heed to Watts' (1997) model of 'integrated guidance'.

Embedding career support into the student curriculum is also increasingly becoming a reality in many institutions, following Watts' (1997) 'integrated curriculum' model of guidance, as HECAS are asked to play a role in providing career guidance modules. How effective such modules will be is still being evaluated but it is assumed that they are valuable tools in promoting diversity. However, the success and extent of such modules still depends on the interest, enthusiasm and time resources of individual lecturers. Opposition to curriculum-based guidance tends to be the result of a lack of timetable space rather than fundamental criticism of the principle.

Collaboration between careers services and external bodies is, perhaps naturally, more varied in its success than internal collaboration. Much work has been done to enable a greater degree of networking between HECAS and between HECAS and other careers service organisations (Watts *et al.*, 1999). Collaboration with employers is dependent upon the willingness of local employers to be involved because of time resources and individual interest in the promotion of diversity. Much of the attention of careers advisers has been focused on the need to make local companies aware of the value of graduates to their businesses and this is particularly important to many students from non-traditional backgrounds as they often need to remain in the region on graduation. For employers in particular, however, there appears to be a continued need for more effective communication from HECAS about what graduates from non-traditional backgrounds can offer.

Collaborative working practices are popular among many higher education careers advisers. Careers staff are beginning to feel more central to the implementation of institutional missions to provide effective support to all students. It also appears to reduce some of the tensions

between different fields of work within higher education institutions. This research, however, demonstrates that the success of such schemes in developing the employability skills of non-traditional students is difficult to evaluate effectively. Evaluation is necessary, but resources are needed.

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Careers Advisory Services Adapting to International Students' Needs: The Case for a Holistic Overview

Gill Cappuccini

Higher education careers advisory services in the UK are facing the challenges of adapting to the particular requirements of growing numbers of international students, whilst at the same time endeavouring to meet a range of policy requirements for the services as a whole, all within a limited budget. Drawing on findings from a HECSU-funded study, this paper considers some of the obstacles to change within the careers services and some of the issues which arise during the transition to optimise services for both international students and home students. The importance of considering such a process holistically is raised and includes issues arising from this development such as challenges to careers advisers' role identity and professional integrity.

Introduction

Owing to the continual advancement of policy requirements and changing market conditions, many professional services and corresponding staff roles find themselves under constant pressure to evolve well beyond their traditional boundaries. Higher Education Careers Advisory Services (HECAS) are a case in point. As recently as 2001, the Harris report which reviewed the services described them as 'too often a Cinderella service, out on the remote edges of Higher Education' (DfEE, 2001). Since that time, a number of further reports have made wide-ranging recommendations for best practice within the services, including better monitoring, extending collaboration and improved targeting of provision (UUK, 2002; Morey et al, 2003; NICEC, 2005).

The HECAS have been making considerable efforts to respond to a series of recommendations for enhancing their overall service provision. At the same time, HECAS face the additional challenge of meeting the needs of the rapidly growing number of international students. There is no lack of ideas as to how provision might be enhanced. The most recent 'Going Global' report, for example, is packed with ideas and guidance about how practitioners can address the needs of international students in order to ultimately enhance their employability (AGCAS, 2005).

It is important to realise that international students in effect represent a new client group, as many of their requirements are founded on differing norms and expectations from those students traditionally using the services. Practitioners are required to address the question of how best they can meet the needs of international students whilst also making improvements to services for home students, which requires imagination and determination in the face of limited resources.

Traditional ways of understanding the workplace regard an organisation as a series of component parts, rather like those of an engine, each of which can be effectively stripped down and remodelled. It is clear, however, that organisations today need to be understood in terms of a much more complex interdependent system, involving both the internal dynamics of the organisation itself and the constant interaction with other systems in the wider world (Carlopio, 2000). Whilst staff may be obliged to embrace wide-ranging plans to improve aspects of organisation and practice to meet imposed targets, what is often not taken into account during times of change and development are such issues as the effects on staff morale and challenges to professional integrity which may arise concurrently, coupled with a loss of clarity in overall direction.

An organisation that communicates clearly with its employees and nurtures their confidence through its transitions benefits from improved staff well-being and organisational effectiveness (Sparks *et al.*, 2001). It is, therefore, beneficial to adopt a holistic view, which balances economic and organisational factors with social, cultural and psychological factors, in order to achieve understanding and facilitate effective and harmonious change. Such an approach acknowledges that accommodating human factors is central to success.

The study

In the face of much anecdotal evidence but little research in the area, the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) commissioned a study to examine the experiences of careers advisory services and international students (Cappuccini *et al.*, 2005). As well as conducting a national survey of staff and students using an electronic questionnaire, the research identified 'good practice' through the construction of institutional case studies and aimed to stimulate support for international students by making key recommendations for practitioners and policy makers.

