

# Career development learning and employability

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## **Learning and Employability Series 1 and 2**

The Learning and Employability series is primarily intended for staff in higher education institutions who are considering the enhancement of student employability. The publications will also be of interest to colleagues new to the area as well as those who are already engaged in developing employability and who wish to broaden their understanding of the topic.

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# I. Introduction

This Guide is designed to help higher education staff understand more clearly the relationship of career development learning to strategies designed to enhance the employability of students. Career development learning is concerned with helping students to acquire knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes which will equip them to manage their careers, i.e. their lifelong progression in learning and work.

The Guide is aimed particularly at:

- Staff who are responsible for curriculum design.
- Staff within teaching departments and careers services who are responsible for the delivery of curriculum components concerned with career development learning.

Themes covered include:

- The nature of employability strategies within higher education, and the place of career development within such strategies (Section 3).
- The nature of career development learning (Section 4).
- Ways in which career development learning can be implemented within higher education (Section 5).
- The roles of teaching departments and of careers services in implementing career development learning (Section 6).

## 2. Preview of key points

- The growing attention within higher education to enhancing students' employability responds to student motivations and to policy concerns. It can reinforce rather than threaten traditional academic values, but it may also require organisational change within higher education.
- Definitions of employability can focus on immediate employment, on immediate employability, or on sustainable employability. The third of these, in particular, requires attention to be paid to longer-term career development.
- Attention to career development in definitions of sustainable employability has not always been as strong as it might have been.
- The terminology used to describe career development learning in higher education has fluctuated, with career(s) education and career management skills as alternative formulations. A number of different conceptual models have also been developed, with the DOTS model being particularly influential.
- Career development learning can be viewed as addressing an aspect of employability, or a set of related meta-skills.
- Career development learning can be delivered through specific modules, through more general curriculum integration, or outside the curriculum. The modular approach has been growing.
- In a number of institutions, close links have been established between career development learning and the processes of personal development planning.
- The teaching and learning methods used in career development learning need to be personally engaging (and therefore active and interactive in nature); they also need to make the world of work real (and therefore include or draw from direct experiences of work).
- The assessment methods used need to reflect the learning goals of the programme.
- Careers services within universities can make a substantial contribution to career development learning.
- There are a number of different models for the respective roles of the careers service and of teaching departments in delivering career development learning. The nature of such models is likely to vary, depending in part on whether the course is vocational, semi-vocational or non-vocational in nature.

- The growth of career development learning has significant implications for the organisational location of careers services within institutions and for the competences required by their staff.

## 3. Sustainable employability

### 3.1 Benefits of the focus on employability

The attention within higher education to enhancing students' employability potentially serves a number of important purposes.

First, it responds to students' motivations for entering higher education. A survey of school students found that the most important personal reasons cited for going to university were, alongside 'to study a subject that really suits me', three vocationally-oriented reasons ('to have a professional career', 'to improve my job prospects', 'to gain entrance to a well-paid career'): each of these four reasons was rated by around four-fifths as extremely or very important (Connor *et al.*, 1999, p.12). Where student tuition fees are payable, such vocational motivations are likely to be strengthened.

Second, it responds to policy concerns, in two respects:

- An important part of the rationale for the large sums which the Government invests in higher education is the contribution which it makes to the development of the country's human capital (e.g. NCIHE, 1997, p.9; see Yorke, 2004, p.3). The more employable students are, the greater the economic yield is likely to be from this investment.
- Expanding higher education is also designed to serve social-equity goals by increasing access for disadvantaged groups. To achieve such goals, attention needs to be paid not only to ensuring the participation of these groups in higher education but also to enhancing their subsequent success in the labour market (Morey *et al.*, 2003).

Third, far from undermining wider academic values, it can be interpreted as reinforcing such values, in three respects:

- By emphasising generic competences rather than direct subject relevance, it can help to resist creeping vocationalism in terms of course content, and to legitimise the continuing value of traditional academic disciplines. Over two-thirds of graduate vacancies in the UK are for graduates in any subject (Graduate Prospects, 2005/6, p.17); employers tend to be much more concerned with generic 'graduate attributes' than with subject knowledge (Harvey *et al.*, 1997).
- Because the generic competences valued by employers are developed largely through active teaching and learning processes, a constructive alliance can be

forged between the employability agenda and pedagogic reform (Pedagogy for Employability Group, 2004).

- Because these generic competences can also be developed through active extra-curricular activities, the employability agenda can reaffirm the value of the wider student experience, including participation in student-organised activities.

At the same time, it may require organisational change within higher education (Knight & Yorke, 2004, pp.10-11). In particular, it may necessitate:

- Concern not just with good academic practices but with promoting the goals of employability through such practices.
- Making such goals transparent to teachers and students.
- Adding supplementary programmes where appropriate to ensure the achievement of these goals.

One of the key processes in achieving such change is auditing the curriculum to determine the extent to which the teaching and learning methods in use meet employability goals, and then reviewing how deficits can be addressed (Harvey, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2004).

