Developing Professional Identity: An international imperative for the professionalization of the career guidance sector

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Overview

- Defining professional identity
- Establishing careers support
- Professionalisation and professional identity
- Professional identity — research in the careers sector
- Moving forward

Working definition

"Professional identity is the concept which describes how we perceive ourselves within our occupational context and how we communicate this to others"

Neary, 2014

Establishing careers support

- The development of careers support is not the same in all countries
- Academic disciplines and professional practice differ
  - Psychology, pedagogy, curriculum
- Contexts
  - Public Employment Services, Higher Education, Guidance Counsellors in school, adults
- Qualification levels and requirements
  - Professional qualification, in service training, CPD

Professionalising the careers sector

Professionalisation – Process by which occupational groups seek to control the market and standardise qualifications and thereby achieve social mobility (Larson, 1977)

Professionalising– A group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards, are accepted by the public, possess specialist knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and skills in the interest of others (Crawford and Parry, 2010)

Professional identity– England (Neary, 2014)

- Fragmentation of careers– diversified for client groups
- Context i.e. young people, HE, adults
- Policy implications
- Professional identity is evolving and can be fragile

Professional identity– England (Gough, 2017)

- Motivation to work ethically and authentically
- Belief in importance of high level qualifications
- Expertise — ie careers information and labour market
- Certainty of Career guidance is a profession
- Shared values — supporting people with career choices that benefit society

Professional identity– International perspectives (Gough & Neary, 2021)

- The regulatory bargain — Government gives the profession legal authority to control the profession ie training, entry and standards of practice
- Career development support is provided in different contexts, formally and informally, qualified and non-qualified
- Professional identity can be strengthened by policy alignment (Scotland), legal requirements (Finland, Iceland), training (Ireland)

Professional identity– International perspectives (Brown and Bimrose, 2019)– Five Themes

- Importance of learning from others– sharing learning, peer learning effective and empowering
- Communities of interest– exchange ideas, Professional associations, LinkedIn
- Professional identity is not static — impacted by policy and practice
- Isolation — spatial, context, lone workers
- Organisational change– changes in structures roles

Professional identity– International perspectives (Brown and Bimrose, 2019)

- Work identities are produced through personal agency, interaction with others, existing norms and discourse– they are dynamic and iterative (2019:766)
- Professional identity develops through
  - Skill development — structures and contexts
  - Careers — own narrative
  - Sense making

Key components of professionalisation

- Initial training, standards and quality assurance
- Continual professional development
- Professional associations
- Shared values and ethics
- Research and developing the evidence base
- Professional identity building

Professional identity is an ongoing shared dialogue. Collectively we need to take responsibility to ensure our professional status is acknowledged.

Thank You

Selected references

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