Eight case study institutions were chosen to represent both old and new universities, and rural and urban, including one institution in Wales and one in Scotland. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 41 staff, mainly working in careers advisory services or international offices on their views and experiences of dealing with international students. Focus groups were also held at the participating institutions, to provide the international students' point of view. A thematic analysis was carried out using Filemaker software (www.filemaker.co.uk) to manage the data. For the purpose of this study, international students were defined as those having non-UK domiciles.

The focus of this paper is on findings from the wealth of data gathered in the in-depth staff interviews, which have identified key dilemmas and issues regarding the adaptation of the HECAS to this client group. Although only eight institutions took part in the case studies, which cannot be said to be representative of higher education institutions as a whole, the issues arising in the interviews reflected those raised at the steering group meetings and practitioner forums held during the course of the project, as well as those raised at two events where the findings of the project were disseminated.

The changing service

HECAS guide and enable their clients, but do not find employment on their behalf. Typically, HECAS roles include providing *information* (paper and electronic); *advice* (career direction, occupations, employers, vacancies, further study and funding sources); *events* (careers fairs, employer presentations) and *workshops* (job applications, CVs, interviews, personal skills). Increasingly, HECAS may deliver careers modules or careers guidance embedded within academic modules. Some services are able to provide advice and help with work placements, but they do not normally

place students as such. However, HECAS normally have to refer students to other professionals in other departments to provide information on national insurance and visa regulations. Part-time job vacancies for students are also usually advertised in a separate or complementary unit.

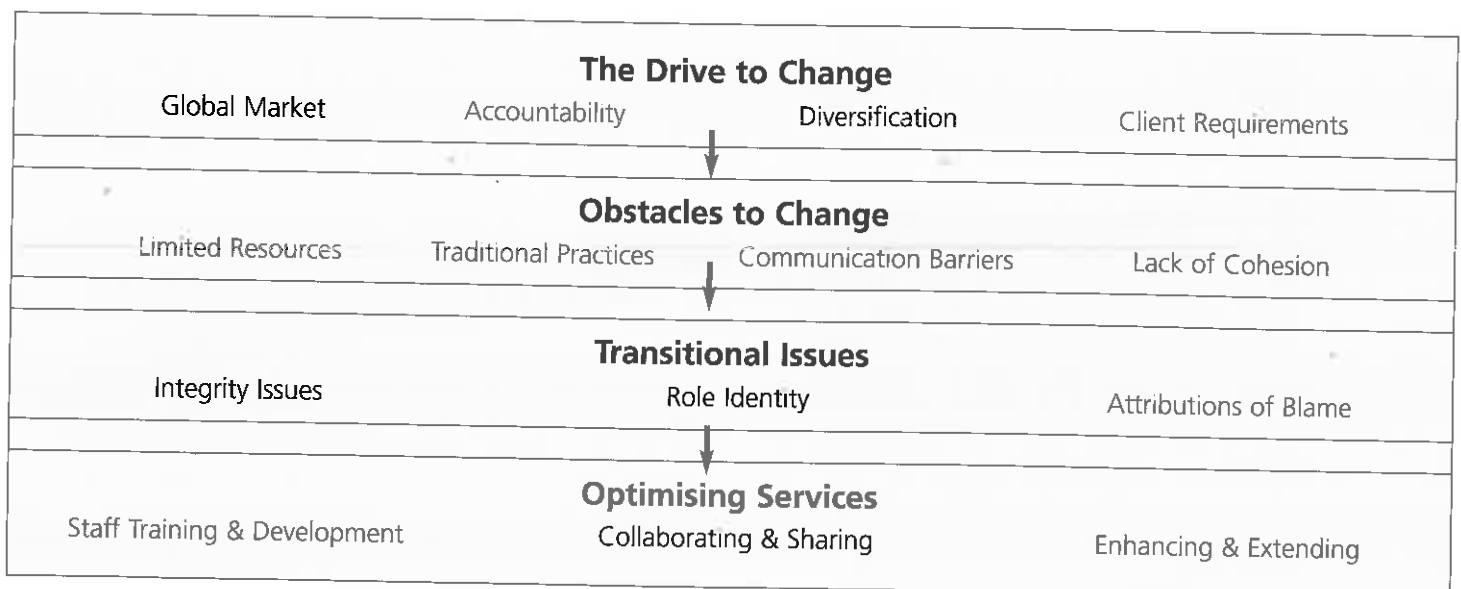
In the remainder of this paper the framework outlined in Table 1 is used to structure the analysis of the research findings. It shows a diagrammatic view of the adaptation process, from the drives to change, barriers to change and transitional issues through to the goal of optimising of services.