### 3.2 Competing definitions of employability

Definitions of employability can be broadly divided into three groups.

The first are those which focus on *immediate employment*. Graduate first-employment statistics have for some time been used as a performance indicator in higher education (HEFCE, 2001). It has, however, been widely recognised that they have been a crude measure, in three respects:

- They have been based on data collected six months after graduation. This takes inadequate account of the length of time which many graduates take to manage their transition into a graduate-level job, whether because they have deferred job applications until after their final examinations, or because they choose to travel for a while or to undertake further studies, or because they take short-term jobs to clear some of their student debts before seeking more permanent employment.
- They have taken no account of the level of the jobs entered, and whether these jobs have made significant use of graduate competences.
- Students' success in gaining employment is determined not only by the effects of their higher education but also by their own pre-existing attributes and by the



state of the labour market and the ways in which it operates at local, national and international levels (Harvey, 2001).

Some modifications have recently been introduced in an attempt to address these limitations.<sup>1</sup>

The second are definitions which focus on *immediate employability*. These avoid the limitations of the 'immediate employment' definition. They are commonly defined in terms of students' possession of the attributes to obtain a 'graduate job'. They tend to include a strong focus on students' 'work readiness': in other words, their ability to cope with the demands of the workplace without requiring additional training to do so.<sup>2</sup> Their field of vision is accordingly somewhat restricted.

The third are definitions which focus on *sustainable employability*. These are concerned with the ability not only to secure a first job but also to remain employable throughout life. As Knight & Yorke (2004, p.46) put it, employability 'does not rest when the first graduate job is achieved' but needs 'to be constantly renewed to be sustainable'. Such definitions accordingly include not only the wider range of attributes required to be successful within jobs; they also include the attributes required to manage one's career development in ways that will sustain one's employability.

Early formulations of the second and third of these definitions focused strongly on skills, variously framed as 'personal transferable skills', 'key skills', 'core skills', 'generic skills' and 'employability skills'. This focus has more recently been widely criticised, chiefly on the grounds that 'skills' is too limited a concept to embrace what employability comprises (Bennett *et al.*, 2000; Holmes, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2003; 2004). An alternative formulation which has been more widely accepted has been the USEM model (Knight & Yorke, 2004), in which employability is viewed as being influenced by four broad and inter-related components:

- Understanding (viewed as being broader and deeper than 'knowledge').
- Skills (or, preferably, 'skilful practices', which includes the deployment of skills).
- Efficacy beliefs (including students' views of themselves and personal qualities).
- Metacognition (including students' self-awareness regarding, and capacity to reflect on, their learning).

<sup>1</sup> For example, the Higher Education Statistics Agency is now proposing to conduct a regular follow-up sample survey three and a half years after completion of their programmes (see HESA, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> This is a common but by no means universal demand from employers (Mason *et al.*, 2003). It is a frequently-mentioned rationale for the inclusion of work experience in higher education courses (see e.g. Yorke, 2004, p.9).

### 3.3 Sustainability and career development

The attention to career development in definitions of sustainable employability has not always been strong:

- Knight & Yorke (2004, p.25) include 'skilful career planning and interview technique' in their list of 'seven meanings of employability', but the specification of interview technique tends to restrict the focus, as does the accompanying note which suggests that its concern is with 'knowing the rules of the job-seeking game'.
- The definition of employability offered by Yorke (2004, p.7) – which focuses on the 'skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations' – can be read as assuming that graduates will remain within a single occupation, and as not attending to the competences required to manage progression within and possibly across occupations.

Similarly, much of the now-extensive literature on employability in higher education (e.g. the earlier documents in this series) pays little attention to the conceptual work on career development or to the work that has been done on career development learning (see Sections 4-6 below).

On the other hand:

- The policy-oriented analysis by Hillage & Pollard (1998, pp.12, 17) suggests that one of the four main elements of employability is 'deployment' – the extent to which individuals 'are aware of what they have got and how they choose to use it' – and defines this to comprise career management skills, job search skills, and 'the extent to which they are adaptable to labour market developments and realistic about labour market opportunities'.
- The Universities UK report *Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity* (Harvey *et al.*, 2002, p.17) states that employability development has three focuses: development of employability attributes; willingness to learn and reflect on learning; and development of self-promotional and career management skills.
- The code of practice issued by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2001a) states that higher education institutions should prepare students not only 'for a successful transition to employment' but also 'for effective management of their career thereafter'.

## 4. Career development learning

### 4.1 Terminology

The terminology used to describe career development learning in higher education has fluctuated.

For some time, the term used was *career(s) education*. This term came into common usage in UK schools in the early 1970s (Schools Council, 1972), and began to be applied within higher education later in the same decade (Watts, 1977). It has retained currency in schools but, partly perhaps for this reason, has lost some ground within higher education – though it is still widely used there (e.g. AGCAS, 2005; QAA, 2001a).<sup>3</sup>

In the 1990s, the term *career management skills* began to be used fairly extensively within higher education. It was used, for example, to describe a government-funded development programme covering eight institutions (Hustler *et al.*, 1998). The term ‘career management’ had previously been used in the 1980s to describe policies and practices used by large business organisations to develop the careers of middle and senior management (*ibid.*, p.4); increasingly, however, it has been used to describe ‘career self-management’ (King, 2004).

