

# A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO UNCHARTED WATERS OF CAREER COUNSELLING,

A CRITICAL REFLECTION  
PERSPECTIVE



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**A Practitioner's Guide to Uncharted Waters  
of Career Counselling,  
a Critical Reflection Perspective**

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*Dear readers,*

*you are opening a practical book intended for career practitioners working with young people in schools and other institutions providing career guidance counselling. It is you who assist them when they find themselves at important crossroads in their lives, preparing for their future career paths.*

*Our aim is to offer you support so that you can feel empowered in your roles as career counsellors, are able to take care of yourselves and gain new ideas for your counselling practice. We believe this book will offer you some interesting tips, no matter what your concerns may be related to – ethics, burnout, communication with parents or colleagues, lack of inspiration on how to creatively map young people's skills.*

*We decided to approach the career practitioner's role from the standpoint of relationships – to ourselves, our community and the world itself. We are analyzing their impact on our work, and looking into topics and challenges one can expect to face in each of these spheres. They are also reflected in the overall thematic structure of the book that is tied together by the topic of critical reflection, which plays an important role throughout the whole publication.*

*The book was written as a part of the Erasmus+ international project. The programme brought together career practitioners from different countries and various backgrounds, all of them interested in exploring what influences career choices young people make. Research into the decision-making process of youngsters has also been a first step of our collaboration. The research findings brought up many issues which are included in this book.*

*The publication is a joint effort of 18 authors from five partner countries (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Spain, and the United Kingdom), and is a result of a three-year collaboration. We believe that the broad variety of views, experience and practice from different countries and backgrounds will enrich you and your professional practice as well.*

*The EKS team*

## CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS AND DIVERSITY

Weather. Even if you look up the forecast in the morning, there's no guarantee that you won't be surprised by what the afternoon has in store for you. From what we've learned, weather forecast can be a similar experience to book writing – no matter how meticulously you plan everything out, once you dive into the process, the thoughts on paper start living a life of their own. And now imagine the creative chaos when 18 people from five different countries are involved in writing.

### What this book could have been about

Whole process of writing started last October on a project meeting in Aarhus, Denmark. We began to discuss what topics should be covered in the publication and had not a slightest idea what an adventure this would be! We left the meeting truly satisfied – all future authors agreed upon four main chapters, which all articles would be easily divided into – no problem... But when we started to read the first drafts a few months later, they did not fit the agreed chapters at all! The original concept was, therefore, replaced with a new one, provisionally called 'three circles and one flashlight'. As we further revised the drafts, it turned out that the articles would align in any other shape but round. We therefore went back to all the scripts and realized while rereading them that despite their diversity, they share one common theme that unites them all: relationships.

### All our life takes place through relationships

Relationships are essential in all spheres of our lives – with our family, friends, classmates, partners, clients, colleagues, ourselves. Having looked at the articles through the lens of our relationships, we suddenly saw how to categorize them and where certain 'gaps' still remained.

When arranging articles into the book, we decided to proceed 'from the inside out.' The first part of the book therefore focuses on our relationship with ourselves, which is a considerable factor affecting our approach to everything else. The second chapter deals with our relationship to those closest to us - our students, their parents, our colleagues – people we are in contact with every day. Even though the relationship with the world and other more general topics (such as sustainability and uncertainty of the future) are discussed in the last chapter of the book, they are still highly relevant to our practice.

## When random is not random

From the very beginning of the writing process we intentionally avoided unifying the format of our articles. They take the form of stories, papers, case studies, as well as practical tips and exercises to support you in your everyday work. This variety should provide you with a full range of approaches, which means that you can find what suits you best. While the chapters are not exhaustive in the topics they cover, you will find a lot of inspiration within these pages.

You can let the individual topics guide you while working with the book or choose chapters at random depending on your current interest. Whether you dip in or read it cover to cover, we believe you can't go wrong.



## A BOOK THAT SLIGHTLY STICKS OUT OF THE BOOKSHELF

Observant readers may have noticed that this book is one centimetre wider than usual. We fought for this extra space and devoted it to **critical reflection**.

### What is it?

**Critical reflection** is a tool designed to help us understand our counselling practice. Basically, it is about contemplating our practice, asking ourselves questions, and exploring new possibilities. Despite their great number, theories, methods, research papers and recommendations that are sometimes useful may become a hindrance at other times. Critical reflection helps us to find our way around. It is a 'flashlight' shining at what is important for us. Every practitioner is first and foremost a human – a unique being with distinctive qualities, experience, education, background and beliefs. Thanks to critical reflection, we can see our uniqueness and understand how it manifests itself in our work.

## What is it good for?

Thanks to critical reflection, we are not mere passive executors of recommended procedures. By adopting the attitude, we are able to recognise hidden problems and their broader context and feel more grounded as professionals. Finally, it helps us to encourage our clients more effectively and help them face their career-related challenges.

## What does the additional centimetre offer?

Slightly wider margins gave us creative freedom and we were able to fill up the newly created space with side notes. Sometimes they take shape of questions and food for thoughts, in other places you will find small tips for practice or tasks. They are always related to the topic of a particular article, and their purpose is to make you think about something that might not be obvious upon the first reading. They are there to help you to see beyond the horizon of what is written and thus taken for granted and to find what connects the topic of the article with your own world.

## User manual?

It is entirely up to you how you approach the inputs for reflection. Apart from notes on the margins you will also find questions directly in the text of the publication. Try for yourself which form of reflection suits you best – a similar approach might be used when working with young people. Since there are studies and theories even for such a strictly practical thing as critical reflection, we want to introduce you to at least the key ones.

We incorporated them into the respective chapters, and you can find them thanks to **different colour of the pages**.



# CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ITS BENEFITS FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

Siobhan Neary

*'A reflective practitioner is someone who is able to research potential solutions through analysing experience and prior knowledge, in order to inform current and future practice'. (Reid, 2016:242)*

What this quote is telling us is that there is much we can learn from ourselves and those with whom we work. By being open to thinking about what we do, why we do it and how we do it, we can learn to be better practitioners. As practitioners, we have a responsibility always to deliver the best quality and informed support we can, to challenge unconstructive and oppressive practices. Therefore, we need to invest in ourselves by engaging in critical reflection as part of our ongoing professional development. Throughout this blog, we will introduce you to essential theories and models that will provide you with several lenses through which to reflect on your practice and develop a more critical stance. As such, you will increase your knowledge and confidence about approaches you can use to help you to learn from and develop your practice. This will help you to become more aware of the influences that can guide practice, both positively and negatively and how you can address this.

## Managing reflections

It is useful for us to start by defining what we mean by reflection. Neary and Johnson (2016) suggest *'reflection is about reviewing our practice to help us learn; it helps us to think about what we have done and why we made the choices we made'* (2016: 61). As such, this is an iterative and ongoing process; we must, as professional practitioners, be receptive to challenging ourselves as part of our learning and development.



Reflection is probably one of the most underrated and underused methods of continuing professional development. But it is also one of the most powerful and is accessible to us anytime, anywhere and costs nothing. Reflection provides a mirror we can use to view ourselves and the outside world; it helps us to learn and inform our future practice.

Neary and Johnson (2016) present the Johari window as a way of viewing reflection. It helps us to articulate:

- What we know about ourselves and what others know about you.
- What you know about yourself but don't share with others.
- What others might know about you, but you might not be aware of.
- What is hidden both from ourselves and others.

Reflection can help to bring these out into the open and enhance our self-awareness, which will enhance our emotional intelligence and how we work with others.

## Why is reflection important?

Reflection is one of the most important skills we have as careers practitioners. It helps us to:

- Continually review the world we work in and to continue to shape what it looks like as we add to our knowledge and skills set.
- Develop our critical thinking skills so that we are better able to challenge unconstructive aspects when we see them.
- Learn from our experience and apply what we have learnt in our practice.
- Be better at what we do.

Although reflection is a cognitive activity, it is helpful to find ways of recording our thoughts. To help you learn from your reflections, we recommend that one of the first things you do is to decide how you want to record your reflections. Being able to review your reflections is an integral part of the reflective process, there is a lot of evidence that suggests that writing down your thoughts can be therapeutic and can help you to engage in the cognitive process (Lakshmi, 2012).

With today's technology, there are many more ways you can choose to manage your reflections. Below are a few ideas:

Have you ever heard of the Johari window? Google information about this method of self-knowledge, then try to apply it to yourself.

Has it ever happened to you that what you had experienced helped you to improve your work?

### Recording reflections

- **Notebook and pen** – some people (including me) still love to write down their thoughts using a notebook and pen. This approach is immediate and gives you time to sit and think about what you might want to write.
- **Reflection journals** – there are several hard-copy diaries you can buy that provide guided activities to support your reflections. Barbara Bassott, for example, has produced a journal that offers useful theories and space to record your ideas.
- **Electronic devices** – increasingly, we all have access to a range of digital devices, including laptops, iPads, smartphones. These will all have options for you to write and store your reflections electronically, which means they are readily accessible.
- **Audio/video journals** – as well as being able to write down your thoughts on an electronic device, you can also use them to dictate your ideas. This means you can record your thoughts anytime you have time available. There are also software packages available which will transcribe your dictations if you want a written record. You might also like to video your thoughts as a way of storing how your ideas about your practice and work evolve.

These are only a few ideas, have a look at this blog from the University of Sussex, UK which offers a few more ideas <https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/tel/2018/12/04/digital-tools-for-reflective-practice-an-update/>

The next sections will be short summaries of theories and models that can help you to develop a more reflective and reflexive approach to practice.

#### References and further reading:

- Bassott, B. (2013) *The reflective journal* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). London: Palgrave.  
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 Neary, S. and Johnson, C. (2016) Reflecting on practice, in '*CPD for the career development professional*'. Bath: Trotman.  
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 Winter, D. (2012) Narrative techniques in reflective practice. *Journal of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling*. 28, 21-27.



The first chapter focuses on ourselves and our inner world. We will start with a practitioner's diary, in which she reflects on her experience of reality in turbulent times, and we will have a look at how to deal with changes in our lives more effectively. We will work on our ability to accept our faults and mistakes and through a real-life story we will learn how doubting our practice can actually improve our approach to students or clients. More tips on how to see our job in a new light will be introduced in two articles on theories and methods of critical reflection. Even though thinking about our approach to work and improving our performance is important, we devoted one of the final texts to burnout syndrome and the necessity of taking care of ourselves.

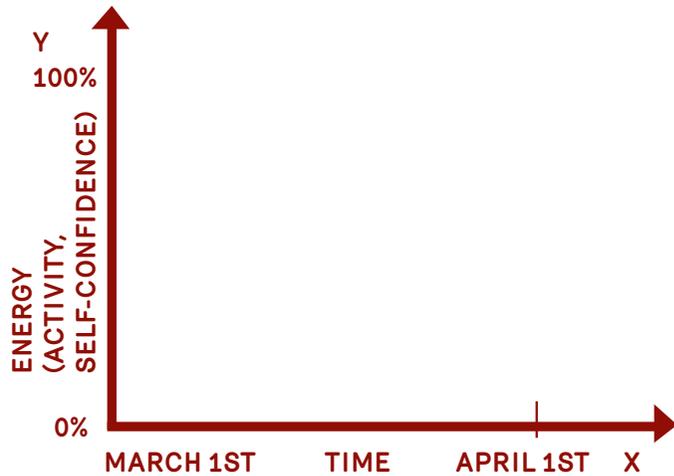
## LIFE IS A CHANGE

Lenka Němcová, Markéta Cudlínová

<i>Sophie's diary</i>	
<i>When I look out of my window, I see that spring is coming. Hurray! I cannot wait to have more classes outdoors; I have already started to plan the first trip with my students. I am looking forward to new adventures.</i>	1/3/2020
<i>Something strange has happened. It is named SARS-COV, and what was once a distant threat is now coming here. We have witnessed the first cases here already...should I be worried?</i>	7/3/2020
<i>From my office, I have a view of the schoolyard. It is usually full of life this time of the day but not today... All schools in our country were closed yesterday, and it is a strange feeling I have never experienced before. Everything has changed so fast, and I am not prepared for this. I keep asking myself – is this seriously happening?</i>	12/3/2020
<i>The very first day of working from home for me and the start of working via remote learning. No clear instructions were given to us regarding to what approach should be adopted, but this is fine for me. I will do it my way (as always 😊). I never give up. Challenge accepted. (Although I have to admit I have been dealing with some unpleasant feelings recently. As I contemplate the future, it is depressing. How will Coronavirus change the world? What will my life in isolation look like?)</i>	13/3/2020
<i>Hurray, the first day of spring is here! My favourite season. New beginnings. The first week of remote learning behind me. I have received lots of feedback from my students' parents – they complained that I sent them too much homework every day, which overwhelmed them. I was surprised to hear that, as they usually like my enthusiastic approach. I am just trying to do my best to manage my classes...</i>	20/3/2020
<i>Zoom, Slack, Teams, Jit.sí, e-mails, Zoom, Slack, Teams, Jit.sí, e-mails, Zoom, Slack, Teams, Jit.sí, e-mails etc. etc. ALL DAY LONG. Help! I am going crazy!</i>	23/3/2020
<i>With all the new things that remote learning brought; I have to work much harder than ever. But don't they say: 'Digital technologies are making life easier'? Well, definitely not in my case.</i>	24/3/2020
<i>Slowly, things are getting easier. I can handle the most common issues related to remote learning I experienced in my classes these past couple of days. Little by little, I am starting to feel more confident.</i>	30/3/2020
<i>April Fools Day was cancelled this year because no prank could match this unbelievable situation in the world right now. Let's see what tomorrow brings...</i>	1/4/2020

### How people react to the changes?

What did Sophie go through between March 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>? How did she feel, how did the situation affect her professional self-confidence? Try to imagine the development of her self-confidence as a curve where the Y-axis represents her self-confidence, and the X-axis is time (beginning of March to beginning of April). Draw the curve of Sophie's self-confidence into the diagram below. How do you think her self-esteem has evolved and to what extent did she believe in herself and her professional abilities at the beginning, during the specified period and at the end.



### The change curve

The 'Model of Dying' by the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) is an interesting view of how people deal with change. Based on her research into how people cope with dying and losing a beloved person, Kübler-Ross created a model of five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She later applied the model to people facing all kinds of personal loss (such as loss of work, income, freedom).

The model is universal to a certain extent, even though the author herself pointed out that every human being is unique. When grieving, we sometimes do not go through all five stages, or we may go through them in a different order. This means that some stages may not take place at all, or, on the other hand, they can repeat multiple times. Time that is needed to move from one stage to the next one differs as well – it could take days, weeks, months or even years.

*'Only a pumpkin grows lying down.'*  
(Turkish proverb)



A modified version of the model has also been applied outside of psychology – for example, in change management in companies. How can we use the change curve when working with students and young people? The model clearly shows that dealing with change and accepting it is a process that requires time. With that in mind, let's try to take our time when adapting to changes and apply the same patience to our students/clients.

This is easier said than done, of course – change often comes in hand with uncertainty, fear and other negative emotions, making us want to deal with the whole situation as quickly as possible or even avoid it at any costs. There are many escape strategies, usually adopted during the stage of 'denial': we pretend that the change does not concern or bother us; we tell ourselves that nothing bad is happening, trivialize the change, hold our uncertainty against ourselves etc. The first step in moving to the next stage is accepting the fact that change is inevitable and it doesn't always bring along enjoyable experience. The whole process will be lot less painful if we stop avoiding unpleasant feelings a change may trigger. Drawing on previous experience can aid the process. When looking back and reflecting on our trials, we can see how we coped with change in the past. It shows us that negative emotions do not last forever. If we can see change as an opportunity to learn and grow, it will be easier for us to deal with unexpected situations in the future.

If you were to use a metaphor to describe change, what would it be? For example, change is a storm; first, it gets dark and lightning strikes, but when it is over, it is much easier to breathe.

This activity can be used when working with students. It is important that they choose a change they have already successfully dealt with and do not mind talking about it.

### My change

Think about a significant change in your life. For example, when you finished your studies and started working, when you came back from travelling, when you returned to work after maternity leave, etc. Then answer the following questions:

What led to the change? What happened right before the change?

Why did the change happen?

Describe the process you went through during the change:

What was the outcome of the change?

Would you do anything differently next time? Why?

What would you miss had the change not happened? What new experience, ability, knowledge, etc. did you gain from the change?

Looking back, what emotions do you feel today in relation to this change?

### STOP AND THINK

- What/who helped you to cope with the change?
- Did you apply some time-proven strategies to cope with the change, or did you do anything different from usual?
- What does it all say about your ability to deal with changes in life?

#### References and further reading:

David, S. (2016) *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life*. New York: Penguin Random House.  
Kashdan, T. and R. Biswas-Diener. (2014) *The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self--Not Just Your "Good" Self--Drives Success and Fulfilment*. New York: Penguin Random House.

## DON'T BE AFRAID OF FAILURE – MAKE CLEVER MISTAKES

Martina Švarcová

There is an old Vietnamese story about a peasant whose horse wandered off one day. People felt sorry for the man, telling him what bad luck he had. But he simply replied: *'It is what it is.'* Several days later the horse returned with yet another. Suddenly people came to the man and told him how incredibly lucky he was. But he gave the same simple answer: *'It is what it is.'* After several weeks his son broke a leg when riding the new horse. This time people moaned: *'Oh, it's sad... What bad luck!'* And the man answered again: *'Well, it is what it is.'* A month later an army of recruiters came to the village and took all young men away. All but the man's son. And people said: *'How lucky you are!'* Take a guess what he told them...

The story could go on and on. And even though it is quite ancient, it is a recurring story of our times. The need to judge everything around us is encoded in our nature. Based on our expectations, our cultural and social contexts, and our current situation, we ascribe 'pluses' and 'minuses' to everything around us. Yet, things and events are inherently neutral. Our mind's need for judging the world and imparting order to it can even be observed in our language. We call all poisonous mushrooms with the derogatory name toadstools, and plants that have the audacity to grow in our carnation flower bed are known as weeds. And since judging is a second nature to us, we should not be surprised that when confronted with a mistake, our inner critic becomes immediately alert.

The word 'mistake' itself carries no positive connotations. The mistake of one's life, a cardinal mistake, a fatal mistake, an awkward mistake... we know these all too well. But what about a useful mistake, a thought-provoking mistake, an inspirational mistake? Can you think of other variations? Can mistakes be anything but bad?

We are not born thinking that mistakes are bad – it is something we learn through our culture. You probably already guess where our quest for perfection originates: the need to complete tasks flawlessly, to be impeccable, to make no mistakes. Yes, it all begins with our upbringing. Since childhood we are taught what is right and wrong. We are punished for our mistakes and rewarded for completing tasks. At school we mainly focus on mistakes. We

If you wanted to share knowledge with someone, would you do it through a story? When would you use it? And what story would it be?

count the number of wrong answers, not the right ones. We learn that it is bad to make a mistake, and as a result we avoid situations in which we could make one. We are afraid of trying new things and the fear of making mistakes guides us towards perfectionism: we are anxious and constantly compare ourselves against an ideal. We want a perfect world and flawless partners, children, colleagues and, of course, ourselves. And that is a very frustrating way to live. Out of fear of not being successful, we dutifully fulfil our tasks, often living a life we actually do not like. For years we endeavour to reach an ideal existence, only to find that we have not lived at all.

And this is not the end of it. When out of fear of making a mistake we only do what we know, we become ever more conservative in our thinking and behaviour. And then a crisis strikes, suddenly, and our usual behaviour patterns no longer work. The crisis calls on us to be creative, to take a risk, to step into the darkness. But since we have avoided similar situations our whole life, we become stressed and paralysed. In times when change is an everyday occurrence, this is not a helpful response.