The drive to change

Changes in higher education services are largely policy-driven and inevitably lead to additional time and effort devoted to planning and budgeting for adaptations to existing services or development of new initiatives in order to meet recommendations.

International students make a significant contribution to the UK economy, providing an estimated £1.25 billion in tuition fees and spending £1.86 billion on other goods and services (UUK, 2005). They are also seen as ambassadors of UK culture when they finish their studies and move back to their home country or elsewhere in the world. Government policy is to compete successfully with other countries in the *global market* for these students. The Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) in 1999 set targets for a 100% increase in international students in the UK and 25 per cent of the global market share of international students in higher education by 2005 (DfES, 1999). The second PMI in 2006 declared a target of an additional 70,000 non-UK students by 2011. By 2004-2005, 13% of UK higher education students were from outside the UK, of which 100,000 were from EU countries and 218,395 were from outside the EU (HESA, 2006).

Table 1: An overview of the adaptation process



The presence of international students has become critical to the income of individual institutions too, and increasing numbers and competition with other institutions has meant that services are obliged to adapt. As one careers adviser commented:

'...because of the economic benefits of having international students, organisations like ours are vastly increasing their recruitment of them and so basically just the issue becomes much more in our face. So I guess that, over the years we've had international students coming in, all the service involved with them has basically been we've given them what we've offered to our home students and not really a service for their needs at all.'

Evolving higher education policy has led to the requirement to introduce greater transparency and **accountability** in all areas of higher education, employing monitoring procedures and measuring outcomes quantitatively, ultimately to demonstrate value for money in terms of usage of public resources. The second PMI in 2006 stresses the need for benchmarking, establishing best practice and enhancing the employability of overseas students (British Council, 2007), all of which have implications for the HECAS.

Monitoring has uses beyond the requirement to meet quality control and accountability demands. There are a great many pressures on HECAS to innovate in all areas of service delivery, and often improvements can benefit both home and international students. The study found that reviewing and monitoring processes were not very well-developed regarding HECAS provision for international students. There was a strong perception of earlier and more persistent use by international students, but very little hard evidence.

Students are no longer seen as a relatively homogenous body with similar, predictable needs, and even the diversity of the universities and colleges in which the growing numbers of students who study is recognised (HEFCE 2005). **Diversification** in higher education means that HECAS are required to actively cater for a wider range of needs, including increasing percentages of part-time, mature and postgraduate students and those from a range of social and cultural backgrounds, changing the career guidance offered in order to accommodate differing expectations, aspirations and needs. International students are an additional and growing sub-group which represents a range of new challenges, often because of unfamiliarity with UK employment culture and misunderstandings of native English usage, requiring staff training and resources being tailored or created to meet their requirements effectively.

The study confirmed that **client requirements** have a significant impact on their interactions with the HECAS.

International students are often surprised by the nature of the service in the UK and are disappointed by the limitations of the services offered and employment opportunities available. Many of them, probably using their home country as a model, expected to be able to find a part-time job whilst studying that is well-paid and related to their future employment; the idea that working as a waitress or shop assistant will provide useful graduate employability skills is often an alien concept. Many also expected that their university would find work placements for them (the word 'placement' being a misnomer), as well as providing networks which would enable them to secure work post-graduation:

'Often when they visit the Careers Centre they think it's a job agency rather than what we are, which is a guidance service, so we can prepare them for work but we can't find them a job, and I do think that's a misconception sometimes with international students who haven't been through the whole careers scene at school so they don't know just what the culture of the careers service in this country may be.'

Barriers to change

HECAS have major difficulties in having to respond with **limited resources** to a wide range of often competing expectations from a variety of stakeholders. The fact that level of funding is usually at the discretion of the institution also has significant impact (Butcher, 2001). They tend to have access to a much sparser budget than the international offices who give support and advice to international students on matters other than careers guidance such as accommodation, financial guidance and arranging social events. The HECAS have already been developing strategies since the 1980s for squeezing more out of their limited resources, for instance by offering fewer long one-to-one appointments and more group provision (Watts, 1996) and now they are faced with a growing group of clients who require more intensive assistance. There was much concern from respondents about the strain on resources, which was often perceived as being unrecognised by the institution:

'With the increasing number of international students it is really, really stretching our resources because of the additional input, on an individual level the students need the time, and I don't think that's recognised by the institution. I don't really think that's recognised just how much work that involves.'

Despite a plethora of theories of guidance to choose from or indeed to employ in combination, initial findings from a longitudinal study indicate that careers advisers largely still favour **traditional practices**, particularly matching theories of guidance which aim to match the client with

their 'best fit' career (Bimrose, 2006). This perhaps reflects an understandable tendency for HECAS to hold on to a manifestation of their role which is understood and feels comfortable, in the face of a rapidly changing higher educational, workplace and technological environment.