The term *career development learning* is of more recent origin (Watts, 1999; Patton & McMahon, 1999). The reason for its growing usage within higher education in the UK is linked to the growing reaction against the limitations of the language of ‘skills’ and of skill-based views of employability (see Section 3.2 above). In particular, it can encompass the notion of supplementing attention to career management skills with the use of career development theory as ‘a knowledge-based, intellectually rigorous frame’ (AGCAS, 2005, p.24) which can be used by students as a tool for self-understanding – ‘as researchers of their own lives’ (McCash, in press).

### 4.2 Definitions

*Career(s) education* was defined by Watts (1977), following Law & Watts (1977), as consisting of planned experiences designed to facilitate the development of:

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<sup>3</sup> McCash (in press) notes some important and paradoxical differences between career(s) education in schools and in higher education: in schools, it is statutory and based on learning outcomes imposed from without, but is informally assessed and not part of the mainstream curriculum; whereas in higher education it is non-statutory and based on learning outcomes developed from within, but is often formally assessed and a credit-rated part of the curriculum.

- Self awareness – in terms of interests, abilities, values, etc.
- Opportunity awareness – knowing what work opportunities exist and what their requirements are.
- Decision learning – decision-making skills.
- Transition learning – including job-search and self-presentation skills.

This formulation – widely described as the DOTS model – was also adopted by Hillage & Pollard (1998, p.17). A broadly similar model was used in the cognitive processing theory of career development developed in the USA by Peterson *et al.* (1991), though with more attention to the ‘processing’ of career development. Law (1996), too, has adapted the model by adding a process dimension to indicate the stages through which learning in these respects can be developed.

AGCAS (2005) reframes the DOTS learning goals somewhat, itemises a series of learning outcomes for each of them (see Box 1), and states that any theoretical model for careers education provision should ‘be congruent with, and encompass as a minimum all these four elements, if it is to enable students to implement fully informed and sound career plans’ (p.5). McCash (in press), on the other hand, argues that the persistent and hegemonic status of the DOTS model has impeded the adoption of more innovative theories and more creative frameworks. He acknowledges that the model can be stretched to meet some of its limitations, but contends that it would be better to start again from first principles.

### Box 1: Careers education learning outcomes (adapted from AGCAS, 2005)

#### Self awareness

- Identify knowledge, abilities and transferable skills developed by one’s degree
- Identify personal skills and how these can be deployed
- Identify one’s interests, values and personality in the context of vocational and life planning
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, and areas requiring further development
- Develop a self-reflective stance to academic work and other activities
- Synthesise one’s key strengths, goals and motivations into a rounded personal profile

**Opportunity awareness**

- Demonstrate knowledge of general trends in graduate employment and opportunities for graduates in one's discipline
- Demonstrate understanding of the requirements of graduate recruiters
- Demonstrate research-based knowledge of typical degree-related career options and options in which one is interested

**Decision making**

- Identify the key elements of career decision-making, in the context of life planning
- Relate self-awareness to knowledge of different opportunities
- Evaluate how personal priorities may impact upon future career options
- Devise a short/medium-term career development action plan
- Identify tactics for addressing the role of chance in career development
- Review changing plans and ideas on an ongoing basis

**Transition learning**

- Demonstrate understanding of effective opportunity-search strategies
- Apply understanding of recruitment/selection methods to applications
- Demonstrate ability to use relevant vacancy information, including ways of accessing unadvertised vacancies
- Identify challenges and obstacles to success in obtaining suitable opportunities, and strategies for addressing them
- Demonstrate capacity to vary self-presentation to meet requirements of specific opportunities
- Demonstrate ability to present oneself effectively in selection interviews and other selection processes
- Identify challenges and obstacles to adapting successfully to new environments, and strategies for addressing them

- Demonstrate awareness of attitudes crucial to the achievement of one's goals

*Note:* In the AGCAS (2005) document, these learning outcomes are set at two levels – 'threshold' and 'exemplary' – to mark low and high points in career development.

*Career self-management* focuses less on learning outcomes than on the behaviours that people can use to eliminate or resolve the thwarting conditions they would otherwise experience in their careers. It has been defined by King (2004) as comprising three groups of behaviours: positioning behaviours; influence behaviours; and boundary management (Box 2). This formulation is focused mainly on adults in mid-career.