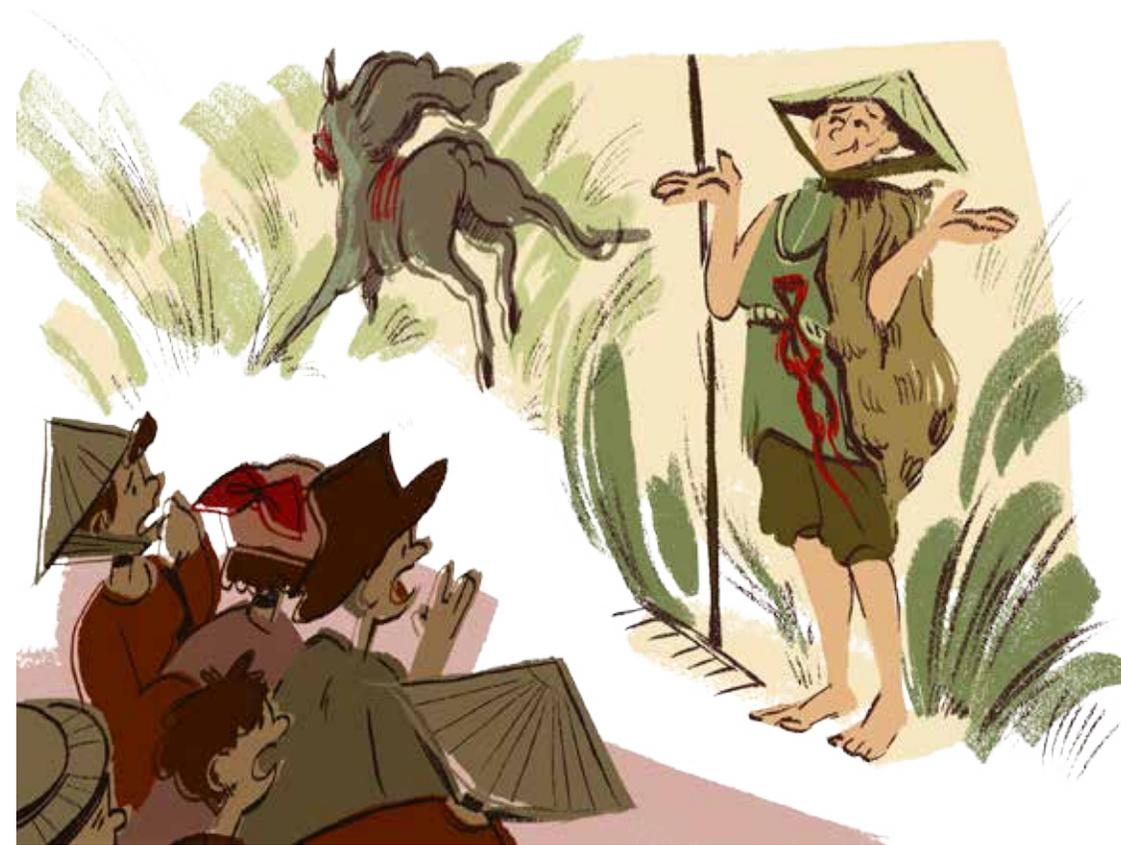
How should we look at mistakes in a way that is not critical? We can draw inspiration from Roger von Oech, an author of many books about creativity. Von Oech says that it is not about not making mistakes - it is about making clever mistakes and using them for learning. This is no breaking news. Even our ancestors knew this, as exemplified by the saying *'you learn from your mistakes'*, a version of which you can find in Czech, German, Spanish and many other languages. Sadly, in crucial moments, we tend to forget the lessons of those who came before us. Why is it that when we were learning to walk and fell countless times, we weren't discouraged from further attempts? Because our inner critic was not yet evolved.

Let's explore how we can challenge our thinking about making mistakes, even the rate at which we make them. Can the rate at which we err be proof of anything other than our failure, incompetence, lack of expertise? Try to see it all in a different light, one where making mistakes is not in the least negative. Perhaps you have already realised that there is nothing ground-breaking about the notion that the rate of making mistakes is directly related to our level of experience with a specific task. In routine activities we make no mistakes, but when trying new things, we cannot avoid them. As Woody Allen has aptly said: *'If you are not failing every now and again, it is a sign you are not trying anything very innovative.'* To cut a long story short, mistakes are a part of the human story. Our life would not be complete if we did not experience both extremes.

We often think that success and mistakes do not go together. Nothing could be further from the truth. Thomas Alva Edison, Marie Curie-Skłodowska, Steve Jobs, Abraham Lincoln, Michael Jordan – all these individuals had to start from scratch several times, to overcome their so-called mistakes in order to get where they got to in the end. While the list is only illustrative, the stories prove to us that success and mistakes are two sides of the same coin, an inseparable duo marking the progress of our lives.

### How not to fear mistakes

Life is easier when you can work with your mistakes and learn from them. Let's have a look at several practical tips for learning to accept our errors and making them our allies rather than enemies.



Put your students into pairs and ask them to share one of their mistakes with their partner. The facilitator should not comment on the mistakes, only affirm them with a simple 'OK'.

### 1. Train the 'risk muscle'

Intentionally break your habits. Try doing things differently, but stick to safe stuff – nothing that will push you too much out of your comfort zone. Brush your teeth with your other hand, experiment with spices, wear different colours than the ones you are used to. If you usually plan everything when taking a trip, go out on a limb and plan nothing. Take the first train that comes into the station and see where it takes you.

### 2. What's the worst that could happen?

If you are terrified of making a bad decision, taking an exam, or any other difficult situation, ask yourself one simple question: 'What's the worst that could happen?' And then ask it again and again. You might find that your fear is much greater than the worst that could actually happen, a millstone needlessly dragging you down. Once you release it, you can breathe freely and embrace new adventures.

### 3. Develop your growth mindset

The concept of fixed and growth mindsets was introduced by the American psychologist Carol Dweck, who encourages people to explore and work on their mindset. By changing our mindset and our view of ourselves, we significantly change our lives. People with fixed mindsets believe that talents are deep-seated traits and they feel more influenced by external circumstances. They do not like taking risks for fear of making mistakes and failing. As a result, they avoid many challenges. They often take feedback personally and get frustrated by the success of others.

If you see yourself at least partly in this description, there is no need to worry. Most people do not have a purely fixed or a purely growth mindset, though one of the two mindsets generally prevails. In addition, the relationship between the two mindsets is a matter of our beliefs and can therefore be changed. That's where the growth mindset comes in. If we allow our mind to be freer, we start to believe that we can influence many things in our life, and to continuously develop our potential. We enjoy trying new things and look forward to new challenges. We do not see mistakes as a personal failure but rather as a way of learning. We do not take criticism personally and are able to learn from it. We are inspired by the success of others.

Do you find the growth mindset unrealistic? To begin with, try to map out for yourself where your mindset tends to be fixed and where it is growth-oriented. In what situations are you afraid to take unnecessary risks, talk yourself out of

things being possible, tell yourself that you have never been any good? Choose one thing, ideally one you would really like to do right now, and try a different approach. One step at a time. You'll see for yourself how liberating this can be.

### OUR TIP:

One more piece of advice. If you want to develop a growth mindset in your students or colleagues, show them that you admire them not for their results but for how they got them. This will motivate them to try other, more difficult tasks. They will feel no pressure to get the best result possible, which means they will not be afraid of failing. And they might even start enjoying work or school more!

### 4. Don't be afraid to admit your mistake

We are used to linking our personal worth to our success, and view each mistake as a personal failure that decreases our value. To admit that we have made a mistake can be painful. It is important to realize, however, that our value is not linked to our collection of successes, because success is a relative term. By acknowledging the fact that it is human to make mistakes, and that we have a right to make them, it will also become easier to admit them. Moreover, admitting a mistake and owning up to it is not a sign of weakness. Quite the contrary – only those who are brave and strong can do it. People around us will appreciate our ability to admit mistakes, especially children, who feel great relief when the adults around them make mistakes and own up to them. This way children see that even adults, who usually know everything and can do everything, are only human, and for this they respect them more.

### OUR TIP:

How to make this work in practice? If you are a teacher, talk about a mistake you have made in your life in your lessons. Analyze it and show the students what you have learnt as a result. It will be an invaluable lesson for them to see that making mistakes can be useful. Or be inspired by 'FuckUp Nights', where celebrities own up to their mistakes by talking about things in their lives that did not come off, what this 'failure' gave them, and what they have been doing differently since then. Try to organize a similar event with your students or friends. Laughing at one's own mistakes brings a great relief and is also a sign of the wisdom we have gained thanks to our mistakes.

### 5. Don't compare yourself to others

Trying not to compare yourself to others is not easy, because we were all raised to do it. Regardless, let's try to change it. The following short story

from *The Wisdom of No Escape* by the Buddhist teacher Pema Chödrön can provide some insight.

There is a story about a group of people climbing to the top of a mountain. It turns out it's pretty steep, and as soon as they get up to a certain height, a couple of people look down and see how far it is, and they completely freeze; they had come up against their edge and they couldn't go beyond it. The fear was so great that they couldn't move. Other people tripped on ahead, laughing and talking, but as the climb got steeper and more scary, more people began to get scared and freeze. All the way up this mountain there were places where people met their edge and just froze and couldn't go any farther. The people who made it to the top looked out and were very happy to have made it to the top.

What can we say about the story? Were those who made it to the top the winners? And those who met their edge, were they losers? How would you feel if you found yourself unable to get to the top? Would you be able to see anything useful in this situation?

The Northern Cheyenne have a saying: *'Do not judge your neighbour until you walk two moons in their moccasins.'* This story is similar. Should we only describe what happened on the mountain, without any judgement, we would say that everybody reached their edge eventually. People who stopped climbing first were not cowards. They were offered a life lesson instead of reaching the top. If they can learn from it, another top awaits, one they cannot even imagine. People who reached the top were not necessarily heroes – they might be confronted with an edge somewhere else.

It is therefore pointless to agonize over the idea that other people are better, to worry that we have not managed something, to focus on our so-called mistakes. You never know – those who reached their notional goal may later find their edge on a path that for us is a walk in the park. Everyone faces their own challenges. Let us not perceive them as failures, but as opportunities. Whether we have reached the top or not, we are not better or worse. We are what we are.

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www.fuckupnights.com

## THEORIES SUPPORTING REFLECTION

Siobhan Neary

There are many theories and models that can help us to develop as reflective practitioners. Career guidance and counselling draws on theory and practice from a range of disciplines, including teaching, psychology, counselling and social work. This wellspring of inspiration allows us to learn from allied professions that make our practice both richer and stronger. In this chapter we present two theories on how to become a reflective practitioner: one from Donald Schön and one from Christopher Johns. The two theories build on introductory approaches to reflection and move to more critical thinking and reflexive approaches that structurally challenge the role we play in supporting our clients. The theories are:

- Donald Schön, *The reflective practitioner*
- Christopher Johns, *Becoming a reflective practitioner*

### Schön: The reflective practitioner. How professionals think in action

Donald Schön developed his theories around reflective practice by examining a number of professional occupations including psychotherapy, architecture and engineering. He wanted to understand how practitioners develop their knowledge and more specifically, how they connect theoretical knowledge with what they observe in practice.

Within this context, Schön explored the concept of 'knowing' and how professionals share and communicate this concept with others. Schön perceived that practitioners intuitively reflect while engaged in their practice, and use this 'knowing' to cope with unique, uncertain and conflicting situations (Schön, 1983: viii).

Schön presented his theory as 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'.

**Reflection-on-action** is a deliberate and conscious process whereby the practitioner retrospectively examines a situation and critically analyses and evaluates it after the fact. This method provides the practitioner with time and space to explore the activity at a distance. On her way home from work, the practitioner might think back over the interviews she had done that day and select one she would like to think through. She might decide to reflect on the tactics and approaches she used with the client in question: Why did she choose the ones she did? How did she expect the client to react? Was this the best choice? Were there others?

In which cases do you find critical reflection easy? And when is it unpleasant?

This process takes time and allows the practitioner to consider what they may do differently in the future in a similar situation. The process helps the practitioner to continually assess and reassess their actions.

**Reflection-in-action** is more immediate, although similar in terms of the process we engage in. It is a type of experimental reflection that happens almost unconsciously as we assess and react to what is happening in the present. To be effective, reflection-in-action requires a high degree of listening, not just to what is being said but interpreting what this means. As career guidance professionals we do this as a matter of course, but it is important that we recognise it as such. As a practitioner you draw on your knowledge, experience and skills to assess a situation, identify a set of approaches or techniques, consider which of them may be most effective, and then apply it to the situation at hand.

For example, a client may be asking you to help them decide on a course of action. Which course should they choose? As an impartial practitioner, it is not your place to make a decision for them, but to help them to decide which course would best suit their interests, aspirations and circumstances. During the interview you reflect on this and decide how best to help the client make a decision whilst remaining impartial. Within this reflective activity, the process is part of the immediate decision-making process.

### Johns: Becoming a reflective practitioner

Christopher Johns' work originates from nursing and is focused on helping practitioners make explicit the knowledge they use in their everyday work. Similar to Schön, Johns utilises two perspectives: **Looking in** and **Looking out**. The two perspectives draw from mindfulness and focus on the importance of paying attention to oneself within one's practice. As such, they emphasise the importance of feelings and acknowledge the interrelationship between thoughts and feelings within reflection.

**Looking in** focuses the practitioner on identifying space to address their feelings and thoughts. Johns promotes the notion that individuals should become aware of their personal approach to reflection and how they respond within their specific context. What is refreshing about this approach is the recognition that individuals may respond and act differently in different situations. When using a 'looking in' approach, practitioners need to have a tool at hand to record their reflections, perhaps a notebook and a pen or an audio recording device. The first stage of reflection is to write down what appears to be most significant about a specific situation.

The second stage of **Looking out** builds on the first stage by coming up with descriptions of thoughts and emotions. Added to this is a series of questions that help the practitioner to explore their situation in more detail – they may want to add to the narrative from stage one by presenting the situation in greater detail. The questions to consider are as follows:

Aesthetics (the art of what we do, our own experiences)

- What was I trying to achieve?
- Why did I respond as I did?
- What were the consequences for the client?
- How were others feeling?
- How did I know this?

Personal (self-awareness)

- Why did I feel the way I did?

Ethics

- Did I act for the best outcome?
- What factors either embodied within me or within the environment were influencing me?

Empirics

- What knowledge did or could have informed me?

Reflexivity

- Does the situation connect with previous experiences?
- What would be the consequences of alternative actions for the client/others/myself?
- How do I feel about this experience?
- Can I support myself and others better as a consequence?
- How 'available' am I to work with clients/families and staff to help them meet their needs?

These questions provide a useful set of cues to help a practitioner to work systematically through a reflection. These would be particularly useful in a critical incident situation, where, for example, the practitioner was working with a student and their parent, and the parent became very upset/angry. The questions are also closely linked to ethics and can therefore help a practitioner in an ethical dilemma. Finally, the questions can also help the practitioner to address their own feelings as well as those of the student and their parents.

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Here are some examples of questions; can you think of others?

What questions pop into your mind when you read the article? What would you like to try out?

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elisabeth Graungaard

Emma has been a school counsellor for two years and works with a large group of pupils. She is inspired by Albert Bandura, a Canadian-born American psychologist who is known as the originator of social cognitive theory and the term **self-efficacy**, which is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. According to Bandura, young people with a strong sense of self-efficacy view problems as challenges to be mastered, develop a deeper interest in activities in which they participate, overcome barriers they encounter and recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. Emma focuses on strengthening the youngsters' sense of self-efficacy by giving them opportunities to have mastery over their experiences and acknowledge a satisfaction of achieving goals. She also arranges meetings with other young people the pupils are regarding as role models. She can use the concept of self-efficacy when she meets youngsters lacking a sense of direction and is optimistic about how she can work with this perspective.

However, Emma has some doubts about her practice. Last month, she spoke to two youngsters, Anna and Peter. They told her that they had made fixed plans for their future. After the conversation, she realised she didn't know how to deal with youngsters who had already made choices about their education. She starts feeling unsure about her practise and experiences a lack of confidence. Should she accept their choice, or should she challenge their decision? She finds it difficult to challenge a decision that has already been made.

Emma is concerned about being a good practitioner. She speaks to a colleague about her worries, and her colleague says that **Amartya Sen's capability approach** might be helpful for her. Amartya Sen is an Indian economist and philosopher who is concerned about individuals' capabilities. He understands capability as a person's actual ability to do various things the person values doing. Capabilities are regarded as a freedom of an individual to choose between different kinds of life.



In this context, **functionings** (beings and doings) can be understood as various job functions that youngsters can achieve. **Capabilities** are actual freedoms to choose between different educational opportunities, depending on information and life experiences (resources) youngsters can access. If pupils only get access to a few resources before they make their educational choices, then their freedom to choose is restricted, and their fundamental ways of acting and being in the labour market are limited. The capability approach model helps Emma to understand that it is not sufficient to provide youngsters with a small amount of general information about education. On an individual level, a youngster will supplement this information with his/her personal life experience (resources), and it will be converted into specific, limited capabilities. To widen youngsters' functionings, school counsellors must give pupils more valuable opportunities from which they can choose.

Emma discovers that she needs to focus much more on supporting capabilities by giving youngsters access to more resources in the choice process. She wants to give pupils opportunities to make other choices before the final decision is made. In this way, youngsters have real options to make different choices. In collaboration with a teacher, she introduces several counselling activities. Youngsters are provided with knowledge of a broad range of educational possibilities and jobs, they participate in work experience and related education, and they have time to reflect, share their experiences and pass on information to each other. In the process, she encourages youngsters to be open-minded by asking them to observe and experience and to postpone any decisions until the period of counselling activities has ended.

After three months of her new practice, Emma meets the colleague who suggested Sen's capability approach. Emma tells her that she is having a success with the new concept and that the approach has been helpful to youngsters like Anna and Peter. Instead of making decisions about their future, pupils keep

What career did you dream of pursuing at the age of 15, and what has your actual career been like? How does your personal career experience affect your work?

Can you remember a film or a book in which the main protagonist doubts himself or herself? What are your feelings about it?

their options open while they are in the process of broadening their knowledge and having a variety of experiences with educational choices. They reflect upon different possibilities and end up making more valuable choices.

During this experience, Emma realised that she could truly make a difference in the way pupils look at their choice process. She feels the benefits of her career guidance and has regained a strong feeling of competence. Finally, Emma discovered that following just one approach might not be sufficient because it does not fit all situations. While experimenting with different techniques, she embraced the wisdom of Bandura:

*'Success is achieved by learning from failed efforts. Experiencing failure is important. This is done by treating every failure as a learning opportunity and a chance to reach competence with a different approach.'*

### STOP AND THINK

- What do you value and believe will benefit your counselling?
- Have you experienced your values and beliefs not being sufficient and the need to use other ways to help youngsters to make educational choices?
- How often do you question your own practice?
- What strategy do you have to keep the choice process open?



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## BURNOUT SYNDROME – LIVING MINDFULLY COULD BE THE ANSWER

Katerina Tsami

Martin woke up one morning feeling very tired despite having slept for almost eight hours. It was a warm and sunny Sunday morning, and his friend called him for a game of squash and drink later. Martin wasn't in the mood for it; he had so much work to do, several articles to study and some preparation for next week's sessions, so he felt he didn't have the time to have fun. He turned down his friend's proposal and switched on the computer. He quickly realised he couldn't concentrate on anything, and kept telling himself 'I am a failure, time is getting on, and I've not done what I had to do.'

The next day he found himself getting irritated by students who he felt weren't paying attention. He'd had a nagging sense of frustration for the past few months, as well as feelings of sadness and inadequacy. He had somehow lost the sparkle in his eye as if his life was no longer full or vibrant. His friends and colleagues recognised subtle changes in him and suggested a psychotherapist may be able to help. At first, Martin refused to accept that he needed help. He believed he was fine, and if he managed to get some sleep, everything would soon get back to normal. He thought only 'crazy people' visit psychotherapists, and it would be a sign of weakness from him to do so. Many sleepless nights passed until he finally acknowledged his need for help.