Home students may take these discrepancies for granted, but the arrangements may be illogical and confusing for international students. There is, however, widespread awareness in the HECAS of this difficulty and an impetus to reorganise where practical. For instance, one institution was planning a 'one-stop shop' facility:

'There is a plan in this institution to create a student services type of centre. We would have a presence, a couple of people there all the time, a one-stop shop, so we need to make sure the students don't have to walk around to lots of different places, passed from pillar to post.'

It is important that both practitioners and their clients understand the fundamental purposes of the guidance service. A trawl through university websites demonstrates evidence of **communication barriers** between services and their clients. HECAS can have different names at different institutions, and may be hidden within other departments such as 'student services' or 'academic support' on the website, reducing the likelihood of successful access. Mission statements of HECAS tend to have an overall employment-related aim, such as *to enhance students' and graduates' career prospects* (University of Strathclyde) or, more broadly, *to promote and deliver best practice in lifelong learningfor people making the transition into, through and beyond higher education* (University of Liverpool), and statements of services available are sometimes quite extensive in their objectives. However, most services do not state clearly exactly what they *can* do and *cannot* do, both of which are necessary to guide the international student client who is unfamiliar with the UK system.

Despite the observations in the Harris report in 1999, HECAS are no longer working in isolation and routinely collaborate with international offices, student services and other departments. However, it is unfortunate that clients can experience a **lack of cohesion**. The various services needed are often fragmented within institutions, for reasons which are usually beyond the control of the individual departments concerned. They may not be within easy reach of each other, and may often be run by different departments and housed in different buildings. International students may need to find part-time jobs whilst studying, work placement during their studies, seek help with visas and immigration, assistance with English, as well as assistance in finding and applying for work post-graduation. It is often only the last of these with which the HECAS can help.

Transitional issues

It is notable that there were a number of important **issues of integrity** that respondents were concerned about in relation to services provided for international students. Many of these students have to learn to 'sell themselves' in interviews and on application forms for the UK market, because this approach may be quite alien to the culture in which they have been raised, and it was recognised that HECAS have a clear role in helping students in this regard. On the other hand, despite having to pass an English test prior to arrival, students' English is often not really adequate to meet employers' needs. Many respondents were concerned as to what extent international students should have their grammar and spelling mistakes corrected on CVs and application forms. It was seen as being of doubtful moral integrity to misrepresent a candidate as having a better command of English than they actually have:

'But it would be inappropriate for them to apply for a job writing a letter in perfect English manner if that wasn't representative of what you could do. My own principles for instance are that I'd like... I would help them to write a letter that made sense but not lose their own personality.'

One respondent illustrated mixed feelings in wanting to help international students a bit more because of the additional obstacles they face:

'...but I feel a very strong sense of desire to help international students, because I'm so full of respect for their ability to be able to go and operate in an entirely different language, so I probably, hand on heart, give slightly more help with covering letters and CVs to international students than I would the UK students but not in such a way, I hope, that means I'm doing it for them because that doesn't do them any favours.'

International students may need more in-depth help with interviews and application forms because of language and cultural issues. But there are arguments for and against dedicated workshops for this group. Some such workshops may be particularly valuable, but there are still problems in that international students themselves vary enormously in their understanding of English and English culture:

'I certainly think in those kinds of workshops (psychometric tests, team building, etc.) there's an absolute case for having those for international students only, but if we do that there would still be a vast difference between the understanding... I mean you may have one student whose understanding of certain English phrases is very clear and others that aren't, even within one nationality, so their needs are very diverse.'

Respondents in the study wanted to know if all students should be treated the same, according to their need, or according to how much they have paid? If international students are bringing in a lot of money to the university, is it right or wrong that they should get better services? HECAS are limited in the extent to which they have the time and resources to target their provision at different groups. There are problems in defining those groups too:

'I mean we have that trouble with separation all the time, we do hold the sessions for mature students for instance, which is really successful, they really appreciate and really like it, and we would like to hold sessions for lots of discrete groups. We would love to hold them for UK ethnic minority students... and we get loads of e-mails back saying well, what about UK students... and lots from international students saying, well can I go because I'm an ethnic minority, but they only want UK ethnic minorities.'

Within a constantly changing work environment, problems arising from challenges to staff **role identity** should not be overlooked, as elements of uncertainty in job roles are probably a threat to occupational well-being and coping (Worrall & Cooper, 1998). Careers advisers have been trained for a role which they may now find less comfortable, particularly within an environment of ever-changing parameters. The UK norm is that HECAS enable students to help themselves with regard to identifying a career and suitable vacancies. HECAS do not hunt for and secure employment for students, they generally do not find them work placements nor write student CVs and job applications on their behalf. International students often have expectations which are contrary to these norms. Careers advisers may find it awkward to be faced with a growing client group, who may be heavy users of services, but be unable to meet perceived demands and provide adequate services.