### **Box 2: Career self-management behaviours (King, 2004)**

#### **Positioning behaviours (making sure one has the contacts, skills and experience to achieve one's desired career outcomes)**

- Strategic choice of mobility opportunity – initiation of job moves, or acceptance of proposed changes made by another party (e.g. one's employer)
- Strategic investment in human capital – investing in training or educational qualifications
- Active network development
- Job content innovation – development of substantive changes in methods or procedures used to perform job tasks and enlargement of one's effective task environment

#### **Influence behaviours (actively attempting to influence the decisions of key gatekeepers to desired career outcomes)**

- Self-promotion
- Ingratiation – making oneself more attractive to others
- Upward influence – increasing gatekeepers' understanding of one's desired outcomes and their sense of obligation to deliver them

### **Boundary management (balancing the demands of work and non-work domains)**

- Boundary maintenance – concerned with the location of the boundary between work and non-work roles
- Role transition – navigating the transition between work and non-work roles.

Many of the behaviours identified by King are in effect merged with elements of the DOTS model in the list of *career management skills* developed earlier by Hawkins & Winter (1997), who also refer to them as self-reliance and effective learning skills (Box 3). While conceptually eclectic and less parsimoniously elegant than the DOTS and King models, this list has been influential in the development of career development learning programmes within higher education.

### **Box 3: Career management/self-reliance/effective learning skills (Hawkins & Winter, 1997)**

#### **Self awareness**

- Able clearly to identify skills, values, interests and other personal attributes
- Able to pinpoint core strengths and ‘differentiating factors’
- Equipped with evidence of abilities (e.g. summary statement, record or ‘portfolio’)
- Actively willing to seek feedback from others, and able to give constructive feedback
- Able to identify areas for personal, academic and professional development

#### **Self-promotion**

- Able to define and promote own agenda
- Can identify ‘customer needs’ (academic/community/employer) and can promote own strengths in a convincing way, both written and orally, selling ‘benefits’ to the ‘customer’, not simply ‘features’

### **Exploring and creating opportunities**

- Able to identify, create, investigate and seize opportunities
- Has research skills to identify possible sources of information, help and support

### **Action planning**

- Able to plan a course of action which addresses: 'Where am I now?' 'Where do I want to be?' 'How do I get there?'
- Able to implement an action plan by: organising time effectively; identifying steps needed to reach the goal; preparing contingency plans
- Able to monitor and evaluate progress against specific objectives

### **Networking**

- Aware of the need to develop networks of contacts
- Able to define, develop and maintain a support network for advice and information
- Has good telephone skills

### **Matching and decision making**

- Understands personal priorities and constraints (internal and external), including need for a sustainable balance of work and home life
- Able to match opportunities to core skills, knowledge, values, interests etc.
- Able to make an informed decision based on the available opportunities

### **Negotiation**

- Able to negotiate the psychological contract from a position of powerlessness
- Able to reach 'win/win' agreements

### **Political awareness**

- Understands the hidden tensions and power struggles within organisations



- Aware of the location of power and influence within organisations

#### **Coping with uncertainty**

- Able to adapt goals in the light of changing circumstances
- Able to take myriads of tiny risks

#### **Development focus**

- Committed to lifelong learning
- Understands preferred method and style of learning
- Reflects on learning from experiences, good and bad
- Able to learn from the mistakes of others

#### **Transfer skills**

- Able to apply skills to new contexts

In some respects (e.g. the references to ‘customer needs’ rather than just ‘employer needs’, and to ‘creating’ as well as ‘exploring’ opportunities), the Hawkins & Winter list potentially incorporates options related to self-employment as well as employment. This focus could, however, be made more explicit and extended a great deal further (see Moreland, 2004). Programmes in education for entrepreneurship and enterprise are limited, and to be found in less than a third of higher education institutions (*ibid*, p.3); where they exist, they are often timetabled separately from career development learning. But the two areas are closely inter-related and can benefit from being combined (AGCAS, 2005, p.28).

### **4.3 Relevance to employability**

According to Watts & Hawthorn (1992, p.15), personal transferable skills and career management skills have some degree of overlap but are essentially different in focus:

- The focus of career management skills is upon competence in making and implementing the *decisions* that determine one’s career.

- The focus of personal transferable skills is on competence within the positions that one enters as a *result* of these decisions and transitions.

It has subsequently been suggested (Watts, 1997, p.43) that career management skills can be viewed in two ways:

- As a sub-set of employability skills.
- As a related set of meta-skills which enable individuals to develop and use the full range of their other skills.

The case for the latter view is strong. Meta-skills are linked to Butcher & Harvey's (1998, p.75) definition of meta-ability as 'an underlying, learned ability which plays an important role in allowing a wider range of ... knowledge and skills to be used effectively'. They are also linked to metacognition (see Section 3.2), which Yorke & Knight (2004, p.6) define as subsuming: elements of 'learning how to learn'; of reflection in, of and for practice; and of a capacity for self-regulation. Career development learning would seem to fit well into this definition, focusing as it does on self-management of progression in learning and work, based on reflection on past achievements and what can be learned from and built upon these achievements.

