City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

Glover-Chambers, T., Dean, B. A., Eady, M. J., West, C., Ryan, S., & Yanamandram, V. (2024). Academics' practices and perceptions of career development learning in the curriculum. Higher Education Research & Development, 1-16.

These authors were interested to find out how academics teach career development within the curriculum. These academics were all supposed to include some elements of career development within their lectures, and the academics generally seemed aware that addressing career development was important for their students, and agreed that the curriculum was the right place for it. But the authors felt that the academics generally addressed career development quite superficially, and in an ad hoc way – talking about careers when it occurred to them, and in the way that felt right in the moment rather than following any kind of considered framework. The academics also often spoke about including career development learning implicitly rather than explicitly in the classroom. The most common specific approach they used was to talk about their own career experiences – sharing their own career stories with the students. The authors concluded that career development learning should be included in the curriculum in a more structured and explicit way, to make sure that all students get the input they needed. This research was conducted in Australia, and the authors focused on one single institution, so we should be cautious about how we generalise the findings, but it does illustrate what can happen when career professionals are not involved in planning the employability aspect of any academic curriculum.

Casey, C., Mountford-Zimdars, A., & Hancock, S. (2024). Player, Purist, Pragmatist: a comparison of employability strategies in access to the solicitors' profession via alternative degree pathways. Studies in Higher Education, 1-12.

We know that law is a fiercely competitive field and that students with privileged backgrounds and those from elite institutions are more likely to secure successful legal careers for themselves. The authors here give us the somewhat stark figure that in a single year in the UK we have more than 20,000 students graduating with a degree in law, competing for just over 6000 legal training contracts. This paper compares the employability strategies of students studying a degree in law with those undertaking a graduate apprenticeship in law. On the back of interviews with 23 aspiring lawyers the authors identified three different approaches that students typically took. ***Players*** tended to be at elite universities and looked on the whole idea of graduate employability as a game – describing a set of rules, and accepting that you need to jump through particular hoops in order to get the prize. The ***purists*** saw the idea of graduate recruitment as a technical puzzle, believing that you have to find the right fit -and gain the right skills and experience that are needed to meet your goals. These were most often degree students at non-elite universities. The ***pragmatists*** were more likely to be on the apprenticeship programmes, and their view was that you should be flexible about your goals and always be on the lookout for opportunities that might come your way – even those that you might not be looking for. I wonder what those of us supporting law students should make of this?

Cohen, H., Baruch, O. K., & Katz, H. (2024). Career Metaphors and Significant Childhood Experiences in Social Entrepreneurs' Career Choice. The Journal of Entrepreneurship, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/09713557241255409

A psychodynamic approach to career choice holds that people choose a career that will meet their deep-rooted psychological needs, often one that links to difficult childhood experiences. Here the authors delved deep with their analysis of metaphors, using psychoanalytic theories to work out how entrepreneurs' metaphors for career, alongside their childhood experiences, relate to their career choice. Metaphors can be a great tool for helping people to understand, making sense of and communicate ideas or feelings that might be quite well hidden in their psyche and in this study, the authors conducted a whopping 138 interviews with social entrepreneurs, asking them to identify a metaphor they might use to describe a social entrepreneur, and to discuss any difficult childhood experiences. They identified five common metaphors the participants used: justice fighter, caregiver, creator, leader and martyr, and found that these metaphors were often linked to specific childhood negative experiences. They describe what they call a 'compensation process' that seemed to underlie their career choice. For example, the participants who described their jobs in terms of leadership were often those who experienced loneliness as a child; those who had experienced helplessness as children were more likely to describe their current roles as caregivers. The authors describe the idea of career choice being part of healing. Delving this deep might be a bit beyond what most of us can manage in a quick query, but does show the potential contribution that metaphors can have within our work.

Bazine, N., Stevenson, L., & Freour, L. (2024). Protean Career Orientation and Career Success: On the Roles of Proactive Career Process During the School-To-Work Transition. Journal of Career Assessment.

This one is specifically about the transition from school to work, but could have some parallels with our students. The authors conducted a rigorous study focusing on what makes a successful school to work transition, trying to work out the relationships between certain characteristics that predict a thriving start to a career. They have come up with a process model that all starts with a protean orientation to careers – an approach that is values-driven and self-directed. This attitude then encourages people to come up with good career plans, and these plans lead people to start to network and this networking then leads to success career transitions. The values-driven and self-directed protean orientation seems to engender a proactive approach to career planning, which reaps rewards when it comes to finding, securing and succeeding in good jobs. This model could be quite interesting to think about when we are planning our career education sessions, suggesting that perhaps a clear focus on increasing our students' protean attitude (ie focusing on identifying values and increasing agency) might be an effective use of time.