Martin's therapy gave him the skills to change how he thought about himself and his current situation. He learnt about burnout syndrome, which he recognised had had a profound impact on his life.



Burnout syndrome is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. Burnout can appear with physical symptoms such as headaches, change in appetite or sleep, lowered immunity, frequent illness etc. It can also have emotional signs such as feelings of helplessness, lack of motivation, sense of self-doubt and decreased satisfaction. All the above can lead to behavioural changes such as isolation, procrastinating, alcohol/drug abuse and other self-destructive behaviours.

This was a challenging time for Martin, but after several visits and a lot of talking, expressing his feelings and receiving feedback on his thoughts, he gained valuable insight. He learnt how to take care of himself better and live a life that is more in line with his values.

Martin learnt that he couldn't eliminate the anxiety he felt, but he did have power in his relationship with anxiety. The first step was to become aware of all the times he felt tension in his body. He understood it was crucial to observe all his thoughts, his feelings, his inner world in a kind and curious way rather than with criticism. It wasn't his fault that his mind kept telling him the same stories about how perfect he must be, that he isn't allowed to have fun or that he is only good enough if he excels among his peers. These were just stories.

Our mind continually produces thoughts about ourselves and the world around us. Often, people try to avoid or suppress them, but this makes things worse. Martin learnt to take a step back and observe his thoughts as a curious scientist instead of drowning in them. His therapist helped him to understand that anxious thoughts are like clouds in the sky; sometimes, it is sunny, and other times, the sky is full of clouds. The sky, though, is there – observing all the changes, containing them and not getting bothered by them. A helpful way for us to become aware and curious about what our mind is telling us is by using the 3Ns: to Notice our thoughts, then give a Name to the story the mind is telling us and then decide with kindness to Neutralise it, saying *'thank you mind for telling me this; I don't really need this now'*. Doing this helps us to create some distance from our critical thoughts, without fighting them. We acknowledge that those thoughts are our own, that we are there to observe them, but we have the choice to leave them aside with kindness, as we desire to live our lives in a meaningful way.

Your head also needs to rest. Make some time in your daily routine for letting your mind flow freely. This frees up space for new ideas.

During his sessions, Martin also learnt that anxious thoughts and disturbing feelings occur when our mind is left to wonder about the future, creating possible scenarios. That way, we lose contact with the 'here and now', the only moment we actually have. Gradually, he learnt to bring his mind back to the present using his body. Our body has a unique way to engage with the present moment, and the use of our senses (smell, taste, vision, hearing) can ground us in the 'here and now'.

Practising mindfulness can be as easy as choosing a daily activity, like brushing your teeth or taking a bath. While doing this activity, try to stay focused on it; think about your body movements, the smell, the taste, the sight, the sounds. For instance, when brushing your teeth, focus on the shape of the toothbrush and how the material feels in your hand. What colour is it? What is the temperature of the toothpaste? What does it taste like? What sounds are there when you are brushing your teeth? Notice the things you can smell. Whenever your mind wanders, notice it and then turn your attention back to your senses. As ideas pop into your mind, notice them and gently refocus on what you are doing. If you experience an intense thought, acknowledge it without judgement and focus once again on the activity you have chosen.

One final area Martin explored was learning to live according to his values and his own desires. Pursuing things that were not desires of his heart or worse – against his values – made him feel miserable and ineffective in his life. That meant that he had to take action and concentrate on things that matter to him, paying attention first to his own needs and being willing to face some difficult emotions to ultimately live a fulfilling life. For him, connecting with students and preparing engaging sessions might be important elements of his life, but what he came to understand is that someone cannot take care of others if he doesn't first take care of himself.

Try 'spontaneous' decision making from time to time. If you cannot decide what to have for dinner or which film to see at the cinema, make yourself decide within ten seconds.

Do you know your core values and true desires? Where do they come from?

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# CRITICAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Siobhan Neary

## Neil Thompson, Personal, Cultural Structural (PSC) model

Neil Thompson's work on anti-discriminatory practice starts to connect **reflection to reflexion and critical thinking**. It moves us away from thinking solely about the one-to-one relationship we have with our client to the context in which the relationship is developing. **Reflection** is essentially an internal activity through which we assess ourselves and our performance, **reflexion** is much broader as it recognises and acknowledges the external environment and how this may have an influence on the practitioner/client relationship.

Thompson's work originates in social work and focuses on social justice. This reflects one of the current trajectories for career guidance and counselling that recognises the opportunities for all are not equitable, and there is work we as professional career practitioners can do to address this by challenging the cultural and structural barriers constraining our clients. Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen (2018) have written extensively about social justice and the role career guidance can play. They challenge us to question whose interests we are working in and that as careers professionals, we should be less passive in accepting social disadvantage and inequality as normal. As such, theories like Thompson's place the recognition of oppression at the centre of practice.

Thompson (2005) links personal experience, beliefs and attitudes within the wider social group. This is then framed within a societal context. His model suggests three levels for examining oppression and presents how power relationships connect individuals, groups and broader society.

- **The personal level** – this focuses on the individual's belief system and can relate to prejudicial views that may focus on race, gender, sexual orientation etc. An individual's beliefs are expressed through thought and emotion and may be based on their experiences with others.
- **The cultural level** – this focuses on shared or community values and can relate to the types of jobs/experiences that are acceptable. For example, young people from certain cultural backgrounds do not go to university or are expected to enter professions such as being a doctor

or an accountant. These are held through consensus and conformity of what are normalised views within the community.

- **Structural level** – recognises how these personal and cultural views can be reinforced by society through the media, religion and government. This level considers the reinforcement of oppression through multiple social, economic and political factors that influence individuals' life choices. For example, youth unemployment is influenced by employer expectations of skills, qualifications and experience.

If you decide to think about some of these issues, you may want to record or video an interview with a client/student with permission and think about how your practice reinforces/challenges anti-discriminatory practices. It would be a good idea to use one of the recording reflection methods from the article 'Theories Supporting Reflection'. You may also want to discuss his/her responses with a colleague.

What is your understanding of 'social justice'?  
Do you think it is something careers professionals should think about?



Try and identify the following:

- What were you thinking at different points during the interview – why you were thinking this? What factors contributed to your thinking?
- What assumptions did you make? What were these about, what led him/her to these assumptions?
- Which personal, cultural and structural beliefs did you recognise (make a list)? How did you address them, what else might you have done to challenge these views?

This blog is just a starting point in learning more about how reflection and reflexion is a crucial and undervalued part of our professional practice. The important thing is to start using these approaches and adapt them to your own context.

### STOP AND THINK

What is your usual 'social bubble'? Try answering the following questions:

- Do you live in a big city or a small community?
- In what fields do your friends and relatives work?
- How educated are the people around you?
- What do you usually do in your leisure time?
- Are you a member of a society, a church or any other social group?
- Are you a member of a minority in any sense?
- Can you think of any other social or cultural class you relate to and ones you don't?

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## ETHICS, IMPARTIALITY, LOCUS OF CONTROL

Nicki Moore

Those working in 'helping' professions will occasionally be presented with issues that feel uncomfortable, challenge their own values and beliefs, and result in ethical dilemmas associated with choosing appropriate attitudes, behaviours and approaches. In the career development context, ethics refers to the moral principles that govern the way practitioners practice. Listen in as two practitioners, Rachel and John, discuss an ethical dilemma and try to decide on an appropriate course of action...

Rachel: *'Oh John, I am glad you're still in the office. I really need to talk about something that happened today when I was interviewing a client.'*

John: *'You sound upset. What happened?'*

Rachel: *'I was talking to a 17-year-old woman from Somalia today. She's very clever. Good at maths and loves physics. She's expecting good grades in her exams. She told me she really wants to be an engineer. She dreams of leaving a legacy through civil engineering. She would love to return to Somalia one day and help with big infrastructure projects. She's a real inspiration.'*

John: *'Sounds good. So what's the problem?'*

Rachel: *'Her parents are putting pressure on her to marry and have a family. She says she doesn't want to marry. Eventually maybe, but now she wants to concentrate on her career. I didn't know what to say.'*

### STOP AND THINK

- Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma in your practice?
- How did it make you feel?
- What are the issues for Rachel's client?

John: *'It sounds like you were experiencing conflicting emotions about this client. Why did it make you feel this way?'*

Rachel: *'She's so young. Marriage shouldn't be something on her agenda now.'*

Rachel shared her worries with John; who would you go to if you had to?



*She's got such a glowing future ahead of her. I wanted her to concentrate on her potential and not on marriage and kids!*

### STOP AND THINK

- What are the ethical issues here?
- What is the role of the practitioner?
- What is the appropriate course of action? What are the options?

We automatically take some things for granted. Try to think what you take for granted.

John: *'Well, I can see that this might be an important perspective, but whose view is important here? We all want our clients to develop their ambitions, but they also must live with the impacts of their decisions. Did you discuss how the client's parents might feel if she chose the route to engineering? Could her wellbeing be jeopardised?'*

Rachel: *'She hasn't told them about her choice yet. I did check if she thought she might be forced into marriage, and she said no. So there were no protection issues to be concerned about. We had a long discussion about how she might approach this. We discussed her options. She told me that she was going to focus on the pride that her parents might feel if she could take them to a road that she had been involved in building. She would be able to show them how important her work was and how many people would benefit. She also said that it wasn't that she would never marry, just not yet! She was very nervous, but we wrote down some strategies. She's going to let me know how she gets on.'*

John: *'Well that doesn't sound like a disaster. How did you choose how to work with this client?'*

### STOP AND THINK

- What principles were evident in the way that Rachel worked with her client? Did she behave ethically?

Rachel: *'In the end I realised that the client's barrier to progress was something I could help her with. It's not up to me to make her decisions for her, but to help her work out the blockage and to develop some strategies. It will be tough for her, but I do hope that our conversation will have helped her think about ways of tackling the hopes and dreams her parents have for her. She may have some very difficult decisions to make in the future, but at least she understands their implications now.'*

John: *'Well, it sounds to me like you worked in the best interest of your client. Now that you have talked it through, how are you feeling?'*

Rachel: *'It has really helped, thanks. I was worried that my own values had got in the way, but now I realise that I was able to set those aside and help the client think through her own problems and to come up with her own solutions. I think I did the right thing...'*



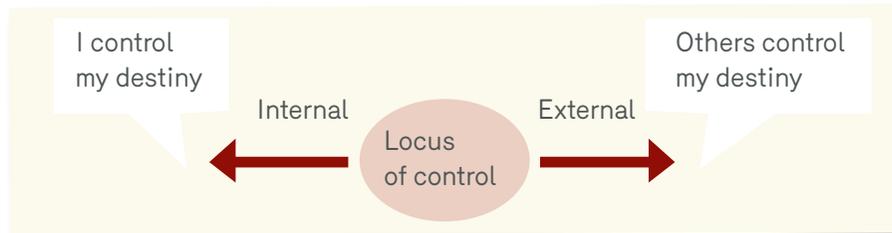
### Analysis

This conversation raises several issues relating to reflective and ethical practice. The first issue to note is that of reflective practice. The philosopher and theorist Donald Schön (1983) introduced the idea that practitioners think about and plan to improve by reflecting 'in practice' and reflecting 'on practice'. In this case study, Rachel chose to reflect on practice by identifying a professional colleague with whom to air her concerns and to seek clarification of her approaches. John's support for Rachel served as a learning opportunity that helped Rachel identify and consolidate her practice. There are several ethical issues in this case study. In the United Kingdom, the Career Development Institute have a clearly defined code of ethics that offers a framework to analyse this case study.

Career development practitioners have a **duty of care to their clients**. Rachel suspected that the client might be in danger of forced marriage. Despite this being illegal in many countries, young people can be coerced into marrying against their wishes. Rachel was careful to check that the client was safe, as this was her primary concern. Once she had established that this was the case, she felt free to discuss the client's other issues.

For more information see the article Theories supporting reflection.

Career development practitioners should always encourage their clients to be the primary decision makers and to have **autonomy** in their decision-making. This principle is in part based on the work of Rotter (1966) who described the theory of 'locus of control' – the degree to which people feel they have control over what happens in their lives. Despite her discomfort about the pressure that the client was under from her parents, Rachel worked with the client to resolve the issues amicably, as this was in the client's best interests. She also made sure that the client understood the implications of her decisions, so that she was able to make a fully informed choice.



Career development practitioners should work towards removing those barriers to achievement that result from prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. The principle of **equality** left Rachel feeling conflicted. She wanted to respect her client's background and culture, but she was also introducing her personal biases in judging the parents as a barrier to her client's ambitions. The principle of **impartiality** was at play. Rachel was in danger of promoting a route that was based on her own feelings and preferences rather than providing guidance and counselling that was in the best interests of her client. In effect she was in danger of replacing one strong influence on the client with another.

In the end, Rachel's professional practice led her to work with the client in an ethical way. She realised that her role was to support her client to address her barriers herself. Rachel worked with her to identify a number of solutions and even though the client was nervous, she supported her to be autonomous in her choices. The client was fully aware of the implications of her choices and Rachel removed her own preferences from the conversation.

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## HOW TO INCLUDE THE COMPLEXITY OF LIFE BY MEANING MAKING AND ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

Elisabeth Graungaard

The second chapter begins with everyday youth counselling. We will learn how to support both versatile and seemingly indifferent children in making their decisions. We also offer you tips on some of the less traditional tools used in counselling interviews. Since family is an integral part of the process of choosing one's career, we will have a look at how to find common ground with students' parents and how to support them in the process of career decision-making. We will also examine why having just one career practitioner for the entire school or organisation is not optimal. The chapter concludes with a closer look at the topic of collaboration with our colleagues and ways to strengthen it.

In our daily counselling practice, we consider how we can help youngsters solve their problems. The most common tool in career development and counselling is a conventional dialogue. However, this method has its limitations and does not fully incorporate all circumstances, contexts and relationships that influence the career planning process. In this article, the practical use of constructivist mapping methods that help us to incorporate the complexity of life will be introduced. They can be used in individual counselling sessions with youngsters or classroom workshops with collective guided questions and subsequent group work with support from the career practitioner.

### An introduction to mapping activities

The mapping activity is a collaborative process. The practitioner contributes to the structure of the map by asking meaning-generating questions that invite the youngster to supply information about environment, people and circumstances that are personally meaningful to him/her. The youngster is encouraged to draw, use symbols, images, metaphors, icons, or to write words or short sentences. Basic strategy is to develop a visualisation map of what the youngster considers to be important and personally meaningful and to draw associations to various factors. Using coloured pens allows the youngster to choose specific colours for different aspects. The career practitioner can support the mapping process by supplying helpful questions, creative, open attitude, and by offering assistance when the youngster requires it. All mapping activities are accompanied by a dialogue – each supporting the other.

Mapping brings three modes of communication, Speaking, Writing and Visualisation, into the counselling process and helps to generate meaning for both the help-seeker and the helper. Through life space mapping, the helper can enter the life space of the other and understand the meaningful life experiences and factors of the other's personal world.

Mapping is an excellent example of learning and problem-solving through guided participation. It is a visible documentation of the counselling session. It can help both the practitioner and youngster to visualise a complex

situation and see how different elements of life space are patterned. It brings clarity and a temporary structure to a problematic situation or a decision the youngster has to make. In the following examples, Peavy describes his mapping methods from his constructivist perspective.

### Life-space mapping

*'If we draw a map of your situation, it might be clearer to both of us – does that seem like a good idea to you? If the other agrees, then I take a sheet of paper and ask the other to think of the whole sheet as her present life-space. I then ask her to draw a small circle somewhere on the page and label it 'Me'. Then, we proceed to make a map of what is going on in her life that seems to have relevance to the issue ... We sometimes pass the pencil back and forth so that we get the feeling that this is a collaborative effort. Other times, the other does most or all the drawing, and occasionally I will do most or all of it myself. We map out experiences, events, people, relationships, needs, voices, obstacles, possibilities and information ... we use drawing, images, symbols, words and sometimes colours to indicate meanings.'*  
Peavy (1998)

### Mapping the influence of the problem

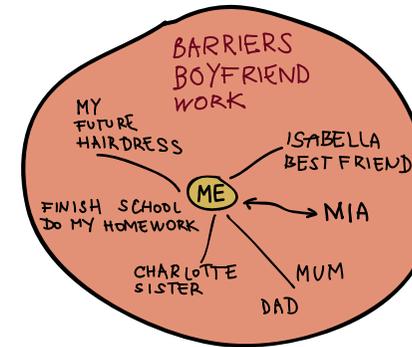
One of the tasks of a constructivist practitioner is to convey to the youngster that the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem. A problem influences a person, and a person can influence a problem. Therefore, instead of taking the problem personally and feeling incapable of doing things right, the youngster will be able to externalise the problem by looking at their situation from a different perspective.

### Mapping your future

Working with a youngster, you can try following activity:  
Draw a large circle and place yourself somewhere in the enclosed space. How do you imagine the future you would like to have? Somewhere in your life space (or personal world), draw or write a little bit about your future or futures. If you have more than one future in mind, which one seems most appealing to you?  
Who are the important people in your life that might help you to make progress towards your future? Place them somewhere in the circle.  
What are the important steppingstones towards your future? Place them in the circle.  
What do you think might prevent you from moving towards your future? Indicate this in your life space.  
What will your life be like if you get to the future you want? Indicate this in your life space.

What things do you have to do or learn if you are to move in the direction of your future? Indicate this in your life space.

### Life-space Mapping

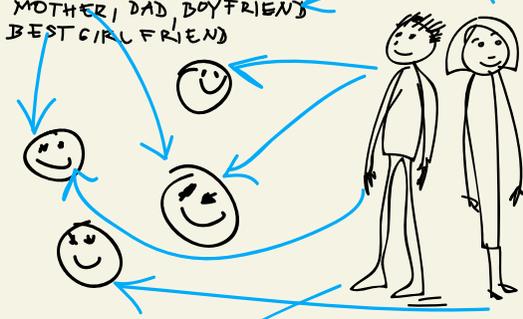


My FUTURE:  
MEDIA DESIGNER

HOW MY LIFE WOULD BE IF I CAN BUILD THE FUTURE IN MEDIA DESIGN

EXCITING CREATIVE HAVE MEANING DOING WHAT I WANT TO DO

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MY LIFE:  
MOTHER, DAD, BOYFRIEND, BEST GIRL FRIEND



### STEPPING STONES

- 4 JOIN A GROUP OF MY FRIENDS WHO HAVE ORGANIZED A CREATIVE LABORATORY FOR INDEPENDENT MEDIA
- 3 GET MEDIA RELATED JOB OR APPRENTICESHIP
- 2 VISIT MEDIA PRODUCTION STUDIO
- 1 FINISH SCHOOL

WHAT BARRIERS DO I FACE?  
CONFLICT WITH MY PARENTS, LACK OF SCHOOL COMPLETION, LIKE TO SPEND TOO MUCH TIME WITH MY FRIENDS

An externalized problem must be named, and we must be specific about it. For example, when a student says, 'I'm stupid,' it changes to the following when externalized: 'My problem is that I am not good at maths.'

Invite the student to imagine that the problem you have been discussing is actually his/her friend's problem. What advice would the student give to this friend?