Career development learning is also relevant to what Bridges (1993, p.50) terms 'transferring skills': 'the meta-skills ... which enable one to select, adapt, adjust and apply one's other skills to different situations, across different social contexts and perhaps similarly across different cognitive domains'. Transfer of skills appears clearly to be enhanced by the use of varied learning contexts (see e.g. Wolf *et al.*, 1990): this makes it possible to practise the skills in the different settings, or at least to see their relevance to those settings. This is part of the rationale for the inclusion of work experience within higher education. Beyond this, however, transfer would seem likely to be enhanced by interventions concerned with helping students to explore possible future career directions, particularly if attention is paid to the relevance of the skills to those directions. At the very least, work of this kind would seem likely to increase students' motivation for work on employability, by enabling them to see its relevance and the benefits it may offer them (Watts & Hawthorn, 1992, p.15).

# 5. Implementing career development learning within higher education

## 5.1 Delivery strategies

In broad terms, three delivery strategies for promoting career development learning can be distinguished (Hustler *et al.*, 1998):

- Through specific modules.
- Through more general cross-curricular integration.
- Outside the curriculum.

There are three forms of modular approach:

- *Generic*, where the same module is designed to be available to students in any department or course.
- *Customised*, where a generic template is adapted to the needs of particular departments or courses.
- *Bespoke*, where modules are developed for specific purposes within particular departments or courses.

The generic strategy needs more limited development time and can be rooted directly in established notions of what career development learning comprises. The customised strategy tends to lead to more active involvement of academic staff; the bespoke strategy to more ownership by academic staff (see Section 6.2 below).

Modules on career development learning were well-established in the USA in the 1970s (Watts, 1977), and have continued to develop there (Folsom & Reardon, 2003). They developed later in the UK, but were given a significant boost in the late 1980s and 1990s by the Enterprise in Higher Education programme (Ball & Butcher, 1994; Watts & Hawthorn, 1992) and by a subsequent government-funded programme which focused specifically on career management skills (Hustler *et al.*, 1998).

In a survey by Pierce (2002), around a third of institutions reported that career management skills modules were available to students. In most cases, the take-up

was tiny compared to the total student population. In one institution, however, 25% of students took advantage of such modules, and in another (the University of Reading) it was compulsory for all students.<sup>4</sup>

Careers modules typically range from 5 credits (half-modules) to 20 credits, though some are larger (AGCAS, 2005, p.19). A number extend to 30 or even 60 credits, at which stage they effectively become a degree course pathway (McCash, in press). They are often located in the second year of degree programmes, though the first and final years are also used (AGCAS, 2005, p.19). In some cases, the credits count towards the 360 credits that comprise a first degree and so are taken into account in the degree classification; in others, they are viewed as 'optional extras' which are credit-rated and academically assessed, appear on the student's degree transcript, but do not count towards the 360 credits and degree classification (some universities have developed separate 'awards' or 'skills certificates' for such extra provision).

In addition to or in place of such modules, career development elements can be integrated within programmes by linking them to existing course components, so that the career development learning is 'caught' rather than 'taught' (Hustler *et al.*, 1998, pp.19-22). This may be done:

- On an *opportunistic* basis.
- On a *systematic* basis: for example, as part of a 'module template' providing greater transparency for the skills (including career management skills) embedded within each module.

In these cases, the involvement of academic staff is likely to be even stronger.

Finally, career development learning can be promoted through extra-curricular activities (*ibid*, pp.23-25). These include:

- *ICT-based activities* – e.g. computer-assisted career development learning programmes on CD-ROM, or the creation and enhancement of websites.
- Non-credit-bearing *special events* – e.g. careers fairs, one-off sessions on particular career management skills (e.g. self-presentation), or short residential courses.

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<sup>4</sup> The current policy at Reading is that all undergraduate programmes have to include the career management skills learning outcomes. The vast majority do this as a 5-credit module (usually in the second year) which counts towards final degree classification.

## 5.2 Links to personal development planning

In a number of institutions, close links have been established between career development learning and the processes of personal development planning (PDP). The introduction of such processes is part of the implementation of the Dearing Report's recommendation that institutions, over the medium term, should develop a Progress File designed to assist students to identify their achievements and to provide information about these achievements to others (NCIHE, 1997, p.141). Two means were envisaged:

- A transcript recording achievement (to follow a common format).
- A PDP process through which students could 'monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development'.

All institutions were to have implemented the PDP aspect of the Progress File by 2005/06 (QAA, 2001b) (though in Scotland, the deadline was deferred). A review by Ward *et al.* (2005) suggested that progress had been made, but that implementation was still variable and uneven.

PDP processes are relevant to, and overlap with, career development learning in at least three major respects:

- They help students to translate learning experiences into the language of employability and to support reflection and the development of self-knowledge.
- The skills of reflection, recording and action planning enhanced by PDP processes lie at the heart of career management skills.
- They develop a bank of evidence that students can 'mine' in presenting themselves effectively to future employers.

Conversely, career development learning helps to ensure that PDP processes are not limited to learning and to the present, but have a future orientation that incorporates work and career too. It thus 'acts as a crucial nexus between the undergraduate "present" and the "future" of life after graduation' (AGCAS, 2005, p.26).

