

Future of Work • Future of Learning

3 - 4 November 2016



Institute for Adult Learning Symposium The
Future of Work – The Future of Learning
3rd November 2016

Transforming career development: narrative career counselling as a learning practice

Hazel Reid, Professor of Education & Career Management, Faculty of
Education, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

Organised by: **SKILLS**future SG



Overview

- What do we mean by career & career learning?
 - Career as 'project'
 - Living in a 'liquid world'
 - Psychosocial, transtheoretical & reflexivity
 - Biographicity and a fragmented story
 - Context, culture, constraints and opportunities
 - Can narrative career counselling help – how?
 - Adaptation for various circumstances
- And Hazel, what is your central argument?



A Definition

Collin & Young suggest:

In the abstract, as a concept, career can refer to the individual's movement through time and space. It can also focus on ***the intersection of individual biography and social structures*** ... [it can] refer to the patterns and sequences of occupations and positions occupied by people across their working lives.

(2000:3 – *my emphasis*)

Less predictable life paths

- Paradox of living in a capitalist world
- Post-modernity
- Late modernity
- Second modernity
- Liquid modernity
- Deregulation, funding cuts and calls for flexibility
- Archer and the 'reflexive imperative'



Psychosocial and transtheoretical

C Wright Mills:

Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles and to the problems of individual life.

(1970: 247/8)



We are all a project of becoming

- What do we see when we look at photos of ourselves as children? We can recognise the place or the new outfit, but there is a sense of separation – how is the child related to who we are now? We recall past events as fragments, but there is also a sense of continuity
- Career, selfhood and ‘selves’



Moving towards narrative

- Innovation
- Transitions and turning points
- Culture
- Biographicity
- More, not less education for reflexive practitioners



Beyond theory – how can narrative careers work strengthen the opportunities for biographical planning?

- Narrative conversations
- Articulating values and interest
- Finding motivation
- Saying it loud
- Hearing our own advice to self
- Pre-occupations
- Rehearsing the problem
- Identifying patterns and themes (we like patterns in nature and in science)
- Meaningful goals and action





Usefulness and truthfulness

Constructivist and biographical approaches, and in my example narrative career counselling, do pay attention to individual meaning-making and **can be adapted for cultural relevance**. Such approaches can foster agency within the constraints of what can be perceived as a perpetually changing ‘liquid’ world, in order to learn more about self and career – in context.

This requires ‘local’ adaptation.



The narrative career counselling model

A systematic approach – ‘fits’ with a 3 stage model, but the language and content differs.

Beginnings – negotiating a contract

- How can I be useful? (not ‘how can I help you?’)
- Tell me why is this important now?
- Explaining the format, number of meetings, note taking etc
- Confidentiality
- Agreeing the topic / agenda

Exploration: 'pre-occupations'

1. Role models when young - 'cool characters' – who did you look up to? Can be a cartoon or TV character, a 'star'. Often a teacher – but other than family (3)
2. Magazines / TV shows, current (other media)
3. Hobbies / free time interests
4. Books – all time favourites (Films)
5. Favourite saying or motto (t-shirt message)
6. (Favourite school subjects / and those disliked... - *not always asked*)



Exploration: 'rehearsing the problem'

Recollections from childhood – if it is helpful to go deeper

- The 1st story – what happened next
- Asking for two more stories
- *The client reflects on the meanings, begins the 'identification' by turning the stories into headlines for a newspaper*
- Listen for the first verb – the first things they say – note it down
- Identifying the themes/patterns and together -relating these to potential interests

Endings

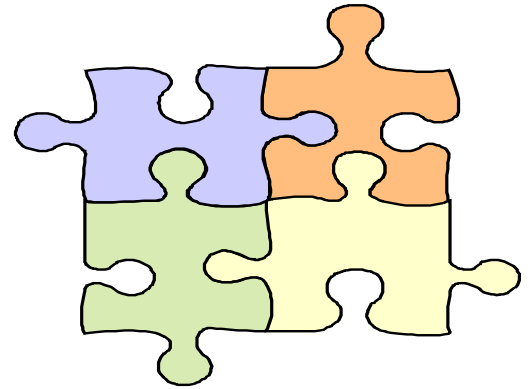
- What are the goals that follow – what action is required?
- So, what has been achieved today – “what is your advice to yourself?”



Follow up email

Following a period of reflection – putting it all together, including the reality check

- What did we get wrong?
- What are your current reflections?
- What are the goals – are these different now?
- What further action is required?
- How will that be reviewed?
- What else needs to happen?





Learning from the research

- ‘Vee’ age 17 – telling her ‘telling’ stories of the loss of her mother, self harm, but also of resilience and care for others.
- ‘Robert’ age 19 – low self-esteem and emotional upset- hopelessness in a troubled world, but confronted his ‘stuckness’, and has moved on in small steps.
- ‘Jay’ (25) first story “...it was a metaphor for where I am now, not in control and veering off in any direction and hoping for the best. The interview prompted me to do my own research and I talked to my girlfriend, thought about it now properly, away from my busy life ... around what was important to me, the recurring themes that came up. It was personal, related to me, not a check list”. He speaks of a hopeful future, a changed horizon, "I'm moving on."
- ‘Mark’ (40) “It was a thought provoking process.. I did a lot of thinking after the interview and weighed up the pros and cons around what is important for me in my whole life – it focussed my thinking. The interview helped me to not just tick the boxes, but to find which boxes were important. I feel I have made an informed decision and I have not been pushed into it. It kept coming back to the importance of family, community and how my current role fits with that. I enjoyed it, it’s not been as much guidance as I expected but I don't think that is particularly helpful.”
- ‘Angela’ (50) found revelation and a turning point in the headline of one of her stories “It summed up my core values, what is so important to me. I will make any job intense, so why go for a boring one!”
- ‘Susan’ (52) did not like the introspection and the need to chose, but saw the value and her advice to herself was “I need to listen to my own advice to myself – rather than do what others want and expect.”

Career learning and the future of work

In a career we try to move from a felt negative to a perceived plus

‘People convert symptom into strength through actively mastering what they passively suffer’ (Savickas, 2011:33).

Life as lived is subjective – narrative career counselling helps to connect the parts to the whole.





Thank
You



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