Map made by help-seeker during a counselling session  
Sociodynamic Counselling. A Constructivist Perspective.  
[http://www.sociodynamic-constructivist-counselling.com/maps\\_Visualisations7.html](http://www.sociodynamic-constructivist-counselling.com/maps_Visualisations7.html)

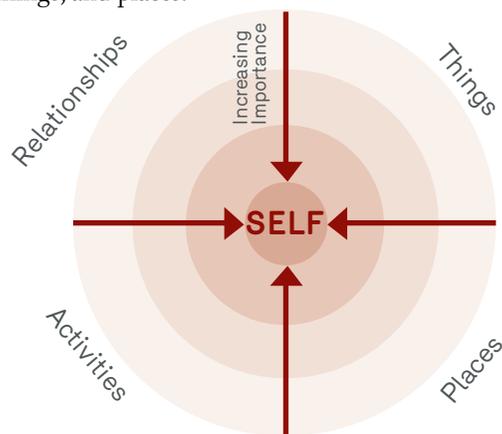
### Intercultural guidance tools

Working with youngsters with a limited vocabulary, using Peavy's mapping activity is a way to draw attention away from the difficult task of finding the correct words. Another useful method in intercultural guidance is asking youngsters to bring photos from their smartphones, which illustrate life at school, work experience, spare-time jobs or other free-time activities. Photos, as well as cards with illustrations, will make the conversation easier.

### Validationgram

The validationgram, developed by Ishu Ishiyama, is useful in a counselling session as a tool for exploring the youngster's world of meanings, feelings and values, and for understanding the effects of significant life events and transitions in one's validation system. It provides a communication tool for clarifying information about validations of young refugees or immigrants. Where are the family members based? How many people are important in the youngster's life? What is the youngster involved in? What is his/her daily life like? What things are the most important to the individual? What places are highly valued?

The youngster maps sources of validation in four domains: relationships, activities, things, and places.



A tip for an activity:

Certain people, activities, things, and places are important to us. Please indicate on this sheet what is personally important to you in these four areas:

- relationships (e.g., persons and pets, alive or dead)
- activities
- things (e.g., material and symbolic items and personal possessions)
- places or locations

Put extremely important items in the innermost circle. You can start anywhere. You are welcome to move back and forth among these four areas if you wish. Feel free to come up with your own symbols to describe what the items mean to you. You are welcome to use a symbol or an initial so only you understand what it means. You can list as many items as you like, use the space outside the large circle, make changes and add more items later.

You can show that certain items are significant to you in both positive and negative ways by using a sign like +/- . If there are items you hope one day will be closer to the centre, use an arrow sign → to show new locations.

It generally takes 10 to 20 minutes for a youngster to do the first round, roughly mapping the validation sources. It is recommended that the practitioner avoids interfering during the mapping activity. The youngster should be given as much freedom and control as possible. However, if the youngster feels stuck, confused or disoriented about the activity, the practitioner can try to explain the concepts and provide examples. It may require multiple sessions to complete the whole validationgram sheet. Instead of covering the four domains in one session, youngsters may focus on one domain at a time, and explore relevant issues in a given session. Youngsters may be invited to add new items on the previously completed validationgram as their self-awareness expands and as new life circumstances require alterations.

Validation mapping can be introduced in any of the following formats:

- a useful activity at a certain point in counselling
- self-reflective homework
- a pre-session solitary activity
- as an in-session activity
- as an on-going project over several sessions

### Post-Mapping Processing

Having completed the validationgram sheet, youngsters should be invited to reflect on the nature of the personal meaning of each item, as well as to explore their feelings and thoughts generated during the mapping activity. Also, youngsters may explore with the practitioner what changes have taken place in their validation network after a particular incident.

Youngsters might remember additional items to be included or corrections to be made on their validationgrams. Such additions and changes to the previously produced validationgram should be welcomed and seen as a new avenue for client self-disclosure and a dialectical exploration of their world. If the youngster is not comfortable with the drawing process or if the drawing

activity is disturbing the contact between practitioner and youngster, a non-visual exercise may be used instead.

**Constructivism** is a theory about how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. Learning is regarded as an active rather than a passive process.

How does a child learn to speak, walk or ride a bicycle? Are parents explaining to the child what to do? Or do children learn by experimenting and exploring themselves? Most counselling sessions are based on verbal interactions – conversations or dialogues where individuals are passively receiving information and giving answers. How can we place youngsters in an active role so that they are participating and generating meaning from their life experiences?

**Constructivist counselling** is about involving the individual in an active process. The constructivist practitioner invites the other person to construct meaning and knowledge by drawing out various factors influencing his or her life situation. Constructivist approach is suitable for youngsters because of the focus on drawing activities and active involvement. Counselling will help youngsters to focus on life circumstances, reflect on possibilities and deal with their problems. By being supported to widen their horizons, youngsters may look at their career planning process from a different perspective. Vance Peavy has presented the constructivist approach in counselling as ‘a co-constructivist approach’ which means that both parties are active in the drawing process, making essential contributions to the activity.

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## HOW TO CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

Helena Košťálová

Career counselling and education covers a wide range of activities with one common aim: to make it easier for clients to find and follow their career paths (as described by many others in this book). Even though we know our career is continually developing and changing, we cannot avoid major steps along our way from time to time. When reaching a certain level of the school system, for example, young people must choose their **first specialisation**. This is usually the task faced by teenagers who find themselves at the crossroads between general and specialised education. And despite all the preparations made in advance, they might feel unable to make a decision as the deadline draws closer.

Student’s sympathies to a specific field of studies are purely subjective. As stated by the postmodern theorists (Savickas, 2011; Dik, Duffy, 2012; Young, Collin, 2004), sympathies are related to our pursuance of usefulness and purposefulness as well as with our aims, context and understanding of our identity. Sometimes these sympathies are based on a hobby a child has been interested in for a long time. But what help can we offer to a child with no obvious interests (useful from a career point of view)? Do you meet children like this from time to time? Sometimes these children have not been supported in what interests them. There are also those who are talented in many ways (and have pursued many of their talents), yet none of their abilities can help them to embark on their career path.

Take Clara, for example, a 17-year-old grammar school student who cannot decide what kind of university she should study at. She likes drawing and has been awarded many prizes for it, but she only considers it a hobby. She likes cooking and is good at it but says that ‘*it would definitely not make her happy as a profession*’. She plays piano and is ‘*pretty good at it, but not good enough to study at a conservatoire*’, and she spends the rest of her free time with friends and playing tennis, ‘*... but I am no Serena Williams*.’ She is clever, communicative, likes both humanities and science. ‘*Basically, I’m good at everything I try, but the problem is that I will have to choose soon, and I don’t know what I truly want to do*.’ Or Damian, who starts his consultation with ‘*... I know I have what it takes to go to university, but I could also learn a trade, I can travel... The worst thing is that I can do anything...*’

And then we have Karel; a student who does not get noticed at school. He does not excel in any subject but does not have significant issues, either. A good boy – that is how teachers describe him. When asked what he likes doing, he

When choosing your career, did you follow your interests?

says: *'I don't know... Nothing really... I play computer games.'* Later on, he remembers that he has been *'collecting bottle tops for a year... Why? I don't know. I have 135 of them. But I think I'll get rid of them soon.'*

Which student of yours comes to mind when you hear the term 'no sense of direction'? What is it like for you to work with such kind of student?

These children are sometimes described as 'lacking a sense of direction'. While their classmates are praised for knowing what they want (*'he had figured it out, he has been saying that he wants to be a joiner since he was 12 years old'*), children lacking a sense of direction are often ashamed of their indecisiveness and tend to withdraw, refuse to talk about their future career or pretend that they too have already chosen their future domain to escape the pressure (*'well, have you decided what school you'll go to yet?'*).



One of the solutions to break this deadlock is to experiment. Take Marek, for example. A versatile boy who started attending an elite grammar school. Soon he realised, though, that he did not like *'swotting up on theories'* and persuaded his parents to let him go to a secondary school specialising in electrical engineering. Two years later, he realised that *'even though it is a practical school, this is not a field I would enjoy...'* When he started thinking about changing schools again, his father offered him the chance to become more active in the family company. Marek tried out several positions, from labourer to managerial roles, and only then he was able to see clearly what he liked and why. Thanks to this, he found a reason to graduate from high school and was able to decide what he wanted to study next. Practical experience of any kind is invaluable.

But what if my father does not own a company?

Marek came with ideas first and then he tried them out in practice. This is an important part of a practitioner's work – to mediate (or at least recommend) contact with reality. Equally important, however, is to help students create, develop and evolve their ideas. There is no 100 % effective way of working with children who lack a sense of direction. Still, we are offering you several practical tips in this article. They are inspired by discussions from so called **research circles**, which were part of a wider research conducted by our project team (Moore, Clark, Neary and Blake, 2020):

### #1 Step out of the bubble

When choosing a specialised school, children are often advised: Write down the fields you are interested in. Most people (children and parents alike), though, do not know many fields. We tend to remember where people around us work and what we have seen in films. Career practitioners should help children step out of their social bubble and show them all the options. Since new professions are emerging almost daily, the list is practically endless – and anyone can add an item to it.

#### OUR TIP:

If you work with young people, try a game of association with them. The associations can be triggered by any word, even a random one – you can use the popular method of a page number in a book or an online word generator (there are many free apps). Students then try to think of the highest number of associated professions as possible. This can be followed by sorting occupations, looking for links between them, and discussing what one could study to prepare for a career in them.

### #2 There is no 'right' choice

Or rather, there is not just 'one right' choice. We have all experienced (and will experience) situations forcing us to choose from several options. They might all seem tempting, yet none of them is perfect. And this is what is so magical about life. Satisfaction with one's life (and career) does not depend on one significant decision. It is built slowly, step by step, with lots of effort and opportunities to swing the situation to our favour.

Children lacking a sense of direction are often too focused on their search for the right choice (*'tell me what I could be good at... what school would suit me...'*). This pressure might be intensified by the school environment (and the emphasis on entrance exams). But people do not make good decisions when stressed. Sometimes, it is enough to reassure young people by saying that they should also enjoy their prospective school. And that there is more than just one such school.

### OUR TIP:

There is an interesting activity called Three Lives. Ask your students, either during a lesson (e.g. when writing compositions) or consultation, to imagine and describe in detail their idea of their future (this is me in 20 years) – where they work and live, what makes them happy etc. Then ask them to do it again, but to describe an alternative life (this is me in 20 years – second variant). Finally, ask them to think of a third variant; in the end, you can discuss which of the variants they find most tempting, which is the most likely, how did they like the process etc.

### #3 Making plans the other way round

Many young people say that they have no idea at all what they want, but the fact is that they do have at least some idea, vague as it may be. They also have an opinion on which fields they do not like, even though they may not be able to articulate it yet. If a positive approach does not help, we can try a negative one – what the students do not want. Sometimes, it is enough to ask: *'So you don't care at all? What about the school of transport?'* and suddenly, students can't stop themselves: *'OMG, no, I hate cars. In fact, I hate all machines and everything related to engines, I hate the smell of oil... Also, I don't want to work with metal; I don't like it...'* And just like that, you have got enough information to build upon and to follow up with more questions.

### OUR TIP:

Making a decision can often be easier with two very common items: a pen and a paper. Give blank cards or sheets of paper to your students. Ask them to write down the fields or activities they do not find interesting, one item per card. Give them enough time and encourage them to write down as many things as possible. Then ask them to try writing a reason for each of the items – why this doesn't appeal to me (e.g. what I do not like about it). The next step is to tell them to sort the cards and look for any links (e.g. to create a pile of all the fields related to engines), and to explain their 'maps' in pairs. Finally, ask them to do the exact opposite – to write down what they could be interested in (now that they know what they do not want to do). If negative planning does not help them, offer them a list of professions as inspiration (e.g. the national qualification framework or a list of websites dedicated to students). Remind them that the goal is not to pick one 'winner' but to create a list of fields to explore further.

### #4 Profession unknown

The job market is constantly changing. Scrum master, floor manager, UX designer, drone operator, data miner, online teacher, influencer, urban agri-

culturalist... There are more and more professions that would have been unimaginable even for science fiction writers a few years ago. Before students finish their studies, many things will be different.

It does not matter if children lacking a sense of direction have no specific idea of their future profession. At their age, it is enough to choose the next school – to select the field they would be interested in. Let the future (and desire for further learning) show them in which specific profession they can make use of their expertise.

### OUR TIP:

Ask them more often: *'Is there anything you want to know more about? What would you like to explore?'* etc. You can also discuss a shared experience (a school trip, a film they saw...). Their impressions may differ even though they all saw the same thing, and their curiosity might have been roused differently. You can use that and ask about a film or novel: *'Which of the themes did you find most interesting? If there were to be a sequel, what should it be about?'* Any experience can impact a person and pique their interest in further studies.

### #5 Everybody has his/her own path

It is not easy to be true to one's uniqueness and find a place in a group at the same time. While in the school environment, students tend to compare themselves to their classmates and look for their shortcomings (test scores, marks, what they can do and I cannot). When choosing a career path, we should mainly focus on what a person is good at (and how to develop it further on), not on one's inadequacies.

When you work with students, try to balance the ratio of comparing themselves to each other and being unique, create opportunities for collaboration, and come up with tasks requiring and appreciating originality. Children lacking a sense of direction will feel better when they realise that their versatility might work to their advantage, and in time they will find a field to apply it to.

### OUR TIP:

We can modify popular children's games. Many of them are competitions, in fact, so that the children will 'enjoy them', right? Take musical chairs, for example: ten children run around nine chairs while the music plays; when the music stops, children fight for the chairs, and the slowest one loses. The fewer chairs there are, the fewer children there are. Those who have already lost watch the others enjoy themselves. This could be tweaked; ten children, nine chairs, when the music stops, all ten children look for a place to sit (two on one chair, most likely). The game goes on, the number of chairs decreases, but all children are

still playing. The fewer chairs there are, the more creative, original and collaborative children must become.

### #6 Work with self-evaluation

A thoughtfully chosen school matches the student's personality. It is not enough to know oneself only through psychometric tests and feedback. Students must know themselves based on both external and internal sources. That is why it is crucial to work with qualitative self-evaluation (students try to evaluate their situation with their own words, assess their progress, compare their past performances, make plans for their future). As Savickas (2011) demonstrates, qualitative self-evaluation is holistic, integrates both the study (or work) life with the personal one, and works not only with rational and measurable findings but also with intuition, subjective opinions, and emotions. Unlike common tests, which may seem 'too given' to us – as if they informed us about who we are, qualitative self-evaluation incorporates the context of student's life, contributes to activation, and encourages curiosity. Finally, it helps students better understand the link between learning and their future career. It is the student who sorts, compares and gives names to the outcomes. Let us not forget that there are no 'right answers' in qualitative self-evaluation and that children need our support to find their own meanings that are relevant to their lives.

### OUR TIP:

When evaluating a situation or discussing careers with your students, work with open questions and incomplete sentences. There are many time-proven ones, for example: *'If I had one million euros, I would...'*; *'If I could do anything in the world, I would be a...'*; *'To move from A to B, I must...'*; *'My favourite saying is... Because...'*; *'My favourite story from my childhood is...'*; *'When we were in/on X (e.g. a school trip), I found... Interesting because...'*; *'If I could change only one thing, I would...'*

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## EMBRACING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER CAREER SERVICES

Nicki Moore

The term 'digital native' was first used in 2001 (Prenzky 2001) to describe young people who, because they are born into a world which is rife with digital technology, grow up to be supremely confident in using it for a variety of purposes. Adults, on the other hand, are described as 'digital immigrants' because they have to adapt to the rise in the use of digital technology across many aspects of life. These ideas – often used in current parlance to reinforce the need for continuing professional development in the use of digital technology – help reinforce the stereotypes that young people are confident users of technology. This reinforcement of stereotypes applies to the area of career development. Kirschner and De Bruyckere (2017) have considered these stereotypes and found that they do not hold true. In fact, wealth and social class are greater determinants of one's ability to use digital technology than age. By assuming that young people are digitally competent, we simply reinforce inequality and barriers to social mobility. There are clearly implications for those who design programmes in career development:

- Practitioners should never assume that young people are proficient in using the internet for career-related research.
- Practitioners should include the teaching of digital career literacy as part of their programmes.
- Practitioners should actively encourage the application of digital skills in practical career research and development activities.

### STOP AND THINK

- Do you make assumptions about young people's use of digital technology?
- How might this impact on the outcomes of your career development activities?
- Do you include the teaching of digital career management skills?
- Where are the opportunities for this?

Clearly, it would be difficult for any practitioner to support others in these new skills areas if their own digital skills were not good. The need to improve the digital skills of career development practitioners is not new. Research in

Do you know the following acronyms: TLDR, LMK, AFK, CWOT, TIMTOWTDI, B2W, PAW?



How would you feel if you were to write a letter on a typewriter, search for information in the library, find the right way without sat nav?

the UK (Moore and Czerwinska 2019) has shown that while the use of digital technology is widespread amongst practitioners, it is often dependent on the interest and commitment of specific companies or individuals, and does not follow a holistic approach. When thinking about the use of technology in career development, there is an automatic assumption that this means 'new ways of dealing with clients', but this is far from the truth. The research found that practitioners use technology to manage their businesses as well as for activities with clients. There were many examples provided where having good IT skills was deemed important: working with spreadsheets, facility with word processing functions, and being able to use digital collaborative approaches including document repositories such as Google Drive. All of these applications help career development practitioners keep in touch and to work efficiently and effectively.

Research conducted by Moore et al (2020) found areas where practitioners lacked confidence in key areas of practice. This included their ability to create useful resources using infographics and video capture, using digital applications in the process of teaching, and using social media as an alternative to a CV or as a job search tool, for example. Many of these activities have become core skills for career development practitioners.



### STOP AND THINK

- How do you audit your own digital skills?
- What gaps has this highlighted in your skills?
- How can you improve your digital skills?



The research revealed that practitioners like to learn new digital skills and have preferences for some modes of training. One of the most important sources of support for developing confidence and expertise is the presence of digitally literate colleagues who are generous in their time and patient in their level of support.

### STOP AND THINK

- Do you have digital skills that you could share with others?
- How can you promote the need to develop digital proficiency with your colleagues?



Once practitioners have developed their skills, they can begin to think about innovating to support clients. Consider the following areas that could be enhanced by using digital technology and applications:

What could your students teach you in this area?

#### Information provision

Leaflets and fact sheets lend themselves to a bit of digital enhancement using infographics, photographs and weblinks. This makes information resources more appealing. Designing and developing informational materials can also be an activity that can involve young people, for example through project work. Information resources can also be provided as podcasts and video using multi-media applications. Again, this is a good way of engaging young people in career research. They could be encouraged to produce their own digital content, for example by interviewing and recording discussions with parents and employers.

#### Personal guidance, coaching and counselling

Career development practice has often relied on face to face interventions, but new webinar technology offers us a chance to explore engaging with our clients from a distance. There are obvious ethical issues about how we safeguard young people when using these approaches. Once these issues have been addressed, however, technology can help us to engage with a range of clients – sessions can even be recorded and given to clients as a record of the event instead of a written report. This can be ideal for clients with special educational needs.

### Careers education

Many schools offer a programme of careers education. In most cases, this focuses on career options and decision-making. However, one of the areas that young people need to develop are digital career management skills. Here the career development practitioner can be innovative and incorporate opportunities for students to learn to develop an online presence (in the form of an online CV, for example) that will be conducive for employers in the early stages of recruitment and selection. Other content might include:

- Understanding the positive and negative impacts of developing online networks when transitioning to new opportunities.
- Developing a personal digital resource archive which contains useful websites and links.
- Developing effective ways of writing and communicating online to maximise success, for example in writing 'business style' emails; and
- Managing webinar technology for the purpose of conducting recruitment and selection activities.

### STOP AND THINK

- What opportunities exist for you to use digital technology and applications to enhance your career development practice?
- What opportunities exist for you to teach and embed digital career management skills within the school curriculum?