## 5.3 Teaching and learning methods

The teaching and learning methods used in career development learning need to meet at least two major requirements:

- They need to be personally engaging, and therefore based on active involvement of students and use of interactive teaching and learning methods.

- They need to make the world of work ‘become “real”’ (AGCAS, 2005, p.10), and therefore include active involvement of employers and, where possible, direct experiences of work.

Certainly there is room for traditional instructional methods for some elements of the programme, including teaching the academic elements of career development theory. But such methods are unlikely to be sufficient.

Personally engaging teaching and learning methods mentioned by AGCAS (2005, pp.8, 10) and by the Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004, p.13) include:

- Facilitative teaching styles that encourage and model an open and honest exploration of the career planning process.
- Using short ‘buzz-group’ discussions within lecture-group sessions.
- Self-audits (e.g. of personal and career management skills).
- Role-play (e.g. recruitment personnel, mock interviews).
- Peer review (e.g. of CVs or of assignments).
- Card-sort exercises (e.g. devising a sequence of decision-making activities).
- ‘Snowballing’ activities which begin with pair-based work, progressively combining to produce a larger-group response to the challenge set.
- Problem-based methods.
- Supplementing lectures with on-line peer discussion groups or tutor-managed discussion forums.
- Self-directed learning.

In addition, there is potential for active involvement of students in the design and delivery of programmes. This can include (Hustler *et al.*, 1998, pp.31-34):

- Systematic consultation of students, through surveys or focus-group discussions, in designing programmes.
- Using immediate student feedback in reviewing programmes.
- Contacting former career management module students after graduation to provide longer-term feedback.

- Involving such graduates in the delivery of modules to current students.

Such forms of participation can mean that students feel they have ‘more of a say’ than in other areas of their higher education studies. This can result in an increased sense of ownership over their personal learning in the career development area.

Similarly, the need for realism in relation to the world of work provides a compelling rationale for the active involvement of employers in the design and delivery of programmes. This can include (*ibid*, pp.27-31):

- Involvement in planning and development – e.g. contributing to the definition of career management skills, to the production of course materials (including on-line materials), to staff-development programmes, and to course design.
- Making direct contributions to programme delivery – e.g. providing or making inputs to workshops, lectures and seminars, and acting as hosts for project work and placements.

Particularly strong areas for such involvement include activities related to recruitment and selection (e.g. interview simulations; application/CV analysis) and team-building and problem-solving tasks. The involvement of employers can add significantly to the relevance and realism of these activities, and their credibility to students.<sup>5</sup> Employers’ motivations for involvement include:

- Conveying a positive image of their company or organisation.
- Access to prospective applicants.
- Company policies encouraging community involvement.

There is however a tendency for employer contributions to come mainly from large rather than small or medium-sized organisations, and for such employers to be more prepared to involve themselves with vocationally-oriented courses and/or in higher-status institutions.

Opportunities for direct experiences of work can contribute strongly to career development learning. The Dearing Report recommended that all institutions should ‘identify opportunities to increase the extent to which programmes help students to become familiar with work, and help them to reflect on such experience’ (NCIHE, 1997, p.136). Three main categories of such work experience can be distinguished (Harvey *et al.*, 1998; Little *et al.*, 2002; Little & ESECT colleagues, 2004):

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<sup>5</sup> For a useful collection of resources developed and used by a range of companies, which may be helpful in this respect, see [www.geog.leeds.ac/courses/other/casestudies](http://www.geog.leeds.ac/courses/other/casestudies).

- Organised work experience as part of a programme of study. This may include long placements on sandwich courses, short placements on other courses, and clinical or practice programmes on some professional degrees. It ranges from doing an actual job, through shadowing a worker in a job, to carrying out a work-based learning project. Some may be paid; some may not. It may also include credit for year-long placements unconnected to a specific programme; for part-time, term-time or vacation work; or for voluntary (unpaid) work.
- Organised work experience external to a programme of study. This includes national programmes: for example, STEP, which arranges project-based placements in small companies and not-for-profit organisations; and CRAC's InsightPlus, which recognises and accredits skills developed through part-time employment, voluntary work or student activities. It also includes more local schemes of these kinds.
- Ad hoc work experience external to a programme of study. This includes part-time jobs that students set up for themselves, for earning rather than learning purposes. In addition to the vacation work that most students have traditionally undertaken, around 60% of full-time students now work during term-time, and do so for an average of 10-14 hours per week (Harvey *et al.*, 2002, p.35).

To these can be added work simulations within higher-education settings, in the form of either simulated environments (e.g. print studio) or simulated techniques (e.g. business game).

Career development learning can use all of these experiences as resources for learning. In particular, it can:

- Help students to prepare for such experiences in ways which harness their career development learning potential.
- Help students to reflect on the career development learning they can draw from such experiences, both during and after the experiences (see Moon, 1999; 2004).
- Help students to develop evidence of work-related experience and possibly proficiency that can be used in future job applications.