Some respondents felt that careers advice practitioners require guidance themselves as to what they should be doing as the changes have been so rapid and the particular needs of the students have not been specified:

'So although there is loads of stuff around about diversity training and awareness of cultural difference ... there's not very much about ... what is it that these students need that may be different from other undergraduates, and what should we be doing with them? ... and I think everybody is a bit worried that there is something really, really different that we ought to be doing but not quite sure about what it is we should be doing. I mean people are much clearer about what we need to do for ethnic minority home students than international students.'

In an atmosphere of feeling under siege in terms of services expected of you it is natural to make **attributions of blame**. Careers advisers in the study often blamed their difficulties on a paucity of resources. There was plenty they *wanted* to do, but they had often had neither the time nor the money. Many attributed international students' unrealistic expectations of the UK labour market to misleading marketing messages from the UK government and higher education sector and alleged false information disseminated by the recruitment agencies used by the universities.

Anecdotally, international students were sometimes thought to be regarded as too 'demanding'. However, a number of careers advisers offered reasons for this impression. It could be that they need reassurance because of their unfamiliarity with the culture:

'They are demanding in that they use the service a lot and they come back ... I don't know, sometimes it's like reassurance, you know, that if you talk to a home student you will say, right, these are the resources, go away and do this research. The international students will come back and double check, say, I've done this, so what's the next stage ... But I think again that's, you know, cultural, you know, I'm dealing with a different set of criteria here so I want to make sure that I'm doing it right, so in that way they are heavier users.'

The 'demanding' behaviour could also be rooted in the 'dependency' culture of their home country, whereby the student only had to study and the rest would be provided for them:

'Now this lady was a postgraduate and she had worked in China and she said, this was the first interview she had ever had because when she graduated she was just told to turn up at such and such a bank because it had all been arranged for her by her parents you see. And so that really taught me a lesson because I thought this sort of, what is often called 'demand culture', you know, you hear ... the international students are so demanding, it put that in a new light for me because it was more in a way a sort of almost, in her case, dependency culture. She just had been led to believe that if she went and she did the studies that was her bit done.'

Optimising services: implications

Where possible, providing a more seamless service to international students would benefit them as clients. Although HECAS may be doing a very efficient job with the limited resources provided, each client is only concerned with whether his or her own needs are met.

As with any client group, it is of course vital to understand their needs if these are to be met properly: even the

concepts of 'career' and 'vocation' can have different meanings in different cultures (Heinz, 1999, p8.). Arulmani (2006) makes a clear case for a re-examination of the concept of career development in the global context as social cognitions rooted in cultural background have a significant role in developing orientations to work. As observed by Yang *et al.* (2002), **staff training and development** must clearly be ongoing in order that careers advisers can better understand the cultural backgrounds, expectations and needs of their international student clients sufficiently to provide an optimum service. This in itself is a challenge as institutions may have to provide for students originating from as many as 120 different countries (Cappuccini *et al.*, 2005, p13.). And as Bimrose (2006) points out, training support for practitioners has often lagged behind the implementation of new initiatives.

Collaboration and sharing good practice have been key concepts for the HECAS for a number of years. An example of sharing good practice suggested in the study was to communicate ideas about the most effective ways of providing workshops to suit both home and international students. It makes sense to share resources between institutions: databases of employer information, overseas links; and information about the job application processes in a multitude of different countries. All parties can benefit from the avoidance of repeated effort.

Higher education institutions provide a range of employment-related services in many different formats, which may be determined by a number of factors including the layout of the campus, budgeting, staffing expertise and the composition of the student body. Within these differing structures, the impetus of limited resources leads to reaping the benefits of sharing best practice and collaborating with services within and external to the institution, to optimise usage of resources and improve planning for future developments.

Despite resources restraints, HECAS in the study were exploring ways of **enhancing and extending services**. There are issues relating to some areas of provision which would benefit from an overall consensus as they are effectively matters of integrity. Careers advisers are clearly concerned about how much international students should be assisted with their English on application forms; the degree to which provision in terms of seminars and workshops should be the same for everyone or should be tailored for international students or other groups; the degree to which resources should be targeted towards those paying the highest fees and to what extent should services simply be tailored towards the demands and expectations of valuable 'customers' in terms of the UK and higher education economy.

Conclusions

Overall, there are dangers in developing a purely pragmatic response to international students' requirements for information and assistance in securing the jobs and careers they have already decided upon. It could be argued that many international students are not requiring 'careers guidance' in the sense that is understood by careers advisory professionals and it is the gulf between expectations and practice, rather than that between resources and needs, which poses the greatest challenge for the HECAS.