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## A GUIDE FOR ENGAGING PARENTS/ CARERS IN THEIR CHILD'S CAREER DECISION-MAKING

Lewis Clark, Hannah Blake

### Advice for careers advisors

A question commonly asked of young people is '*what do you want to do/be when you grow up?*' While this question can act as a catalyst for a conversation between a young person and an adult regarding the young person's career aspirations, it is not always the most effective approach to take. This article suggests ways in which careers practitioners can interact with young people and provides advice that careers practitioners can share with parents to aid in their career-related conversation with their child.

Young people are entering a world of work that is radically different to that of previous generations. In the midst of the fourth industrial revolution (a period where developments in technology are reshaping the way we live and work), the traditional route from education into a 'job for life' is changing. Technological advancements are predicted to redefine the labour market, pressuring young people to constantly adapt and learn new skills as career options become disrupted and replaced, or in some case non-existent, all while they are starting to think about their future.

It can be argued that asking a young person the question of '*what do you want to do/be when you grow up?*' does not reflect the transitional career path they may have to take – instead, it encourages them to narrow their ideas and consider one defined career option, as opposed to a broad range of potential career options. This is particularly important for parents/carers to consider, as our research has shown that young people view their parents/carers as the most important influence on their career decisions. They are also their most popular source of career advice (76%), followed closely by the internet and online resources (71%). The role that parents/carers play when supporting their child to make career decisions is therefore one of critical importance, yet research has shown that many parents/carers feel ill-equipped to do this. Whilst 70% of surveyed parents/carers said that they sought information about careers alongside their child, less than 40% felt prepared to support their child's career decision-making.

When students' parents contact you, what is a common question they ask? Has a parent's question ever surprised you?

## STOP AND THINK

Our project research has shown that when it comes to career-related activities, students either do not remember them or they do not make the connection between the activities and their career choice.

- Have you ever thought about whether your students remember the activities they have taken part in?
- Do you know which activities they find beneficial and which they do not find useful?

Given our findings, we offer a number of important alternative questions (informed by our own research) that parents/carers can use to engage in career conversations with their child. We hope that these questions will help parents/carers gain a greater understanding of (1) how young people search for and receive career information, (2) how young people feel about making career decisions, (3) what support young people have received so far and (4) how other parents/carers can seek information to help support their child.

## STOP AND THINK

- Which career-related activities at your school do you find most important as a career practitioner?
- Which of them should be noticed by your students' parents?
- How do you share the information with them?

### Advice for parents/carers when talking about careers with their child

Talking with your children about their career choices can be a difficult subject. After all, asking them what they want to be when they are older does not always lead to an engaging conversation. Below we explore six points that may help you to talk with your child about their future career.

#### 1. How does your child feel about having to make a career decision?

Research has shown that when we interpret the world around us, our emotional state influences our responses. For example, if you wake up feeling happy you might decide to go out for a meal with your friends that evening, but if you wake up feeling sad then you might decide to stay in on your own and watch Netflix with a tub of ice cream. The point to take away here is that different emotional states trigger different responses. When applying this thinking in a career exploration context, a young person who is excited about their future may be more willing to explore potential pathways, engage in conversation and try harder at school than a young person who feels anxious about their future.

When talking to your child about their future, it is therefore important to understand their emotive state at that particular moment, as this can have a major impact on the discussion you have and on their decision-making.

#### 2. What sources of information does your child use to help their career decision-making?

Most young people receive career-related information from a range of sources such as family members, teachers, friends and people in the community. In our research, young people stated that their parents/carers were the most popular source of information for career options, closely followed by internet searches and talking to their friends. Talking to people in the community, visiting a job centre, and visiting the library were less frequent sources of information for young people. These findings highlight the value that young people place on talking to their parents/carers about their future, as well as the importance of using the internet. When engaging with your child about their future, it may therefore be worthwhile to use the internet as a mediator for seeking further information or for completing fun career related games/activities together. You could ask your child what sources of information they have already tried, what information they have discovered, and how useful they have found it. You could also ask your child's school careers advisor to recommend some useful sources.

#### 3. What career-related activities has your child completed in the curriculum, and which were most valuable to them?

At school your child is likely to engage in numerous curriculum-based activities that are focused on careers, ranging from specific lessons to job fairs and mock interviews. Our research has found that across five countries, curriculum-related activities were most frequently undertaken during subject lessons, as part of options information, and in specific lessons about careers and work. Unsurprisingly, young people benefit from receiving a range of career-related activities during their education. Across all the countries in the research, young people found receiving options information most helpful, followed by lessons about careers and work and information provided during subject lessons. This suggests that young people find it most helpful when they are able to understand how the decisions they are making in the present relate to their future career choices. Linking different jobs and careers to subject areas can be a good way of supporting young people in connecting their school learning to their future, as well as promoting subjects they might like and enjoy. As a parent/carer, you can help to relate the present to the future by talking to your child about your own education and how this linked to your career pathway.

#### 4. Has your child had any discussions with a careers adviser about their future?

Engagement with careers advisers usually takes place in the later years of schooling. If your child has met with a careers adviser, it is likely that they will have discussed their future goals and career aspirations. For some young people, a meeting with a careers adviser may result in a personal action plan in which the young person identifies where they are now, where they want to go, and the steps they need to take to get there. Your child may have told you



they have not had a careers interview, but with the numerous ways in which careers advice is disseminated as part of education, it is possible that they have participated in some form of a career-related activity but not recognised it as such. These activities can take the form of visits to further and higher education institutions as well as employers and worksites, mock interviews, and career-related activities on social media. If your child is unsure of the career-related activities they have completed/planned, you should be able to

request this information from their careers advisor. You can then use this information to have an informed conversation with your child about what careers activities they have done, what they enjoyed, and whether they would like to find out more information about a specific career.

#### 5. How prepared do you feel to support your child's decision-making?

Talking to your child about their future education and career options can be a daunting subject, particularly if you feel that you do not possess the experience or expertise to support your child. If this is you, then you are not alone. Our research has found that few parent and carer respondents felt well prepared to support their child's career decision-making. By seeking out career-related information, you can learn alongside your young person. You can explore the world of careers together by understanding the range of job and further/higher education options that exist, and what qualifications or attributes are needed for specific careers. You might even decide that it is time for you to return to education or to have a career change!

#### 6. How can you seek information to support your child's decision-making?

Seeking information for career decision-making can be overwhelming for both young people and their parents/carers. So where can you access information to best help and support your child with their decision-making process? The most frequent source of information accessed by parents/carers is unsurprisingly the internet – across the world there are online resources with useful information on careers and education that are easily accessible for both young people and their parents/carers. If you and your child require assistance in the decision-making process, then seeking guidance and advice from the child's school can help identify appropriate routes that match your child's abilities. Schools often have access to a careers adviser who will be able to sit and talk with you and your child and provide detailed information to help in the career decision-making process.

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## COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENT'S PARENTS – HOW TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER

Ana Couce Santalla, Elena Fernández Rey

Marie works with teenagers as a career development practitioner. In her work, she has frequent contact with families. Although she values communication with parents of adolescents, she is not sure what to expect from the upcoming meeting with Davy's mother.

Davy is a 16-year-old student who says that his expectation is to go on to study a degree in medicine, which requires high grades that Davy does not have in this course. Davy's mother requested this interview to address his academic-professional expectations. In the following paragraphs, we will explore not only what was said during the interview but also the inner thoughts of both Marie and Davy's mum.

Marie: *'Good afternoon. We are holding this meeting to address Davy's future academic career.'*

Mother: *'Well, it is quite clear he is going to study medicine.'* (The situation with Davy's grades is serious, and I am afraid he might not get into medical school. It seems that if I had not arranged this meeting, this practitioner would not do a thing for him...)

Marie: (The mother seems to be quite ambitious just as I feared...). *'It may be positive to consider other alternatives. Medical studies are not the only option. It is also good to listen to Davy and learn about his interests.'*

Mother: (Does she know Davy at all? All he talks about is becoming a doctor and he spent this whole summer helping his aunt at her medical practice.) *'But he has always wanted to be a doctor.'*

Marie: *'He should take into account his interests, but also his skills and abilities. Davy does not have high marks in many subjects. The teachers agree that he does study but has difficulties.'* (How I wish the mother could see it, too, and stop forcing him into medical studies...)

Mother: *'Are you saying that my son is not going to be able to study medicine? That he is not smart enough for university?'* (I know his grades have not been great lately but that will crush his dreams!)

Marie: *'His teachers recognise that Davy has many strengths and talents that might be overlooked by not also giving him other opportunities. When making*

*a professional choice, it is not only necessary to consider what one wants to be, but what has to be done to obtain it, where one is willing to go etc. The teachers agree that Davy could obtain more satisfactory results by changing the option and the optional subjects.'* (I believe that he wouldn't have to struggle so hard at another school, plus the chances that he will be accepted by the medical school are so low...I really do not want him to be disappointed...).

Mother: *'I really think this should be a family decision.'* (I cannot believe I came here for help! Of course, he has complained about the difficulty of some subjects and lately he is spending all his free time with his girlfriend... But he has never talked about a different path so naturally we have never considered other options ...)

Marie: *'Ok then.'* (Well, if she is not interested in my help... this interview did not work out exactly the way I planned...)

In the interview, both Marie and the mother acted in the best interests of Davy. So why was it that they could not find common ground? And which path is the right one for Davy? It is quite possible that the expectations created by the student and his family are too high. Or perhaps Davy really has not felt the need to consider other options because the decision has already been made for him. Or maybe he is pretty sure about his choice and his grades will get better over the coming years. In any case, neither the parents nor the practitioner know how Davy's career path will eventually turn out as there are too many variables at play.

In our practice, we might focus only on giving information, forgetting that the listener is always receiving the information from a subjective point of view. Although this certainly happens in every conversation, active listening and making the expectations we have for others transparent can help us to understand each other better. Also by being genuinely interested in the other person's subjective view, we can learn about the 'inner voices' of the speaker and perhaps better understand why he or she is behaving in a way we consider irrational or incomprehensible. And this might be the very first step for starting a positive working relationship.

Is there a question that always irritates you to the extent that you do not want to talk anymore?

In what situations do you find yourself thinking of something else when talking to someone?

### STOP AND THINK

- What do you think is the hardest thing for parents in supporting their children along their career path?
- What makes them happy?
- What makes them worried?



### What else could Marie try in the next meeting?

- **Listen actively:** be attentive to what the other side is trying to communicate. A helpful tip is to summarise what was said and ask for clarifications. (Mother: *'But he has always wanted to be a doctor.'* Marie: *'So becoming a doctor is very important for Davy?'*)
- Show **empathy** recognising the **family's feelings**: acknowledgement of their feelings is the first step, accepting them second. (Mother: *'Are you saying that my son is not going to be able to study medicine?'* Marie: *'I can see that you are worried about the academic future of your son... Are you afraid that Davy will be very disappointed if he does not succeed?'*)
- Express and share **your own feelings**: use I-messages and do not forget to express your reasons (*'I personally feel worried because...'*). It also might help to be appreciative (*'I am glad you could come today ...'*).
- Offer **support**: suggest providing useful information and additional help to the student and family during the whole career-related decision process.
- Stay **calm**: if the discussion starts to become heated, try the strategy of the scratched disc (repeat important aspects, information, e.g. without getting angry, be persistent).
- Show your **openness for collaboration**: offer your opinion and expertise but focus on finding common and shared solutions.

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## ROSY AND THE GARDEN

Nicki Moore

When Rosy was little, her mum often gave her gifts which featured a rose. This was to represent the beautiful potential of the rose bud as it bloomed into its true beauty. Rosy dreamed of her future garden as a tranquil place full of rose bushes, but her early attempts at growing roses failed and nothing would bloom. One day she woke to find that one of her new rose bushes had died. Undeterred, she sought guidance from a book, which helped only a little. So Rosy approached a neighbour whose garden was beautiful. She explained that she had admired the neighbour's roses for a long time and wanted to improve her own garden. Rather than being upset by Rosy's questions, the neighbour was delighted to share her knowledge and even offered to visit Rosy to see if she could help. A friendship grew between the two women and they decided to become members of a local rose growing group whose members met regularly to share their stories and skills. Rosy and her neighbour became regular members of the group and this was a delight to them both. Eventually Rosy's neighbour sold her home as she was moving to sheltered accommodation. The new neighbours were a young couple. It was their first home and the young woman told Rosy that one of the reasons they had wanted to move to the road was because of the beautiful gardens. She hoped Rosy would share some of her secrets! Rosy was delighted to be asked and vowed to introduce her new neighbour to the rose growing group, as she was now the group's membership secretary. She had even won an award as the most promising new member due to her work in establishing community action groups to grow roses in derelict spaces around her city!



Do you know who lives in your house?

### Contributing to a community of practice: What we can learn from Rosy's story

The concept of a community of practice was first used in an educational context by psychologists Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe a group of individuals who have a shared professional interest and who learn jointly through sharing ideas and examples of practice. Through their theory of situated learning, Lave and Wenger emphasised the importance of the social context in which learning takes place.

Go to a colleague who has very different opinions and ask him for his advice/opinion on a situation you need to deal with.

Rosy's story explores the personal and professional development that can be gained through reaching out, asking questions and sharing knowledge and skills. Career development practitioners develop their practice in many ways. The most obvious ways are by reading or attending courses. However, there is a great deal of power in learning through immersion in practice and reflecting on the experience, by asking questions, and by observing the work of others. This may well be in a formal context through organised coaching sessions with more experienced colleagues, or in informal settings through professional discussions over a coffee with work colleagues. It can also take the form of volunteering to talk to others about professional experiences and problems, and discussing how these problems have been resolved. It is important for practitioners to consider ways of seeking out, observing and discussing their practice so that a self-sustaining community that extends and develops the profession is established.

### What are the messages for practitioners in this story?

1. **Observe others** – seek role models whose practice matches your ambitions for improving your practice.
2. **Reach out** – people will usually be flattered to be asked to share their practice. You might wish to explore groups who also share similar interests. If you can't find one, then make one!
3. **Don't be modest** – recognise that you may have skills and expertise to offer too.
4. **Innovate** – try your practice in new situations. This helps to embed your practice and adds to your toolkit of experience and expertise.

### STOP AND THINK

1. Who are your role models in the career development sector?  
Whose practice would you like to emulate?
2. Are there local groups you could join?  
Could you get some colleagues together and form your own group?
3. What skills and knowledge could you share?
4. What opportunities exist for you to try new ways of working to develop your practice?

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## WEAVING NETWORKS

Cristina Ceinos Sanz, Miguel Ángel Nogueira Pérez

Educational providers have characteristics that make them different from one another. This is affected by multiple variables: the providers history, the atmosphere among teachers, the relationships with families, the socioeconomic context that surrounds it, educational policies, available resources, and students. All these topics shape the educational providers organisational culture.

This culture is not created overnight. Rather, it is a construction that requires a lot of time, and it is also constantly changing. Although the career development professional has a fundamental role in revitalising the schools and other educational providers by creating networks with other teachers and professionals, especially in issues related to career guidance, in reality it is not that straightforward because of aspects including the following:

- The position of career counselling is not clearly defined by the school management.
- The teachers are overloaded with work, not having time to cooperate with the counsellor.
- The counsellor's communication with the teaching staff is not always optimal, or even non-existent.
- Many teachers believe that their students' career guidance is not their responsibility.

For these and other reasons, the counsellor can be rejected by other teachers, even if he/she has a proactive personality and attitude. What can the career counsellor do to **weave networks** within his/her educational provider?

### Communication as the basis for establishing good professional relationships with colleagues

As in everyday life, establishing good interpersonal relationships involves developing social skills, such as **communicating appropriately**, unambiguously accepting and supporting others and resolving conflicts constructively.

It is not always easy to communicate our message in a way that others understand. Avoiding technicalities and presenting the information simply and attractively might help the counsellor win an ally. And what can be done when teachers do not see the importance or benefits of career counselling at

Are you a visual or an audio person? Try to show your colleagues or students what your work is about using a video or a podcast.

the school? It might be helpful to present the information schematically – in a practical way like the infographic below the article.

### And what if communication still does not work?

Problems in communication might also arise from having different ways of thinking or opposing points of view, which can sometimes lead to discussions and conflicts with a lasting detrimental impact. This can affect the work environment in the educational centre. The solution to the conflict is a dialogue that goes beyond merely exchanging points of view. Constructively resolving conflict requires active listening and assertiveness.

What does assertive communication mean? It is a way of expressing thoughts clearly and respectfully, considering other points of view without being aggressive or passive. A counsellor should be able to express themselves in a kind, straightforward, open, direct and appropriate way, managing to say what they want without threatening others. The following tips might improve your communication in everyday situations as well as conflicts:

- 1. Describe facts:** describe the situation and the behaviour clearly, without detouring or making judgments. For example: *'We have agreed that you will implement a guidance activity in your class last week. In the end, there was no time for the activity in the class, and we have not spoken since.'*
- 2. Express your feelings about the fact:** explaining calmly the feeling caused by the behaviour or fact. For example: *'I am worried that the activity will not make much sense to the students if it is done too late.'*
- 3. Describe the consequences of the fact:** the consequences of the teacher continuing the behaviour are described. For example: *'This activity was designed to help the students reflect on their experience at the employment fair they went to last week. The longer we wait, the more information the students will forget.'*
- 4. Propose a solution, offer help, and make space for their ideas:** explaining the specific changes expected from the teacher so that they can respond proactively. For example: *'I think it would be best to add the activity to this week's plan. Is there anything I can help you with (perhaps explain the activity more clearly or help you to figure out how to connect this activity to your lesson plan)? What do you think about it?'*

### Work collaboratively to weave networks

Trustful relationships among teachers, mutual support and shared professional learning are the cornerstones of collaborative work. This is only effective when all the staff members share the same educational vision and take collective responsibility for all activities happening at the school.

How can we promote collaborative work?

One possible way is to connect an educational project to a topic related to career guidance. For example, when your educational provider plans a project linked to a historical anniversary in your town where students will carry out

interviews with witnesses of the event, suggest that they find out information not only about the event but also about the witnesses' professions. The students can ask them about their former daily tasks in the job, their career path or what the salary used to be back then. This information can later be used as a springboard for discussing the changing world of work as well as form the background for an essay in a language lesson or a source of information for the basics of financial literacy in mathematics lessons.

There are many examples of good collaboration. For more inspiration, see: <https://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/be-inspired> <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/good-practices>



Can you pay somebody a compliment without appraising them? What can you say to a colleague who managed to organize a field trip, other than 'You're great!'?

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## CAREERS GUIDANCE AND EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Markéta Cudlínová, Helena Košťálová

- Creates opportunities, regardless of the social or cultural background of the students.
- Increases career aspirations and motivates individuals to pursue further education and development.
- Seeks harmony between the career path and personal interests.

### What belongs there?

- Careers education
- Providing career information
- Individual career counselling
- Direct contact with the labour market, internships, excursions, shadowing, etc.

### Why all this?

- The purpose of the school is to prepare children for the future, part of that is finding a job.
- Children and their parents will need the support of us all because many different factors must be considered in finding the right direction.
- The World Economic Forum estimates that up to 65% of today's primary school pupils will work in professions that do not yet exist; their career path will probably be a series of unpredictable changes and the children will have to be able to cope with them.

### What is careers education?

- Strengthening the ability to manage self and one's career path.
- Development of the ability to reflect on a goal from different perspectives.
- Development of competencies that enable the acquisition, analysis and organisation of information about oneself, education and occupations.

### Why should the career practitioner not be alone?

- One person can never provide continuous support to all students.
- Linking different jobs to subjects helps to connect school learning to the future career path.

### How to do it?

You can help your students by:

- showing them the broadest possible range of labour market opportunities,
- fostering their ability to deal with change, think critically and plan,
- helping them gain insight about themselves, their aspirations and abilities,
- giving them lots of practical experience throughout their time at school (so their vision of the future is rooted in reality),
- promoting the ability to reflect on their experiences and build their plans for the future based on past successes.