## 5.4 Assessment and evaluation

The assessment methods used for career development learning need to reflect the learning goals of the programmes. Methods can include (Hustler *et al.*, 1998, pp.49-53):



- Reflective essays or reports.
- Learning logs and portfolios, including action plans.
- Group or individual projects.
- Group or individual presentations.
- Direct assessment of CVs, applications and interviews.
- Written examinations.

Where the focus is upon personal information, attention is focused not on the content but on the quality of analysis and articulation (AGCAS, 2005, p.11). Some assessments may be for formative purposes only; some may use simple pass/fail classifications; some may use grades or degree classifications.

Evaluations of the effectiveness of career development learning programmes in the UK are still very limited. A review in the USA of 40 evaluation studies of career planning courses within higher education institutions (Folsom & Reardon, 2003) found that:

- In relation to *outputs* (e.g. career thoughts, career decision-making skills, career decidedness, vocational identity), 88% of the studies reported positive gains, and 12% reported no changes.
- In relation to *outcomes* (e.g. persistence in college, satisfaction with field of study, job satisfaction), 9 of the 11 studies measuring such outcomes reported positive gains, and two reported no changes.

The Centre for Career Management Skills at the University of Reading, which makes learning outcomes related to career management skills compulsory for all the university's students (see Section 5.1 above), is currently conducting a research programme that is examining:

- Subjective outcomes (e.g. self-efficacy, perceived control, adjustment, life satisfaction) before, during and after the transition into employment.
- Impact on vocational preferences.
- Objective outcomes two years after graduation (e.g. entry to graduate-level employment, earnings).

## 6. How careers services can help

### 6.1 The changing role of careers services

Yorke & Knight (2004, p.14) suggest that 'in many cases a preferred way of enhancing an institution's contribution to student employability is to strengthen the careers service, although the impact will be muted if the service lacks a curriculum presence'. Similarly, Harvey *et al.* (2002, p.6) comment on the growing recognition by institutions of the need to develop a longer-term integrating strategy for employability that includes closer links between central services and programme-based initiatives.

Careers services within higher education institutions vary considerably in their size, in the roles they carry out, and in their organisational location within the institution. Their traditional core role has been to help students to manage the choices and transitions they need to make on exit from their courses of study. The services' core activities have traditionally comprised (see e.g. UGC, 1964; Watts, 1997):

- Individual and group guidance.
- Information services.
- Employer liaison and placement services.

A criticism of such services has been that they tended to have more to offer to students who already knew how to help themselves, and that, in those groups of students that appeared to be in most need of the service, significantly lower proportions were likely to have used it. The latter included those who achieved poor degrees, mature students, students from lower socio-economic groups, and arts students (Rowley & Purcell, 2001, pp.420, 429). There has accordingly been growing pressure on careers services to target their services at such groups (Harris Committee, 2001, pp.26-27). Overt targeting can however be problematic (Morey *et al.*, 2003, pp.27-33). An alternative strategy is to adopt new approaches to service provision to all students.

Certainly the nature of careers services' core work has changed dramatically. In many institutions, individual and group guidance is now increasingly based on short interventions and group activities rather than long guidance interviews. Growing use is made of ICT, including the strategic use of websites and e-guidance to extend access to services (Offer *et al.*, 2001; Offer, 2003; Madahar & Offer, 2004). Greater attention has been paid to quality assurance of services, including accreditation against the Matrix quality standards (Maguire, 2005).

In addition, around the traditional core activities, many services have developed a range of other activities, some of which have the potential for radically changing the nature and structure of the service. A review of strategic directions for higher education careers services (Watts, 1997) identified a number of options, four of which were based on stronger embedding within the institution:

- The *integrated guidance* model, in which the careers service becomes an integral part of a continuous guidance process available to students pre-entry, on entry, and throughout the student's course, as well as on exit from it.
- The *integrated placement* model, in which the careers service's concern for placement on graduation becomes part of an integrated placement operation which also includes course-related placements, and placements into part-time and vacation jobs.
- The *curriculum* model, in which the careers service becomes part of the teaching delivery vehicle for, or of a consultancy service designed to support academic departments in, incorporating into course provision the development of employability and career management skills.
- The *learning organisation* model, in which the careers service becomes part of a service designed to foster the career development of all members of staff, including contract researchers and other staff, as well as students.

Each has significant structural and resourcing implications. The contention is that these models are not incompatible with one another, but that there are some tensions between them which mean that, beyond a certain level of provision, they may require some degree of structural separation (*ibid*, p.44).

Of these four models, the curriculum model is particularly relevant to the concerns of this paper. It was implicitly given primacy by the Harris Committee (2001), which redefined the prime function of higher education careers services as being 'to help the institution produce better-informed students who are self-reliant, able to plan and manage their own learning and have sound career management skills' (p.15). It added that careers services 'have key roles in delivering, or helping tutors to deliver, aspects of the curriculum, for example relating to the development of students' career management skills, arranging work experience and encouraging students to reflect on that experience' (p.30).