Meeting the challenges of service developments should go beyond the service addressing a list of recommendations, and is better regarded holistically. If moral dilemmas are raised concerning adapting provision to meet the needs of a group of clients, this should be treated sensitively and seriously and addressed in an appropriate discussion forum. Likewise, it can be argued that helping staff to re-establish work role identities and addressing new training needs must be given sufficient attention in order to ensure the success of new initiatives. An approach to change and development which gives sufficient weight to human factors as well as organisational policies and targets will clearly benefit HECAS as they adapt to the dynamic environment of modern higher education.

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Do 'Types Produce Types'? A Case-study Approach to Understanding the Development of John Holland's Vocational Personality Types

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This article is derived from a larger study by John Holland entitled *Making Vocational Choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (1997). One of the subjects considered in the article is Holland's description of how vocational personality types develop and the influence exerted upon this process by a number of what Holland terms 'influential variables' which he places under the rubric of 'other things being equal' (Holland, 1997: 13). The article begins with a brief overview of the theory and a short explanation of the methods and procedure employed in the study.

Holland's theory: a brief overview

Holland's theory originates in the 1950s, since which time it has undergone considerable modification and revision, and has been the subject of innumerable, mainly quantitative, studies. Central to the theory is the premise that vocational choice is an expression of personality. Holland suggests that people can be characterised by their resemblance to one of six personality types: Realistic; Investigative; Artistic; Social; Enterprising; Conventional (RIASEC). These are model or ideal types against which real individuals can be measured, for example, by using one of a variety of instruments that Holland and his collaborators have developed for this purpose. Perhaps the best-known of these instruments is the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1997: 28), an easily-administered vocational interests inventory that provides an individual's pattern of resemblance to the model personality types expressed as a three-letter code (for example, SER: Social - Enterprising - Realistic).

An individual's pattern of resemblance to the model types, i.e. their personality pattern, has significant consequences in terms of how his or her career unfolds and Holland goes on to posit a number of hypotheses concerning the levels of educational and career aspiration and achievement associated with different personality types as well their likely behaviour in a variety of non-career-related situations (Holland, 1997: 36).

Development of the 'types'

Holland suggests that people come to resemble types as a result of the interplay between a number of developmental influences. Foremost amongst these is parental influence since, as Holland puts it, 'types produce types' (Holland, 1997: 17). This is largely because parents create an environment characteristic of the type (or types) they resemble, which inevitably influences the development of their offspring. The process of development thus set in motion, the child is further exposed to the influence of the wider family, peers, and the broader community (e.g. school, church, clubs and societies) which conspire to reinforce his or her proclivity toward a particular personality type.

Holland is content to describe the aforementioned process in highly general terms, asserting that the fact that it *does* occur is more important than the detail which would unnecessarily complicate the theory. Understandably, this latter omission has been the focus of some criticism, even by those favourably disposed toward Holland's theory (Smart, 1989). However, studies have been conducted which tend to support Holland's suppositions and it does indeed appear to be the case that to a significant extent types really *do* produce types (De Winne *et al.*, 1978; Smart 1989; Helwig & Myrin, 1997).

'Other things being equal'

'Other things being equal' is not so much an element of Holland's theory as a condition that Holland says must be observed if the theory is to be properly understood (Holland, 1997: 13). The term encompasses a range of variables that serve potentially to modify the main predictions arising from the theory. Specifically, Holland identifies 'other things being equal' as comprising 'age, gender, ethnicity, geography, social class, physical assets or liabilities, educational level attained, intelligence and influence' (Holland, 1997: 11, 13). As shall be seen, the evidence of my study would appear strongly to suggest that the influence of at least some of these variables applies equally to how the personality types develop.

Methodology

I opted to use case studies as the basis of my research because as one commentator has observed they 'offer the

richness of context that is generally unavailable in other types of study' (Swanson, 1999: 137). Case study method can properly be described as an 'empirical enquiry' (Yin, 2003: 13), and consequently should not be confused with purely qualitative research, since it may legitimately incorporate (as did my study) both qualitative and quantitative data.

Procedure

Six participants (whose names have been changed to preserve confidentiality) took part in the study. The group was homogenous in the sense that all participants were aged from their mid-30s to mid-40s and could be characterised as being middle-class professionals. However, there were some differences; in particular, the group was split evenly between men and women, my intention being to take into account possible differences between participants arising from gender-role socialisation.

Participants were first asked to complete Holland's Self-Directed Search in order to identify their three-letter code, i.e. their pattern of resemblance to Holland's model personality types. Next, a short vocational and biographical questionnaire was administered. Finally, participants were interviewed, in order both to clarify and elaborate upon the information provided in the Self-Directed Search and questionnaire, and to gather more detailed developmental and biographical data from which the case studies were constructed.