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## WHAT SHOULD I BE WHEN I GROW UP? FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR THE WORRYING TEENAGER

Miriam Dimsits, Lenka Němcová

*'What you will be when you grow up is less important  
than growing up.'* H. B. Gelatt

The overarching theme of the third and final chapter is change and instability. We will introduce arguments why it is better not to let our students focus on just one specific profession in today's world, how to help them find relevant details in a sea of information, and how to work with young refugees.

As the book title suggests, a good career practitioner sees beyond the horizon. The second part of this chapter therefore deals with various stakeholders involved in career counselling, their interests, influence and impact as well as the role of practitioner in the counselling process. The final article in this chapter offers reflection and practical tips on how to introduce sustainability into the career decision making of future generations.

As a career guidance practitioner working with teenagers, you often face the question *'What should I be when I grow up?'* Unfortunately, practitioners are not oracles of wisdom with a magical ability to predict the future or to recognise young people's true destiny.

Would you have your fortune told by the famous Oracle of Delphi?

Career guidance professionals do not possess the powers of foresight. What they do possess is the awareness that **the future is uncertain and unpredictable**, a fact they can be absolutely certain about. If practitioners gave this answer to worrying teenagers, however, they would not be very good at helping them with their worries about future career decision-making. Still, this could be a good starting point for personal reflection work, strategy development, and learning systematic research processes about education opportunities and labour market information.



## The uncertain modern world

Let us explore the position of the American guidance theoretician H. B. Gelatt, who developed the career guidance idea of **positive uncertainty**, which can be most helpful for identifying decision-making and career-planning strategies in modern day society (Gelatt 1989). Gelatt presented his new decision-making framework in the late 1980s. In his presentation, Gelatt discussed how during the second half of the twentieth century he himself changed his decision-making perspective as the world around him became more uncertain and ever changing. Some thirty years later, those of us who remember the 1980s can attest to the fact that back then we could not have imagined the speed of change that is currently taking place across the globe due to extensive global trading and economic interconnectedness, aligned with an ever-expanding communication infrastructure that permeates our entire life sphere (Rosa 2015). Since the 1980s we have seen jobs disappearing because they have become irrelevant (Do you remember the telegraphist? The film projectionist? The typist?) and new ones arising, with job titles that were difficult to imagine just ten years earlier (Have you heard about the data detective? The vertical farm consultant? The drone pilot?). Armed with this historical knowledge, career guidance practitioners can find it ever more difficult to advise young people, because they know that this rate of change will grow exponentially in the coming decades (Ibid.).

How can this historical knowledge be of use to young people? How do we let the knowledge of 'not knowing anything about the future' shape our career guidance practice?

### Challenging rational decision-making: positive uncertainty ahead

What H. B. Gelatt saw already in the 1980s was the true nature of modernity. *A modern society is a society where change is fact, information is flowing, and people are constantly changing their feelings, passions and aspirations, either adapting to change or leading the change along their career path.* (Gelatt 1989). Gelatt saw a need for challenging the decision-making framework dominant at the time, one based on the notion of rationality, because it no longer applied to the fluidity of modern life. How could you make rational decisions when all the parameters on which you were basing your decisions were shifting and never predictable?

Gelatt challenged our ideas of rational decision-making by claiming that total rationality was never possible. The idea of rationality was built on the notions that you always have different choices (e.g. A, B and C), that these choices have

separate consequences and outcomes, and that people would always have different preferences tied to these consequences and outcomes. Gelatt opposed the idea of rationality by challenging the underlying notions as follows:

- We do not necessarily have separate choices, as our choices may be connected or intertwined.
- When it comes to a career choice, we can never predict the outcome of a specific choice when so many people and parameters are involved (co-workers, bosses, teachers, students, family, global economy or even pandemics).
- We change our preferences throughout our lives. You might set a career goal to reach in ten years, but who will you be in ten years' time? What about your interests, your social situation, your living or working environment? They might have changed. In the end, after struggling to reach a goal and finally achieving it, you may no longer want it.

Furthermore, Gelatt argued that although we think that we are rational, we are not aware that our habits, feelings, values and culture are central – even if unconscious – to our decision-making. So instead of deliberately excluding habits, feelings and values from decision-making, it would be more 'rational' to integrate these soft choice parameters systematically into our decision-making process (Ibid.).

### Three guidelines for decision-making

Gelatt provides concrete guidelines for making decisions, a framework that can be good food for thought for the worrying teenager. Gelatt sees decision-making as '*... the process of arranging and rearranging information into a choice or action*' (Ibid.). To help facilitate the worrying teenager's decision-making, the career guidance practitioner can break the definition down into the following three guidelines:

#### 1. Information guideline: Treat your facts with imagination, but do not imagine your facts

To make a good decision, you need information. But information is everywhere and is so easily accessed, that you need strategies for picking out the right information. Furthermore, information always contains bias or sender imprints, something the decision-maker needs to be aware of in order to collect the right information. When you have collected the right information,

Has irrational behaviour ever been worth it in your experience?

The idea of instability and variability in the world of work is sometimes more difficult for adults than for teenagers. Ask your students how they feel about that.

you have to invite creativity to the table in order to view the information in a different light, to arrange or rearrange it. This way, the information will not tie you to specific decisions, instead giving you a defined space for creativity in your decision-making process. To encourage a counselee to treat facts with imagination, you might pose the following question: *‘Perhaps the education path you are considering will put a strain on your finances, but how can you organize your way of life so that it makes this path possible anyway?’*

### OUR TIP:

When treating facts with imagination, you will probably encounter several obstacles on the path of your decision-making. Instead of rejecting any path outright, try to think of ways to overcome these obstacles and allow your mind to play out different scenarios. Try to identify one effective action or thought to overcome each obstacle, even if it might be difficult to come up with different scenarios. If struggling with this, you can try creative brainstorming. Think about any of the obstacles on the path of your decision-making and write it down. For example: If... (obstacle), I will... (action or thought to overcome obstacle). Take two minutes to write at least three ideas for overcoming the obstacle. It is important to write exactly what comes to your mind first. After you finish brainstorming, look at your list. Which of your ideas is most powerful? Do not hesitate to make it into an action when needed.

### 2. Process guideline: Know what you want and believe, but do not be sure

It is good to have a goal, but if you strive towards only one goal with blinkers on the entire time, you may run the risk of achieving a goal you may not want by the time you have reached it, because your life and preferences have changed by then. Your hard work to reach your one and only goal might have come at a high cost, a cost you might regret in hindsight. Gelatt posits that decision-making should be as much a process for discovering goals as for achieving them. Keep your eyes open at all times and make time for exploring new things along the way. This might lead you in new directions with new learning experiences to follow. And these should be valued, because they might help you identify a better goal to pursue. After all, it is more rational to shift goals than to stay with a goal that is no longer meaningful to you. *‘Perhaps you are trying to make the ‘right’ decision in order to get your dream job, but what are the principles of making the ‘right’ decision when the future is uncertain and unpredictable?’* A question such as this may inspire a counselee to focus on enjoying the process and exploring new opportunities.

### OUR TIP:

An important aspect of goal setting is keeping a positive mindset about your ability to reach your goals. Gelatt points to research that shows that by having a large amount of self-efficacy in your career goals, you are more likely to succeed in reaching them. And since the future does not yet exist, why not seize the opportunity to try and do what your heart aspires to, and do it right now. This puts positive attitude into the paradigm of positive uncertainty decision-making.

### 3. Choice guideline: Be rational, unless there is a good reason to be irrational

It is best to be rational when making decisions, which in Gelatt’s view means to invite emotions, habits, values and culture into the decision-making process in a conscious and systematic manner. Gelatt talks of ‘holistic choice making’ as a way of including all important parameters in your decisions. When making choices you of course need to look at the facts, but you cannot tell in advance how these facts will work for you in the future. When you want to inspire holistic choice making, you might ask a counselee the following: *‘Perhaps working in this industry or profession will provide you with all the financial benefits you could dream of, but how does this industry fit with your values, your ideas of leisure and your current interests?’*

### OUR TIP:

To make a good decision, you will probably seek out information about professions that are currently available and the skills and knowledge that match different roles. Keep in mind though that we live in a changing world and that what is currently available may vanish in few years’ time. Skills and knowledge are just tools that may go in and out of fashion. Instead of matching yourself to a role first, start your decision-making by evaluating your personal values, beliefs and dreams, as they may provide you with an important compass for your life.

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# PHILOSOPHICAL GUIDANCE – HOW TO HANDLE ANXIETY AND FRUSTRATION IN AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD

Jesper Sigaard Hansen

Philosophical guidance has great potential in a world that is perceived as complex and difficult to grasp. A philosophical conversation is a powerful tool for dissolving frustration and the feeling of having lost meaning and direction in life. This does not happen by finding quick fixes. A guidance counsellor has to investigate a problem with a counsellee by bringing it into motion and by exploring new perspectives and ways of assessing the situation. To succeed with philosophical guidance, one has to have curiosity and openness for the unknown.



This article will demonstrate how philosophical guidance can be used in everyday guidance practice. The demonstration will be based on a narrative of a 15-year-old girl who is figuring out what she is going to do with her life.

Sarah is an ordinary Danish 9th grader. She is doing pretty well academically and socially; she is well-liked by her peers and has many friends. Her parents are very supportive and they have a great relationship with Sarah. Seen from the outside, Sarah should not be having any problems. But she is – especially in relation to upcoming exams and her choice of further education:

*'I feel a lot of pressure right now. We have so much to do in school, but my teacher tells me that this is nothing compared to what we will have in upper secondary school. There's also huge pressure to choose to go to upper secondary. I always thought I would go there and I'm pretty sure I will. But I'm also having second thoughts. I'm so scared of making the wrong decision and it's all up to me. I feel so stressed and anxious. Sometimes I think I'm depressed.'*

Sadly, Sarah is not alone in feeling nervous and stressed. A Danish inquiry from 2019 found that 20% of girls aged 16-24 feel stressed and nervous (Psykinfo, 2019).

## When traditional methods of guidance counselling are not the right choice for the guidance practitioner

When young people feel insecure about which road to take in life, traditional guidance focuses on presenting different options and removing uncertainty. Enlightened in this way, young people can choose the right education path or life journey (Skovhus, 2016). This approach does not make sense in a world characterised by complexity and uncertainty. It is impossible to know all the facts before deciding about the future. The labour market is changing fast and possibilities of different jobs and educational options seem endless. This is why the decision-making expert H. B. Gelatt argues that we must ignore the old decision-making theory in which you must be enlightened and then choose between known possibilities (Gelatt, 1989).

This could also be the case in Sarah's example. Naturally, the guidance practitioner wants only the best for Sarah and other young people. This is why the practitioner focuses on introducing many career path possibilities to Sarah and her classmates. The practitioner also explains the different academic competencies and career skills needed for different career options. Looking through the lens of traditional career-learning thinking, it should be easy for Sarah to narrow down between different options and make an educational choice that will make her happy.

But Sarah does not find this process easy, and she does not feel happy about it. She is insecure and feels anxious about her upcoming career choice. As evident from her narration, Sarah does not consider the guidance she is receiving as being helpful with reducing her anxiety and frustration. Quite the contrary, she feels that the guidance is contributing to her growing anxiety about her upcoming educational choice.

Making an educational choice is difficult for Sarah due to two factors (Lystbæk, 2011):

1. It is hard to choose when we cannot predict the consequences of our decision. We do not know how the labour market will evolve and we cannot be assured that life will turn out as we wish.
2. Our choice of education is interlinked with our understanding of self and our identity.

It is no wonder that Sarah and other young people feel restless, uncertain, and anxious about their educational choices. The question remains: how can uncertainty and anxiety about upcoming career choices be reduced for young people? Let us examine if philosophical career guidance could be the answer.

### STOP AND THINK



Try and think about deliberately working with ‘uncertainty’ in your counselling or teaching. For example, give your students a task without clear instructions and leave it up to them to figure out. Ask the following questions (or similar ones): *Who could help them? How do I verify the information I obtained? What would happen if I did not obtain the information? Have you ever experienced anything similar? Is there any other way of dealing with the task?*

- Can you think of any other way of working with uncertainty?
- Where does your comfort zone end when it comes to uncertainty?
- What would have to happen to push the boundary of your comfort zone?

### What is philosophical guidance and how can it be used in guidance counselling?

Philosophical guidance goes thousands of years back to the time of Ancient Greece – and probably even further. As a guidance approach, philosophical guidance was formally established by the German philosopher Gerd Achenbach (Lystbæk 2011). To understand the concept of philosophical guidance, one has to look at the etymological meaning of the word philosophy, which is coined from the Greek words ‘Phylos’ (to love) and ‘Sophie’ (Wisdom). By definition then, philosophical guidance is not about finding answers, but about being curious, asking questions and developing the capability to accept that there are no easy answers and that new questions can always be asked (Lystbæk, 2011).

Philosophical guidance draws inspiration from Achenbach’s second-order thinking, where one must reflect on the validity of one’s assumptions, the value of one’s values, the meaningfulness of meaning, and so on.

### How can career guidance practitioners use the philosophical approach?

In philosophical guidance you invite the counselee into a fellowship of wondering, where they are encouraged to philosophise about practical issues in a reflective way. In relation to Sarah this means that we will not ask her which educational path she would like to take but encourage her to reflect on herself and her ideas about how to live a meaningful life. The guidance counsellor can help Sarah to do this by asking philosophical questions – but always in relation to issues concerning her immediate problems or challenges. For example:

- *Sarah, you’re not sure which career choice you are going to make. But what is a good choice?*
- *Sarah, please tell me about a time in your life when you felt that you had made a good choice.*
- *Sarah, you tell me that it’s important to be happy. But what does it mean to be happy?*
- *Sarah, please tell me about a time in your life when you felt happy. Can you describe your feelings? What was the crucial impact of that experience?*

Through the philosophical approach, Sarah may realise that a good choice does not always mean an easy choice. And by attempting to answer the questions about happiness, she may realise that happiness is a feeling that is often linked to other people or to overcoming difficulties in life.

Philosophical guidance reflects on issues that are present in our lives with the help of existential and philosophical questions. Because of this, it has the power to solve anxiety and frustration in our lives by bringing our awareness to new perspectives about the way we can live our lives. Philosophical guidance helps us to search for an understanding of self and of life in a world where there is no manual on how to live. It can serve as a guide for calibrating the internal compass with which we navigate our lives.

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It does not have to be only you coming up with new, stimulating philosophical questions! Tell your students to ask each other uncommon questions.

*‘The only thing we require to be good philosophers is the faculty of wonder.’* (J. Gaarder, *Sophie’s World*, 1991).

When was the last time you reflected on something in wonder?

## WORKING WITH YOUNG REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

Peggy Vassiliou

Greece is a country of excellent food, blue and white coastlines and ancient monuments, but as an EU border country, it is also the first place that high numbers of refugees encounter, with a peak of 856,723 arriving by boat in 2015. Currently, there are 121,000 refugees and migrants<sup>1</sup> still living in the hope of a better life in 4,576 apartments and 22 buildings, in 14 cities and 7 islands across Greece<sup>2</sup>. Many of them (sooner or later) decide to stay in Greece. According to statistical data from the *Greek Asylum Service*<sup>3</sup>, from 07/06/2013 to 29/02/2020 there were 299,620 asylum applications in total, of which 12,415 were unaccompanied minors: 1,105 (8.9%) females and 11,310 (91.1%) males. Like other children, these youngsters have dreams, and they want to be happy. They wish to live a dignified life, to be educated and find a rewarding job. To achieve these goals, they need professional help.

Europe is not (and never has been) a static, fixed place. We may be surprised by the effects of migration, as well as the consequences of environmental disasters or diseases. The following article can serve as inspiration for us in how to handle difficult or unusual situations. We want to share with you our experiences of counselling within refugee structures (hotspots and shelters) in Greece. We interviewed three young counsellors - two women and one man. This is what we learned from them:

The counsellors' daily tasks can be summarised as follows; motivating, encouraging and counselling young refugees by means of:

- Dealing with behavioural issues
- Group meetings for self-improvement & confidence boosting
- Organising self-action plans
- Emphasising the necessity of education and learning Greek
- Cooperating with lawyers and teenage refugees on issues such as legislation, training and education possibilities, working alternatives, and possibly reuniting with their families
- Individual discussions (personal thoughts & issues).

The current law states that unaccompanied minors shall be referred to accommodation centres for unaccompanied minors or to other accommodation

centres, for the duration of their stay in the country or until they are placed with a foster family or in supervised lodgings<sup>4</sup>. *'When a child has travelled many miles on foot for days or even months, fleeing their country to save themselves, they are capable of almost anything. There is no way you can keep them restrained. These children arrive in Greece, and they already have detailed knowledge of Athens, despite never having been there. The information comes from connections that are already in Athens. So, very often, children of 'safe zones' escape in various ways (jumping walls, tearing wire mesh fences) and once again travel miles inland to re-join their companions. Many of them never return to the refugee structures, and it is not easy to see or contact them.'*

The main problem our counsellors face is the isolation of the adolescents. This particular group has experienced deception and rejection, as well as violence and deprivation. These teenagers do not want to hear words; they need to see action. All three counsellors agree that the only way to 'fight' withdrawal is to help these young people identify their positive personality traits and the pleasant, happy moments of their past that have inspired them to persevere. By and large, individual sessions are the most helpful. However, peer group therapy is also beneficial in terms of cultivating social skills. There are times when foster parents are encouraged to support this effort by rewarding the teenagers for their participation in these sessions.

*'We can't expect them to become properly adjusted to society when we have them living in restricted environments, separated from the real world. How can I convince a teenager that they need to attend language lessons when they call me a liar because they can't conceive that all young Greeks go to school every day? Sometimes I consider recording students going or coming back from school by bus, train, on foot, on video with my mobile phone.'*

Another major obstacle for the professionals is, of course, the lack of trust and the insecurity the young refugees feel. All the counsellors again agree that their continuous presence among the young refugees is proof that someone really cares and truly wants to help them. They must show empathy on a daily basis and show that they acknowledge the seriousness of the teenagers' problems.

*'The rapid turnover of counsellors working in the shelters is, unfortunately, the reason we lose vital information about these young people; most of the time, all our efforts go down the drain. No one is interested in promoting personal feedback or even supplying the new counsellor with data. As a result, the trust that was built with so much effort is eventually lost.'*

Can you think of inspiration from your practice or a method you would recommend to counsellors working with refugees?

Sometimes, the counsellors must deal with verbal aggression. They are recommended to:

- Keep their presence of mind
- Learn about previous unpleasant experiences the teenager has faced
- Be able to differentiate between the behaviour and the individual
- Reward and praise them for their efforts to stay calm and practice self-control
- Not take their verbal attack personally
- Leave the room, telling them they probably need time to think and calm down.

*Many of these teenagers have experienced physical or verbal violence in their families as a daily occurrence. As a result, they tend to accept this kind of treatment as normal, and of course, they act similarly. They often fight each other (really hard) to amuse themselves. They even do it on purpose because they want to make fun of me.'*

### And what would the counsellors recommend to their colleagues who work (or will work) with refugees?

According to the counsellors, it is imperative that they:

1. Show empathy and acceptance to build a relationship based on mutual trust.
2. Not take any aggressiveness or hostility personally. In other words, stay calm and show indifference.
3. Find ways to motivate these teenagers on a daily basis.
4. Prove themselves to be reliable, trustworthy, and a shoulder to cry on.

At the end of the conversation with us, the counsellors shared the following story, which, despite its tragedy, is a story of hope. Although long-term and loving support will not erase the past, it holds power to positively influence their current and future lives.