A follow-up to the Harris Committee's report found that a quarter of institutions argued that 'partnerships with academic departments in contributing to and embedding CMS [career management skills] development' should now be viewed as 'core' rather than 'additional' activities (Universities UK, 2002, p.33). A later survey by Maguire (2005, p.41) found that no less than 90% of services reported that they had partnerships with academic departments in contributing to career

management skills development, and 76% in embedding career management skills in the curriculum.

The growth of personal development planning (see Section 5.2 above) has also strengthened the curriculum role of careers services in a number of institutions. The Harris Committee (2001, p.30) stated that 'individual academic departments must have lead responsibility in helping students to compile their Progress Files, but Careers Services have an important role to play in ensuring that the Progress File is viewed not as an end in itself, but as a tool to aid successful planning and progression'. In practice, Little & ESECT colleagues (2005, p.13) report that 'in many higher education institutions, PDP and career development are viewed as an integrated process rather than separate activities, with careers services (or Centres for Career Development, as some are now titled) taking the lead role in delivery'.

The organisational location of careers services remains an important issue. They can be aligned with other student services, with academic services, or with marketing services; or organised on a stand-alone basis (Watts, 1997, pp.26-27). The survey by Maguire (2005, pp.28-29) indicated that in 53% of institutions the careers service was located in student services, and only in 14% under teaching and learning. Some institutions, however, had adopted some degree of hybridisation which attached careers services to teaching and learning structures even though they were located elsewhere within the institutional structure.

If, in the longer term, career development learning becomes widely embedded within higher education as part of a 'core curriculum', this could have considerable implications for the structural position of careers services within institutions. Possibilities mentioned by Hustler *et al.* (1998, p.47) include:

- Providing curriculum consultancy and support within the traditional careers-service model, alongside its traditional functions.
- Restructuring the careers service as an academic service rather than a student service.
- The careers service becoming, or existing alongside, a teaching unit focusing on career management as an academic discipline in which research can be conducted.

## 6.2 Models of partnership with teaching departments

Attitudes within teaching departments to the need for career development learning, and to whose responsibility it is to provide such learning, tend to vary, depending on the nature of the course (see Watts & Hawthorn, 1992, p.20):

- Within *vocational* courses, which are linked to a specific occupation, and are regarded as essential for entry to, and as providing preparatory training for, that occupation (e.g. medicine, architecture), the department is likely to view career development related to that occupation as being its own primary responsibility (though is unlikely to pay any attention to career development outside it).
- Within *semi-vocational* courses, which lead to a wide range of occupations, but with the expectation that they will be regarded as essential or desirable for entry to many of those fields (e.g. chemistry, psychology), the department is likely to view responsibility for career development learning as being shared with the careers service.
- Within *non-vocational* courses, from which it is common for students to enter a wide range of occupations, to most of which the subject content of their course is not directly relevant (e.g. history, philosophy), the department is likely to view career development learning as being primarily the responsibility of the careers service.

There are a number of different models for the respective roles of the careers service and teaching departments in delivering career development learning. These include (Hustler *et al.*, 1998, p.41):

- *Specialist*: delivered solely by careers advisers.
- *Consultancy*: careers advisers lend support and expertise to work undertaken by departments, including involvement in planning groups, materials development and informal staff development.
- *Parallel delivery*: academic staff and careers advisers have separate slots in a departmentally-based programme, usually initiated and owned by the department.
- *Integrated*: academic staff and careers advisers work as a joint course team.

Such models have considerable implications for the staffing of careers services, and for the competences required by their staff. In addition to their traditional advisory, information and brokerage roles, they may now be expected to play roles as teachers and as academic leaders (*ibid*, pp.39-40). This requires:

- Greater pedagogic knowledge and skills than they have usually had in the past.
- A stronger grounding in career development theory, not only as a theoretical basis for their own professional practice but also as a body of knowledge for them to teach to students as part of the students' career development learning (McCash, in press).

- 'Academic empathy', in order to work effectively with the distinctive contexts and cultures of different teaching departments and disciplines (Hustler *et al.*, 1998, p.56).

A number of institutions have already taken steps to respond to these changed requirements.

## 7. Conclusion

Career development learning offers an additional dimension to institutional strategies designed to foster the employability of students. It makes the value of such strategies transparent to students; it also strengthens the sustainability of their benefits.

Career development learning has not always been as strongly represented in employability strategies as it should have been. The last few years, however, have seen a rapid growth of career development learning programmes within higher education institutions. In most cases, they currently cover only a minority of students; in a few, they have been extended to larger numbers or even made obligatory.

If career development learning programmes are to continue to grow and develop, the nature of careers services within higher education and their relationships with teaching departments need to be further reframed. The intellectual foundations of career development learning also need to be strengthened. It is hoped that this paper will support and contribute to these developments.

## Biography

Professor Tony Watts is a Founding Fellow of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, and a Visiting Professor at the University of Derby and Canterbury Christ Church University. He was formerly Director of NICEC from 1975 to 2001, and worked at OECD in 2001/2.

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