Results

Table 1 compares participants' personality patterns (three-letter codes) with what were identified in the questionnaire and subsequent interview as the primary occupations of their parents. In each case, occupations have been allocated the equivalent three-letter Holland Occupational Code (HOC), using *The Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996). In comparing participants' personality codes with the occupational codes of their parents, my intention was to identify whether the two matched, or were similar, i.e. 'that types produce types'. Overall, Table 1 presents a rather mixed picture. On the one hand, it is noticeable that the personality patterns of all six participants share at least two letters from the occupational code of their parents; and in the case of one participant (Bernard) all three letters are represented. On the other hand, although four participants have as the first letter of their personality pattern (i.e. their primary type) letters from either or both of the parents' occupational codes; only one (Frances) shares the first letter of her pattern with the first letter of the occupational code of a parent.

Of course, the usefulness of the data presented in Table 1 is predicated on an assumption that a parent's occupation is actually indicative (consistent with Holland's assertion that vocational choice is an expression of personality) of their personality type. This is not necessarily the case – we don't know that a parent was really in the 'right' job for their type. Further, the process of coding occupations using Holland's Occupational Codes was an imperfect one.

Table 1: Comparison of Participants' Personality Patterns with Parental Holland Occupational Codes (HOC)

Participant	Personality pattern (three-letter SDS summary code)	Occupations of parents with mother at top, then father	HOC of parental occupations	Occurrence of letters from parental HOC in participant's personality pattern	Occurrence of letters from parental HOC as first letter (primary theme) of participant's personality pattern	Description
Alison	ACE	Secretary/Teacher Urban Planner	CSE/SER ESI	2 (C, E)	No	—
Bernard	CSE	Farmer Horse Trainer	ESR SEC	3 (C, S, E)	Yes	Third letter of HOC of father
Colin	AIC	Secretary Dental Technician	CSE REI	2(I, C)	No	—
Darren	RAI	Teacher Electrician (Aircraft)	SER IRS	2 (R, I)	Yes	Third letter of HOC of mother and second of father
Eleanor	SAE	Secretary Undertaker	CSE ESR	2 (S, E)	Yes	Second letter of HOC of mother and father
Frances	SCA (first two letters undifferentiated)	Seamstress Teacher	CRE SER	2 (S, C)	Yes	First letter of HOC of mother and father

Consequently, Table 1 must be regarded as being at best inconclusive. If anything, it suggests that the process is more complex than a simple vertical transference of parents' vocational aptitudes and preferences to their offspring. So what is really going on? To begin to answer this question, we must look at participants' recollections of their formative years.

Participants: in their own words

The accounts provided by participants do indeed confirm the important influence that parents have exerted over their development. Into the fabric of these accounts are woven, sometimes almost inextricably, a number of the variables encompassing 'other things being equal': each of these is considered in turn below.

Social class

Without exception, all of the participants in the study describe the social class of their family as having been middle- (or lower-middle) class. Their recollections suggest that 'middle-classness' was conveyed both through material means, and by the inculcation of what participants feel were middle-class values. Amongst the former was encouragement to join clubs and societies and to participate in extra-curricular activities at school. Regarding the communication of characteristically middle-class values, several participants refer explicitly or by implication to a 'work ethic'. These were caring and supportive families, but by no means overly sentimental or molly coddling – 'a get on with it attitude' (Frances). Materially, all the participants describe their familial circumstances as having been (in the words of one) 'comfortable', but nobody's family was what could be called affluent and attitudes to money reflected this fact; one participant recalls vividly the memory of her mother counting out the money for a new car on the living room floor! Social values were communicated, several participants recollect, principally at the dinner table, and in some instances through religious worship, though the latter was never imposed in an oppressive manner.

Significantly, no participant recalls their parents having sought to instil in them a preference for a particular occupation, whether their own or another. Neither did any participant feel that they were encouraged to entertain, or to avoid, certain jobs based on gender stereotypes. This tends to reinforce the data presented in Table 1 in that it suggests the absence of a simple 'top-down' transference of parental occupational preferences to their offspring. Rather, participants recall (with the exception of one, Bernard) that their parents conveyed to them simply the expectation that they should 'do well' (Eleanor) in whatever career they chose.

Educational level

Holland speculates that the level of education that an individual achieves will exert a significant influence over their career (Holland 1997: 58). Here, however, we are more concerned with how parents influence their offspring's attitudes and aspirations as regards education, and the practical ways in which they assist, or hinder, offspring's educational achievement. For the purposes of this article, I adopt a broad definition of 'education' which encompasses both informal and formal learning experiences, and instrumental and associative (or vicarious) learning (Mitchell *et al* 1979).

As we have seen, none of the participants feel that they were pushed by their parents to do well educationally, though it was generally assumed they would. However, the influence of parents in shaping both the direction and the level of their offspring's educational aspirations (and subsequent achievement) is apparent especially in the recollections of two of the participants: Eleanor and Bernard.