*In April 2018, we welcomed two children (brother and sister) about eight years old. From the beginning, these two showed aggressiveness and hostility. They refused to make eye contact with us, and very often they hit us. They wouldn't follow any rules, wouldn't participate in activities and didn't want to be part of our community (peers and staff). They were sleep-deprived and malnourished. We assumed that they had been abused and neglected, and unfortunately, we were right. [...] with stability, persistence and patience, we followed a very specific and fixed schedule to make them feel confident and secure. Our teachers and caregivers had to keep them clean, fed and well dressed. On the other hand, we, as counsellors, had to persuade them to become part of a bigger community, help them make friends and take part in activities. After several weeks, it seemed we had earned some of their trust, and*

*that was a healing result for these children. Active listening, dedication, rewarding them, boosting their self-confidence and providing them with care: those were the instruments we used to approach these children and grow their sense of trust.*

*Rewards usually took the form of a warm round of applause or a big hug or even something more tangible such as an ice cream. Sometimes the reward could also be the kind words of another child in the group who spontaneously highlighted something positive ('thank you for lending me your pen', or 'I appreciate you sitting next to me'). These efforts were reinforced by physical contact mainly from the caregivers in the structure who also had a maternal role based on three pillars: affection, care and stability. The combination of those daily efforts had therapeutic effects on these children. In this way, we concluded that it is necessary to provide – at least to young people – compassionate and humane services in addition to scientific ones. Today, these teenagers are with a foster family and seem to be getting along better.'*

### STOP AND THINK

How can one increase one's intercultural sensitivity? When going to a city you do not know, try visiting a non-tourist part. You can walk around, sit, shop, etc. Just go with the flow and do not hurry. Try to observe everything with a clear mind. Notice everything around you: people, architecture, nature, sounds, smells, etc. Try and describe everything you see/hear/smell without assessing it. You can use any tools you like to capture it (words, colours, shapes, taking pictures, etc.). When you get home, spend some time reflecting on the following:

- What did you see and hear during your observation?
- What did you think about at the time?
- How do you feel about it?
- Does it evoke any memories?

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Lecturas complementarias y referencias

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# SELECTING APPROPRIATE AND USEFUL INFORMATION

Nicki Moore

Young people seek information from a variety of sources to support their career decision-making. Some young people prefer to get information from books and magazines and some prefer to receive it from family members or employers. Some information is freely available on the internet and young people access this in their own time. It is tempting for practitioners to deny responsibility for how young people access and use this unmediated information to inform their career decision-making. Other materials, including paper-based and internet-based resources, are selected on behalf of young people and disseminated in the form of weblinks, posters, reference materials and worksheets. In some countries, there is legislation governing the provision of information and all career development practitioners have a responsibility to act ethically in its provision. As educators they are also responsible for ensuring that young people have the knowledge and skills to select career and labour market information (CLMI) that is appropriate and valid.

## Legal duties in the provision of CLMI

In some countries, specific legislation or statutory guidance makes specific reference to the provision of CLMI. In England, for example, schools are required to ensure that pupils are given access to a wide range of up-to-date reference materials. Legislation also defines the term impartial as being in the best interests of the pupil and not in the interests of another individual or organisation. Schools are also required to provide careers education that is free from bias. Each European country may have specific legislative requirements, and practitioners will need to explore the implications of these for their work.

## STOP AND THINK

- What are the legislative requirements for the provision of career and labour market information in your country?
- How do you ensure that your information provision meets these requirements?

## Ethics and the delivery of CLMI

The moral principles that guide the provision of information include the need to be impartial, transparent and trustworthy (CDI 2018), but it is quite possible to provide access to a range of information materials and be partial.

Moore (2019) applies the work of Thaler and Sunstein (2008) to explore how lessons from behavioural economics can be applied to the provision of CLMI. Moore notes that it is possible to influence the choices made by young people by carefully placing information about the routes which are seen as preferential (for example careers in science, technology, engineering and maths) in more prominent places than information about less preferential careers (for example in the arts). This approach exemplifies 'nudge theory', a system of behavioural change that is growing in prominence internationally. In economies where governments are keen to manage skills gaps, one might have some sympathy with this approach, however as career development practitioners we must remain trustworthy and transparent and by applying nudges of this sort we would be neither.

## STOP AND THINK

- How do you ensure impartiality, transparency and trustworthiness in the provision of information in your practice and in your organisation?

## Encouraging the discerning use of information by young people

There has been much written in the international media about the role that 'fake news' has played in influencing the decisions that citizens have made in elections and other political events. The headlines have reinforced the need for people to ask questions about the sources and intent of the information that they encounter through social media and other online sources. The same principles apply to CLMI and lead us to the conclusion that we must educate young people to be more discerning users of information. The worksheet at the end of this article is one way of supporting young people to develop their information handling skills. It can be used by practitioners to ensure that the information that they are selecting is of good quality. It can also be used as an education resource to help young people to develop their career information handling skills.

## Evaluating career and labour market information

Choosing accurate and trustworthy information sources is critical in making well-informed career decisions. It can be hard to know what information is valid and what information needs to be rejected as unhelpful. This worksheet uses the Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose (CRAAP) test, which was introduced by Sarah Blakeslee from California State University in 2004. It can be used to evaluate both online and paper-based resources.

Name three sources you go to most frequently for information when making a decision.

If the law in your country does not regulate the provision of career information, how do you select suitable sources?

	Definition	Questions to ask	Response
C	<b>Currency</b> or the timeliness of the information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What date was this resource published?</li> <li>Have I got the most recent edition?</li> </ul>	
R	<b>Relevance</b> or how the information meets your information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is this information directly related to my question or is it more general in nature?</li> <li>Have I found this information as a direct result of my research or did I find this by accident?</li> </ul>	
A	<b>Authority</b> or the source of the information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who has produced this resource? Is it a company or a person that I recognise and trust?</li> <li>Have other people that I know used this resource?</li> <li>Has someone that I trust signposted me to this information?</li> </ul>	
A	<b>Accuracy</b> or the reliability, truthfulness and accuracy of the information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the facts presented in this information replicated elsewhere in reliable sources?</li> <li>Is there any critique about this information anywhere? What are people saying?</li> </ul>	
P	<b>Purpose</b> or the reason why the information exists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the agenda behind this information?</li> <li>Does it support the interests of any one group?</li> <li>Is this information sponsored? By whom? Do they have an agenda?</li> </ul>	

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## CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CAREER COUNSELLING PRACTICE

Jesper Sigaard Hansen

Ethical responsibility is critical in the field of career guidance because a career guidance practitioner can have a crucial impact on another person's life. This article will examine how critical reflection can strengthen the practitioner's efforts to work within ethical guidelines in their guidance practice.

Critical reflection and ethical responsibility can serve as meaningful guidelines for the practitioner. These guidelines can be helpful in the field of career guidance because the practitioner will always experience tension between the best interests of the counselee and societal demands. This may sound simple or obvious, but if the career practitioner is to succeed in this balancing act, then it is necessary for them to have a critical view of the society and the organisation of which they are a part.

This dilemma will be illustrated with an interview carried out as part of research in our project team. It documents a conversation between the researcher and a 9th grade student from a Danish compulsory school.

Interviewer: *'Michael, can you tell me more about feeling pressured?'*

Michael: *'I feel pressured by all the talk about choosing a career, PISA' measurements and national tests. It's as if the teachers and career counsellors want to help us by providing a little extra – but I'm just getting stressed. I don't think there's any room for career exploration.'*

Interviewer: *'But does the career counsellor also talk about other things?'*

Michael: *'Yes, we talk of course about different options for career paths. We talk mostly about vocational education, so I have the feeling that it's mostly about having more young people going in that direction. But I don't think it's for me. I want to go to college.'*

Interviewer: *'So you want something else.'*

Michael: *'I don't know – maybe something more in line with my dreams.'*

### Career counselling - between individual needs and alignment with the system

As illustrated in the interview, the practice of the career guidance practi-

What career-related topics are important in your country?

tioner is interwoven with societal and institutional requirements and routines in which the individual, in this case Michael, can feel pinched. This issue can be illustrated by a quote from the French/Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas:

*'There are cruelties which are terrible because they proceed from necessity of the reasonable order. There are, if you like, the tears a civil servant cannot see: The tears of the Other. (Simmons, 1999:98)'*

Expressed in other words, all the tasks and requirements the career guidance practitioner needs to undertake and address can easily lead them to overlook the individual whom they are intending to help.

### How can it be that career counselling and career activities can contribute to increased pressure and dissatisfaction among pupils in school? And what can be done to avoid it?

In order to answer this question, it is important for the career guidance counsellor to see the career guidance practice in a larger context. This is essential in order to identify how career guidance activities, if not used carefully, can contribute to the experience of pressure and dissatisfaction among pupils in school.

In the interview above, Michael feels that the guidance counsellor is trying to sell vocational training to the students in the class. This is a real concern, since in Denmark there is a great political focus on getting more young people to choose vocational education. The guidance counsellor is certainly aware of this fact – just as it has not gone unnoticed by Michael. If this issue is not directly addressed by the counsellor, it can have the following consequences:

- The young people can perceive the guidance counsellor as untrustworthy and they may ask themselves: does the counsellor want the best for me? If they think there is a hidden agenda, it may have a negative influence on their relationship.
- The guidance counsellor unintentionally contributes to increased insecurity and pressure rather than to a safe exploration of career opportunities.

### What could the guidance practitioner have done instead?

If the guidance counsellor had been more open and direct about the fact that there is a great political focus on promoting vocational education, then it would have been possible to facilitate an enlightened discussion about contemporary society and the needs of the labour market. In this way it may have

been possible to reflect on the fact that there are many ways to live a good life, and that vocational opportunities are often dismissed by young people without much reflection. An open discussion such as this might help to strengthen young people's critical thinking about vocations and boost their career learning opportunities.

### Critical thinking in our guidance practice – an ethical responsibility

It is not always easy to see how guidance can have unintended consequences. That is why the Maltese professor Ronald Sultana (2014) argued that career guidance must be seen as a piece of a 'larger picture'. It is imperative that the guidance practitioner reflects on their own role in society and the opportunities and consequences that their guidance can bring.

The German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt calls it a denial of responsibility if one is not critical of the role and influence they have on another individual (Aasland, 2011). The critical guidance practitioner should make it clear if career guidance activities may not be in the best interest of the young people involved. At the same time, it is the guidance practitioner's ethical responsibility to act in the best interest of the other individuals involved. In order to do that, the practitioner needs to develop their own critical thinking.

### STOP AND THINK

Ask the students to read an article about the current job market. Their task is to find as much verified information both disproving and confirming the claims made in the article as possible.

- If there is more information, does it automatically mean that the article is true/untrue?
- What else can cause a lack of information of some kind?



Why did you choose your current job? What motivates you?

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<sup>1</sup>PISA is an OECD study that compares student competencies in member countries.

# CAREER COUNSELLING AS A PERMANENT CONFLICT?

Eva Kavková

Career counselling, as well as social or community work, can often result in conflict or dilemma. On one side of the conflict are students who have their own ideas about how they would like to live their lives; they imagine their future career and sometimes think of further studies. On the other side of the conflict are education providers who provide career counselling; they can often be financed by the state, region or municipality and have a founder that wishes to assert some influence over the institution. If that is the case, the institution then acts, in some respect, as an instrument of the state, closely linked to industry and promoting economic interests above all else. One can even say that career counselling provided by such an institution may be primarily motivated by current demands of the labour market. In other words, the practitioner is expected to guide students in such a way that would ensure that vacancies in sectors where labour shortages are most prominent would be filled.

It is clear that the interests of the two sides do not always intersect, and sometimes even contradict each other. The career practitioner often finds themselves in between the two sides. Sometimes there is more pressure from one or the other side and sometimes the practitioner identifies more with one side than the other, consequently, it is very difficult to find a balanced position.

What role should current economic demand play in career counselling?



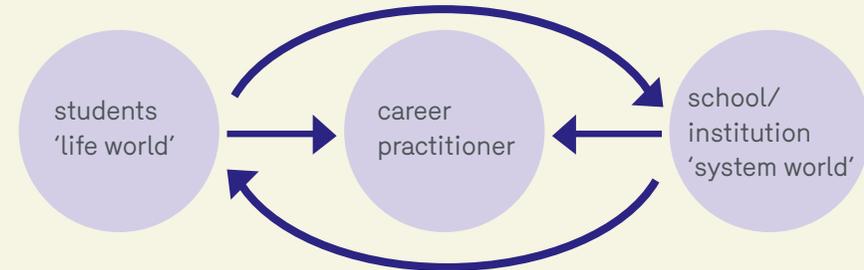
## STOP AND THINK

- What is your aim when it comes to career counselling?
- Do you identify your students' needs?
- How do you verify that you truly understand their needs?

In his article *Critical reflection and ethical responsibility in career counselling practice*, Jesper Hansen provides a detailed description of ethical dimensions of the tension career practitioners find themselves in when trying to balance their clients' best interests (as required by code of ethics) and society's requirements. He then points out negative impacts of misbalanced counselling, favouring economic interest, on students' lives. This article follows-up Hansen's point and explores the negative social and economic implications of career counselling, which it is too strongly influenced by current economic demand.

Tony Watts, the founding member of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling and an Emeritus visiting professor at the University of Derby, says that students are motivated to study mainly to 'gain access to pieces of paper which provide passports to enter the world of work. Career practitioners or advisers are gatekeepers, checking the visas.' Watts (1998).

To better understand the conflicting nature of career counselling, we should take a closer look at the players.



Students are the starting point, since they are the recipients of career counselling services provided at schools and other institutions. We can also call them the 'life world'. The term was first used by Habermas (1981), and it means the world of everyday reality. Students have their own experience with the world around them, they have their own values, dreams, and ideas of their future lives. Their opinions are primarily influenced by their background – their family, friends, and also by what they learn on the Internet, as proven by the research conducted by our project team in 2019 (Moore, Clark, Neary and Blake, 2020). Their perspective is not always in line with opinions of their teachers, career practitioners, school management and ruling politicians.

Society with its rules, norms and values (what Habermas calls the 'system world') stands on the other side. Its norms come from those who are in power. They are the ones who define what is accepted as right, suitable and normal (i.e. what are the correct values, suitable behaviour, good study, commendable work or a successful career). Any behaviour that does not meet this definition of normality is labelled deviant or pathological (Dominelli, 2002). Schools then function, in a sense, as a first stage of the system world, which prepares and moulds students according to prevailing norms of society (Illich, 1975). Those who do not comply with these norms are pushed to the margins. Oomen & Plant (2014) argue that those leaving education prematurely, labelled as 'dropouts', are actually pushed out by the system, i.e. 'push outs.' The fact that they do not graduate is perceived as a personal failure caused

by lack of self-confidence, stamina or motivation – and not as a failure of the system, which does not meet their needs and offers them no other solution than to drop out.

According to a 2012 Eurofound study, the greatest risk of dropping out of school can be seen in children who live with disabilities, come from divorced, unemployed, or low-income families, or whose parents are migrants. They all have one thing in common: their life and cultural patterns do not correspond to perceived mainstream normality.



### What does career counselling look like in the context of mechanisms described above?

Students are encouraged to choose studies and career paths that are customary or needed in society at that moment. They are advised to study and find jobs later where there is a great demand in the labour market, without taking their aspirations into account. This principle is not harmful on its own. Some students have unrealistic life expectations, while others have no idea which direction to go in the future. The career practitioner can help them to be grounded in reality. However, this must be done in a sensitive way so it does not demotivate the students, as Hensen demonstrates in his article. If the career practitioner does not respect wishes and needs of the students and does not reflect on instructions they are given from above, such a service has negative impacts – especially on individuals coming from low-income and disadvantaged families. Let's see how this works in practice.

Aside from IT specialists, there is a long-term demand for production and construction workers in the labour market (McGrath, 2019), which means less-qualified, lower-paid jobs, often involving shift work and less comfortable and safe working conditions. Moreover, some occupations in these industries are at significant risk of being replaced by robots and may disappear in a few years. Career practitioners who are overly influenced by the system might tend to direct their students who appear unpromising, indecisive, difficult to educate, and lacking the 'right' competencies, to choose one of these less-skilled professions, all because it is difficult to work with such students. There is often a lack of time and money, and practitioners must be able to think critically and unconventionally, outside the box prescribed by normality, to discover their students' hidden potential.

How does the topic relate to your work?

### OUR TIP:

Ask students to explain 2-4 terms related to finding employment (e.g. success, career, good school, meaningful work, etc.). Follow up with a discussion aimed at comparing your students' definitions (and yours). Explain to your students that there is no right or wrong answer in this case since you asked about their point of view on these terms.

As a result, career practitioners who do not think about the impact of their work and choose the 'easiest' path contribute to social disparities and inequalities. As proven by many researchers (see below), it is easier for children from middle and upper class – from families that appreciate education – to adopt behaviour and norms called for by their school and thus to pass their high-school and university entrance exams successfully. On the other hand, children from working class backgrounds who have not been taught these norms from an early age do not see the same benefits in education. They are not motivated by the school and therefore tend to choose vocational education, ending up once again as workers in low income, and often also uncertain and precarious positions, despite any talent they may have. As Katrňák says in *Condemned to be Blue-Collar* (Odsouzení k manuální práci, 2004): '... one must ask how many children end up at vocational schools only due to their social status, even though their intellect would easily allow them to study at a grammar school under different circumstances.' Without critical reflection, career counselling can contribute to further stratification of our society, creating a wide divide between privileged on one side and future unemployed (or unemployable) due to automation on the other one.

There are many sociologists who focus on unequal access to education and resulting low social and professional mobility; the following publications are especially noteworthy: Thompson, K. (2016). *White Working Class Underachievement*, Acher, I., Huchings, M., and Ross, A. (2003). *Higher Education and Social Class. Issues of exclusion and inclusion*, Erikson, R., Goldthorpe, J. H. (1992). *The Constant Flux. A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*, Willis, P. (1975). *Learning to Labour*

Career practitioners are the last element of the diagram. Their situation is not that of a blank slate – they have their life experience, upbringing, family and professional background, values, and opinions. All of this influences their work attitude, their position in the diagram and helps or prevents them to balance conflicting requirements of both parties and to look for acceptable compromises.

### What can career practitioners do to cope in such a difficult situation?

Using critical reflection tools, as discussed in this book by Siobhan Neary in *Critical Reflection and its Benefits for Career Development Practitioners* and in *Theories Supporting Reflection*, may be one possibility. Critical reflection helps career practitioners to stop and gain a deeper insight into themselves, their work and the context in which they provide their services. The aim is to see under the surface of what we take for granted and to learn to examine our motivation and behaviour and its impacts – retrospectively, continuously, and with our eyes set on the future so that we do not unwittingly contribute to social injustice and inequalities.

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## GUIDANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY – PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE VALUES IN CAREER GUIDANCE

Miriam Dimsits, Helena Košťálová

As career guidance practitioners, we often forget how influential a profession in career guidance is. We see many kinds of people and try to help them think about themselves and the society in which they live. We make an impact on young peoples' lives that hopefully helps them make good and meaningful choices along their career paths. Career guidance as a profession helps to shape individuals' values, ethics and independent thinking – it is a way of changing society and the global community step by step.

Career guidance as a profession arose in around 1900 in response to significant societal challenges when many people started moving from the countryside to the city, or other countries and continents with the hope of finding jobs, prosperity or a way out of poverty. Frank Parsons, originally an engineer, who after personal experiences with unemployment and the financial depression in America in late the 1800s, was led by thoughts of social reformation and social justice to establish the first known 'vocation bureau' in the world. In the city of Boston, his vocation bureau helped newly arrived immigrants to find their perfect match with the industries of the city (Brewer 1942, Plant 2014). At the core of this vocation bureau was career guidance, where practitioners sought to find solutions for societal problems on an individual level. Career guidance practitioners throughout history have tried to solve intersectional challenges in modern society, and in many ways, they have succeeded in their task (Watts 1996).

Now we face a new societal task, an environmental challenge dealing with the livelihood of our global community. If we fail to deal with this task as an international community, it will have a tremendous impact on billions of lives. Again, career guidance could be the most important means to turn this negative spiral around and help find new solutions in the intersection between society and the individual.

### STOP AND THINK

- Do you agree with what John Donne said – that 'no man is an island'? Who is part of your island?
- What challenges do career practitioners face today?



What are your thoughts after reading the article?

Professor Peter Plant at the University of South-Eastern Norway has proposed a concept for a shift in guidance policy and practice called, *Green Guidance* (Plant 2014). Through *Green Guidance*, Plant wishes to stress the importance and responsibility of the career guidance practitioner in promoting green values in guidance. Here, he draws on the historical account of Frank Parsons' (who is considered the founder of career guidance) ideas of a profession based on societal responsibility. Plant argues, that in Parsons' spirit, a profession with built-in social justice ethics is necessarily concerned with environmental matters, too, and would have been if the profession had been founded today with the environmental knowledge we currently have (Ibid.). The practitioner practising *green guidance* should aid the counselee in finding *green* career paths, jobs, careers, that have positive environmental outputs (Ibid.).

However, an elaboration of the position of *green guidance* can be made here. If we only view our global challenges of climate and ecology as *environmental problems* or as matters of *green*, we might risk not understanding how our global challenges have emerged and how they can be solved. If we only pin environmental challenges to a specific segment of society, namely 'nature', we risk failing to grasp the intersectional nature of 'environmental problems' fully.

The concept that can be most helpful here is the one on everyone's lips. It was coined in UN policy in the 1960s, then moved to the centre of discussion in the 1980s with the UN Report, *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report. Since 2015 it has been a buzzword under the 2030 UN 17 goals: The concept of 'sustainability' (UNORG 2015/UNWCED 1987). Sustainability as a concept embraces the societal challenge and the solution as an intersectional one, where the needs of people, nature and economy have to be met at the same time (Elkington 1997). It is a concept that inspires global consciousness in all choices, even career choices.

If we look at the concept of sustainability and sustainable development as it was presented in 1987 by Gro Harlem Brundtland and the UN Commission gathered to investigate and address global environmental challenges, they define sustainable development as '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*' (UNWCED 1987). This definition has no mentioning of nature or ecology but frames people and people's needs as pivotal. It calls for an ethical awareness in our dealing with our own current needs that we do so in a manner that people of the future, people we have not yet met or will never meet, will have the same

opportunities for meeting their own needs, as we have today. The definition is a call for inter-generational solidarity and also a plea for ethical behaviour, that does not rely on direct experience or feelings connected to 'another person's pain', but a call for an ethics of duty, relying on reasoning and categorical imperatives (see Levinas 1991/1980, and Wood 2007).

What does all this have to do with young peoples' careers and career decision-making?

The concept of sustainability helps us to see our intersectional connectedness with nature, other people, society and the economy. It helps us to see that we are not isolated individuals with a free choice of either choosing or not choosing, a sustainable career. Our so-called free choices in light of sustainability are always firmly tied with responsibility and consequence concerning nature, society, community and the economy. Our free choices can, over time, limit our freedom, or as the definition of sustainability suggests, our 'free choosing' can potentially reduce the freedom and the quality of future generations' livelihoods.

### So how can we connect this understanding of sustainability to career guidance?

We suggest that career guidance practitioners enable career development for individuals striving towards a secure and meaningful livelihood without compromising future generations' access to a secure livelihood and a meaningful career path. We thereby propose a definition for a practice called *sustainable guidance* that builds on the definition of the Brundtland Report.

**Sustainable guidance is, therefore, *A career guidance practice that supports career development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.***

Looking at the UN17 goals, we see 17 target areas that are all connected are prerequisites of each other or are linked together in a domino-effect sequence. Career guidance as a profession and practice targets goals such as quality education, reducing inequality, ensuring gender equality, working for decent jobs and so forth. But looking at all the targets, we also see 17 challenges that young people today need to familiarise themselves with, also in terms of making individual career choices. The 17 goals or challenges could serve as beacons of personal career development, thereby supporting and guiding the specific career path. By choosing one or more of the 17 challenges to engage in, you can choose an

What changes could be introduced at your school to make it more sustainable? Ask the students for their ideas.

Which 3 values would you like to pass on to future generations?

education and career path that involves working to solve various sustainability challenges. Both in the present and the future, we need people to think about how they can train, choose an education path, and choose a job that addresses one of the 17 challenges represented in the UN Sustainability Goals. This is, of course, a central task for *sustainable career guidance*, where information, discussion and facilitated reflection on these global challenges are essential. This practice, therefore, can support individual decision-making in terms of a career path that addresses and impacts sustainable change.

Below, we have listed several examples of types of exercises that exemplify sustainable career guidance.

### Jobs for future

**Material:** cards, whiteboard, paper, pens

**Aim:** foster critical thinking and creativity; broaden horizons; draw attention to social responsibility and sustainability; show students that everyone can contribute to improving these issues.

#### Part one:

Before you start, you need to create cards with the names of the following professions: Aquaponic fish farmer, Organic voltaic engineer, Residence manager, SmartCube technician, Biofilm installer (you can find brief information about the professions below).

1. Divide the students into groups. Each group receives one card.
2. In groups, students discuss the following questions and prepare posters:
  - a) In your opinion, what is the job description? What does the person do?
  - b) Why is the profession needed? How can he/she help (people, the planet, animals...)?
  - c) What kind of knowledge, qualities or skills does the person need to practice the job properly?
3. Let the students present their ideas, group by group. The members of other groups can add their thoughts.
4. The teacher sticks the posters on the wall.
5. Finally, the teacher wraps-up this part and adds more information, if needed.

#### Part two

1. Let the students brainstorm 'what makes me angry' or 'what worries me' (e.g. food is wasted in the school canteen, people buy goods they do not need and send them back, children are involved in the production of some goods, we don't understand why we have to learn certain things.. etc.).
2. Ask the students to choose at least one of the problems and think of a profession that does not yet exist and could solve the problem.
3. Students can create a poster – information about the profession, including a job description and the skills needed.
4. With the students, you can discuss whether they see a link to social responsibility (Will the others also find this profession useful? How many people will benefit from this?) or let the students 'vote' for the most ... (helpful, funny, popular, innovative...) profession.

**Tip:** Part one and part two can be organised as two independent activities.

Part two can be organised in pairs, small groups or individually. You can link the brainstorming to a topic of your subject (e.g. arts, science, language...) or you can ask students to make a home reading before the brainstorming to provide them with some background information. The posters can be 'paper' or digital (you can use infographics or online boards, e.g. <https://www.canva.com/>, <https://padlet.com/dashboard> etc.)

#### ORGANIC VOLTAIC ENGINEER

To meet the needs of people living in the modern world, we need energy. However, the current method of generating electricity is unsustainable in the long run. We need to increase the efficiency of energy, using the forces and non-toxic resources of nature in a way that is healthful and renewable. Organic voltaic engineering focuses on creating this kind of energy, considers all forms of non-polluting, naturally-sourced energy, seeks the replacement of toxic elements of energy production, storage and use with non-toxic substitutes to existing infrastructure and works in collaboration with others around the globe to minimize the environmental impact.

#### RESIDENCE MANAGER

Because many homes are not affordable for younger families, they will choose to purchase a larger home to share with extended family or friends. Co-housing arrangements may also include the shared ownership of one or more vehicles. Co-habiting people share the mortgage and the use of the property, and the residence manager organises everything. He/she ensures that the group's bills are paid

on time, and the vehicles are running well. He/she is also there to help mediate and solve interpersonal problems.

### SMARTCUBE TECHNICIAN

90% of goods traded in today's world travels by sea. Several innovations have extended the options to track packages through 'smart' shipping containers—SmartCubes—that can be tracked by shippers and recipients. These systems are automated. However, moving millions of containers through a port still means that problems can arise. A SmartCube technician works with a tracking system to make sure that shipments arrive at the shipment point and the destination.

### BIOFILM INSTALLER

In 2030 technologies may exist that allow people to process sewage and waste at home. This is made possible through biofilms, substances formed when many living cells stick together to create a living surface. A biofilm installer has a significant role in building and retrofitting energy-efficient buildings. They might fit bathtubs with a film that feeds on mildew or install a 'living wall' in a bedroom that improves air quality. They also educate people about renovation options for their homes.

### AQUAPONIC FISH FARMER

Populations of wild fish are disappearing. New methods like aquaponics will step in to replace the fish we can no longer catch in the wild. Aquaponics combines fish farming with gardening, where plants grow over the water, covering its surface, while fish live below. The plants return oxygen to the water, and the fish produce waste that fertilizes the plants. Aquaponic fish farmers will be able to set up operations almost anywhere. This system is small-scale and needs fewer resources and space than traditional fish farming.

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Career coach and lecturer  
EKS, Czech Republic

She is interested in all levels of career counselling – from systemic and theoretical to practical work with clients. In recent years, she has dedicated herself to school counselling. At EKS, she organises coaching meetings with young people and conducts in-service training for career practitioners. At Charles University, she is working on her PhD thesis in school counselling. She rarely finds it easy to switch off – new information and experiences trigger a cascade of associations in her mind. She finds the ever-changing world fascinating and likes searching for unexpected connections and possible impacts on one's career. She also considers our relationship to the world important because she loves the world and believes that our approach to it affects its future shape.

### HANNAH BLAKE

Researcher at the International Centre  
for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)  
University of Derby, United Kingdom

She joined the iCeGS team in March 2020, and she has since been involved in numerous careers-based projects ranging from careers and special educational needs to effective engagement with businesses and schools.

She believes that the chapter 'Me and the Community' is particularly important and significant, as it demonstrates the key role that parents play in a young person's career choices. From personal experience, she is aware of how influential parents and their opinions can be in a child's career decisions and how this can ultimately decide a young person's life course.

### MARKÉTA CUDLÍNOVÁ

Career coach and lecturer  
EKS, Czech Republic

She is a qualified social worker whose interest in working with people brought her to EKS. For the last 10 years, she has been a lecturer in career counselling and personal development as well as career counsellor. She uses creative methods to increase children's and adults' career and life satisfaction. She is convinced that our relationship to ourselves affects both the quality of our relationships with other people and the way we see the world. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that when we take care of ourselves, it can positively influence the whole planet. When writing and editing this book, it was the creative process that she enjoyed the most and possibility to see how various ideas intertwine.

### LEWIS CLARK

Research Assistant at the International Centre  
for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)  
University of Derby, United Kingdom

He joined the iCeGS team in 2017. Since then, he has conducted careers-related research on national and international projects and engaged with a range of stakeholders including careers professionals, young people and parents/carers, among others. The chapter 'Me and the Community' is particularly important to him, as one of the first projects he worked on at iCeGS explored the relationship between young people and their parents/carers in the context of a career. Since then, he has continued to conduct research with this cohort to highlight the significant role that parents/carers can play in their child's career development.

### MIRIAM DIMSITS

Consultant in career guidance, Founder of Everything about Career, external lecturer at Aarhus University, The Danish School of Education, Denmark

Since 2007, she has worked professionally in career guidance as a practitioner, educator and researcher in the field. She works within her own company and at Aarhus University with practitioner training and development in the field of career guidance, supervision and teaching.

She feels a strong need to empower practitioners in the field of career counselling. Their job is to change the world. She is passionate about sustainability in counselling and guidance. She is also concerned with the ways practitioners engage clients in seizing the world and the lives they want to live through personal career decisions.

### ELISABETH GRAUNGAARD

Lecturer, facilitator and consultant in the field of career guidance and counselling  
Denmark

For 11 years, she has been teaching the diploma programme in educational and vocational guidance and practising as a career counsellor in lower secondary school. She regards critical reflection and questioning one's practice, beliefs and values to be a fundamental part of being a good career practitioner. Reflective practice has helped her to look at her counselling from new perspectives and to do things differently.

### JESPER SIGAARD HANSEN

Assistant professor in Career Guidance  
VIA University College, Denmark

At VIA University College, Jesper is involved in different research projects in the field of career counselling. He also teaches diploma programme in Career Guidance.

His key area of focus is reducing social injustice in the Danish education system through career counselling. This fundamental interest is reflected in the article 'A critical reflection and ethical responsibility in career counselling practice'.

### EVA KAVKOVÁ

Career coach and lecturer, founder of the EKS EKS, Czech Republic

She has been active in career counselling for more than 10 years, focusing mainly on mapping the hidden potential of disadvantaged target groups and empowering them. She is teaching courses for career practitioners as well as working directly with migrants or women on parental leave. She helps them restart their career, rise their self-esteem and discover the full range of their potential.

Having worked with various clients and in multiple environments for many years, she has learnt that it is essential to think about the overall aim of counselling services. Who is supposed to benefit from them, and what interests we pursue when counselling? Are we truly pursuing our clients' well-being, or strengthening the existing social and economic inequalities as a result of our efforts?

### NICKI MOORE

Senior Lecturer in Career Development at the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)  
University of Derby, United Kingdom

She has been in the field of career development for 24 years, first as a practitioner specialising in working with young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Now she works as a lecturer and researcher in the field.

She has a particular interest in the development of professional skills and how we evolve communities of individuals who support each other to develop their practice. She is continually inspired by the people around her. Her chapter on communities of practice was inspired by her daughter, who teaches her every day that becoming better at things requires us to listen and to share.

### SIOBHAN NEARY

Head of the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)  
University of Derby, United Kingdom

She has been working in the careers sector in the UK for over 30 years as a careers adviser, trainer and researcher. Her passion is for the professionalization of careers development practitioners through engagement in initial training and CPD. As such, the critical reflection and 'Me and the World' sections of this book resonate with her. As professionals working in a challenging field, careers development practitioners have to continually reflect and think about what they do and the impact they have; the influence they can bring to make things better for everyone also needs constant consideration.

### LENKA NĚMCOVÁ

Career coach and lecturer  
EKS, Czech Republic

She studied cultural and social anthropology and has been active in adult education for 8 years. At EKS, she is a career coach and a lecturer of professional and personal development. She likes gaining knowledge through work; many of her clients, both children and adults, also inspire her work.

She does not think our relationship with the world and those close to us should differ too much – a smile and understanding are needed everywhere. She, therefore, tries to be empathic and positive every day, not only when working. And since she sees changes as challenges, she approaches life and everything it brings with zeal.

### MIGUEL ÁNGEL NOGUEIRA PÉREZ

University lecturer  
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

For the past 15 years, he has worked as a university lecturer in the initial training of future educational and vocational guidance professionals and as a university researcher in educational and professional guidance. He is linked to the second part of the book 'Me and

the Community', specifically with the contribution 'Weaving Networks'. In this article, he utilised his experience in the field of guidance, information and communication. The article is also influenced by humanistic psychology, which stipulates among its principles that human existence develops and takes place in an interpersonal context where communication that implies the recognition of the other is valued.

### ELENA FERNÁNDEZ REY

Professor in Educative Guidance,  
Coordinator of the master's programme  
in Training Processes  
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

She works in the training of future teachers and pedagogues. She says 'Teaching was always my first professional choice. From the age of 6, when adults asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, my answer was a teacher'.

'Me and the Community' is the chapter closest to her heart because she agrees with the principle that counsellors are agents of change in the contexts in which they work. Therefore, relationships with people, groups, institutions and organisations are essential in their daily practice.

### CRISTINA CEINOS SANZ

University lecturer in Vocational Guidance  
and Educational Counselling  
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

She has been a member of a research group focused on diagnostic and educational and vocational guidance since 2005, with an active role in several national and international research projects and networks involved in ICT guidance, training for guidance practitioners and career guidance.

Her main connection with the booklet is in the second chapter, 'Me and the Community', to which she contributed as an author of the article 'Weaving Networks.' She believes that the existence of contacts and the establishment of multidisciplinary workgroups must be considered an essential contribution to people's full development.

### ANA COUCE SANTALLA

Counsellor at an educational centre and associate professor in the Faculty of Education Sciences University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Since 2003, she has combined work at the educational centre and University of Santiago de Compostela. Professional development in the field of orientation is enriched through these two areas. Given her training and professional experience, her greatest personal connection to the book is the section 'Me and the Community'. She understands that education professionals, and in particular, guidance professionals, have a commitment to the entire educational community, both in the training and personal development of students and in the guidance and support of other professionals and families.

### MARTINA ŠVARCOVÁ

Career coach and lecturer  
EKS, Czech Republic

She runs courses on competency mapping, communication skills, counselling interviews, and creative and art-therapy-related approaches to career counselling. She considers the career practitioners' relationship to themselves very important, maybe even the most crucial. The better we know ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, the more we are able to accept ourselves just the way we are and the better we can handle stress as well as accept everybody else and their 'weaknesses'. One can never stop working on oneself, and that is why we must learn to accept our mistakes and not to be afraid of making them. They are essential to our growth and development.

### KATERINA TSAMI

Psychologist at Sivitanidios school's Counselling Centre  
Sivitanidios School, Greece

She has been working with teenagers and young adults at Sivitanidios School since 2013. She is a psychologist and helps students to get to know themselves, to find out more about their interests and to manage their difficult emotions. 'Happiness starts with you, not with your relationships, not with your possessions or your occupation' – that is her motto and strong belief. A person cannot be happy and satisfied unless he/she lives life according to his/her values and core desires of the heart. The relationship we have with ourselves is fundamental for living meaningfully.

### PEGGY VASSILIOU

Manager of the Lifelong Learning Centre of Sivitanidios Public School of Trades and Vocations  
Sivitanidios Public School of Trades and Vocations in Athens, Greece

She works with young people as well as seniors. Her interest to help adults reconnect with the labour market and find ways to rebuild their strength and self-confidence has led her to career counselling. Based on her work experience, she relates to the 'Me and the World' chapter of this book. Refugees and immigrants are the fields she has chosen to bring to the fore because nowadays, our communities are constantly changing as people from all over the world are forced to migrate for various reasons. These groups of refugees or immigrants need to be absorbed in the social net of the host countries, and for the last five years the centre she works at has been working to this end.

## ORGANIZATIONS

**EKS** is an NGO providing career counselling, coaching and training. It has been working with children and adults for more than eighteen years, assisting them in finding the right career path. It runs training courses both in Czech and English, conducts international research, develops its own methodology and publishes numerous training books. EKS has received a total of five National Career Counselling Award as well as the Golden Star Award from the European Commission.

[www.ekskurzy.cz/en](http://www.ekskurzy.cz/en)

**The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)** is a research centre based at the University of Derby, UK. The Centre, which was established in 1998, has expertise in careers and career development and a strong interest in how education and the labour market can be better aligned. The Centre conducts research, provides consultancy to the career sector, offers a range of training programmes for career development practitioners, career leaders and doctoral-level study.

[www.derby.ac.uk/icegs](http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs), @icegs

**VIA University College** is one of Denmark's six university colleges. VIA develops programmes, courses and research focusing on professional practice in areas such as healthcare, teaching, social education, technology and career educations.

[www.via.dk](http://www.via.dk)

**The University of Santiago de Compostela** is a public institution of higher education established in 1495. It currently has more than 25000 students enrolled on its undergraduate, masters and doctoral programmes and has extensive involvement in developmental and technological innovation research. Over the last 20 years, the Faculty of Educational Sciences has developed five master's courses on vocational guidance with 200 postgraduates.

[www.usc.es](http://www.usc.es), [www.usc.gal/gl/centros/cc\\_educacion](http://www.usc.gal/gl/centros/cc_educacion)

**The Lifelong Learning Centre (Level 2) of Sivitanidios Public School of Trades and Vocations (KEDIVIM2 SDSTE)** was founded in 2014 by decision no. 2000098 of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). The LLC's objectives are further education and training, adult education, lifelong guidance and counselling services.

[www.sivitanidios.edu.gr/index.php/en](http://www.sivitanidios.edu.gr/index.php/en)