Eleanor's story is what might be termed the more 'positive' of the two, and clearly illustrates the importance of associative learning (i.e. learning through the direct, or indirect, observation of other people's behaviour). She recounts the childhood experience of accompanying her mother to the care home at which the latter was employed, where she recalls 'I used to sit and talk to the old people'. It was here that Eleanor first became interested in caring occupations (i.e. those with a pronounced Social theme) and specifically in occupational therapy having observed an Occupational Therapist at work in the home. For Eleanor, the experience of watching her mother at work reinforced her experiences in the family home where her father's job as an undertaker meant that grieving visitors were commonplace – further inculcating in her an appreciation of Social values such as empathy and sensitivity that has lasted throughout her career. Indeed, it is precisely these values, Eleanor believes, that find expression in her present job as a Connexions personal adviser and help explain why she values her job so highly.

Bernard's experiences were rather different. Until the age of fourteen, Bernard attended his local comprehensive school with his friends where he performed well. However, at this point, his mother in consultation with Bernard's paternal uncle decided to move Bernard to a private school. For Bernard, the shock was immense and he was unable to settle in, performing (in what he terms an 'act of self-sabotage') dismally in his O levels and leaving as soon as he could with just a handful of poor grades. The story has a happy ending in that the experience ultimately set him on a path that took him back to college and then to

university. However, it illustrates dramatically the direct and profound way in which parents can influence offspring's educational attainment. Further, it reveals how the variables comprising 'other things being equal' tend to exert an inextricable and reciprocal influence upon one another since Bernard is explicit that one of the reasons he did so badly in his new school was because he felt 'out of place' in terms of his social class.

Ethnicity and geography ('community')

I have chosen to address these two variables under the same heading, partly for reasons of economy, but also because in the case of two of my participants they appear inextricably bound together. 'Community' is used (as it is in my study) as a sort of shorthand to describe the sense of place and belonging that ethnicity and geography help to engender in an individual.

Once again, Eleanor's and Bernard's experiences are particularly illustrative. In Eleanor's case, she grew up in a close-knit Jewish community, and while her family was not Orthodox (for instance, Eleanor attended a mixed comprehensive), the experience inevitably delineated the experiences and opportunities to which Eleanor was exposed. We have already seen how the example of her father and mother informed Eleanor's career aspirations and the inculcation of Social values. However, Eleanor is clear that growing up in so close-knit a community has exerted a more pervasive and profound influence, in that in her career she has sought to replicate the peculiarly intimate and Social environment of her childhood: as she says of her present (and favourite) job, 'I like this [a close community]... Connexions is [also] a close-knit community'.

Bernard's experiences concern geography rather than ethnicity. Bernard was brought up on the family farm in a remote rural community. In career terms, this meant that opportunities were limited, and indeed it initially seemed that Bernard would, as his family hoped, take over at least some aspect of the running of the farm. However, Bernard began to feel trapped and finally decided to break with the wishes of his family and 'get away'. Thus, 'community' in Bernard's case could be said to have influenced his development (and subsequent career) negatively, in that it prompted him to reject a career on the land. But at the same time, it may be that its influence has been greater than Bernard would give it credit for. Farming is an occupation that requires specific attributes: social competence (after all, these are small, close communities), the ability to work long hours at frequently arduous tasks, and (not least) business acumen. Translated roughly into Holland's typology, these attributes equate to Social, Realistic and Enterprising. Table 1 shows that two of these (Social and Enterprising) are present in Bernard's personality pattern; and while Realistic is absent, Bernard

has as the first letter of his code (his primary theme) Conventional, i.e. the type adjacent (and therefore most similar to) Realistic in Holland's RIASEC typology.

Discussion

The conclusions that emerge for this article are necessarily tentative, and incomplete. For one thing, space means that I am only able to include consideration of some variables, in particular, the role played in the development of vocational preferences by chance and insight (Holland, 1997: 70), which my study would suggest is considerable. More importantly, however, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study from which this article is derived. As we have already seen, there were a number of methodological limitations, not least the small sample group used, and the difficulty of coding occupations using Holland's system of occupational classification, where there were frequently a number of possible alternatives, and other instances where no equivalent occupation could be found. Moreover, the study was limited in its scope, in that I considered only some of the variables that Holland identifies.

Where this article hopefully succeeds, like the study itself, is in illustrating the benefits of applying a case study approach to filling out Holland's rather vague description of how the personality types develop. Far from a simple top-down transference of parental personality type, the picture that emerges is one of a complex process in which parents influence the development of their offspring in sometimes subtle and at other times quite profound and unexpected ways, and to which at least some of the variables – often working inextricably upon one another – contribute.

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