

International Conference, University of Padua, Italy

Conference Title: Decent work, equity and social inclusion: Research and practice

Dates: 5 – 7 October, 2017

Title of Proposed Symposium: Integrating ICT into career counselling practice: inclusive or divisive?

Corresponding author: Professor Jenny Bimrose
University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research, Coventry, CV4 7AL
England
Email address: jenny.bimrose@warwick.ac.uk
Phone Number: +44 (0) 24 7652 4231

Keywords: technology; career practice; challenges; opportunities

Abstract: (350 words)

The expanded influence of ICT has been a key recent development and looks set to dominate social, economic and political change for the foreseeable future. Billions of people are connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge, the possibilities are huge. Modern careers and employment service delivery has become fundamentally IT-dependent, with profound changes evident to, for example, the methods of recruitment and job search.

However, while 250 million Europeans use the internet daily, 18% have never used it at all. Recent European Union trends (The Digital Economy and Society Index [DESI], 2016) show country variations regarding (i) connectivity; (ii) human capital; (iii) use of internet; (iv) integration of digital technologies; and (v) digital public services. For example, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands have the most advanced digital economies in the EU followed by Luxembourg, Belgium, the UK and Ireland. Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy have the lowest scores in the DESI. In 2016, all Member States improved on the DESI. Slovakia and Slovenia progressed most (more than 0.04 as opposed to an EU average of 0.028). On the other hand, there was low increase in Portugal, Latvia and Germany: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi#the-digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>. These data provide a powerful indication of the digital divide that exists amongst countries and perpetuates social inequalities.

Reflecting these global trends in ICT development, there have been radical changes in the delivery of career and counselling services. Careers delivery services and their relationship with clients, customers and/or consumers are becoming increasingly more dynamic and complex with a high demand for online customised products and services catering to the precise needs of individuals, within a time-compressed environment. Yet ensuring an iterative

relationship between the all-important client perspective and the sector's workforce development needs remains critical. What the client wants, and how they want services, must be pivotal in framing provision, with the digital divide a crucial consideration.

This symposium will explore the impact of ICT on different aspects of career guidance and counselling practice, together with some challenges and emerging opportunities, from the perspective of social justice.

Order and titles for presenters

**1) Raimo Vuorinen, University of Jyväskylä:
Integrative role of ICT in the LLG systems and policy development.**

Ensuring that career guidance and counselling systems reach all those who require support is a major challenge. Providing open access to the whole range of services offered in each country is critical for social inclusion. This presentation will provide an overview of the strategies and policy options in use for emerging technologies within the existing delivery structures for career guidance services. For example, how to use ICT in enhancing synergies between different service providers in the design and implementation of coherent career services. Within this wider context, ICT relates to the products, infrastructure, and electronic content that enhance policy and systems development for career services, career resources, and tools. It refers to how interactive services, resources, and tools are designed and developed for citizens, how citizens use these, and how such usage, in turn, reshapes their design. It also refers to the digital competency required to use ICT in a career developmental context. This kind of strategic use of ICT in career development aims to systematise the use of technology and improve service efficiency. The concluding discussions will focus on the specifics what has made the technology helpful and effective, together with the challenges different countries have faced.

**2) Jaana Kettunen, University of Jyväskylä:
Competency for social media in career services**

Social media is fast becoming as much a necessity as an opportunity in career services. There is no denying the fact that it is fundamentally influencing the way career services are delivered. Recent research stresses the ability of career practitioners to take advantage, to be innovative, and to fashion novel career service delivery formats with online technologies. It is essential that career professionals have the competence and confidence in existing and emerging technologies in order to consider their usefulness and potential for clients. Moreover, this is not only the case for those clients who come through the door, but for all citizens who need career services, especially those who are disadvantaged. Indeed, it is very likely that practitioners need to be trained differently in this area than for the traditional face-to-face service mode.

Due to the relatively recent use of social media in career services, little attention has been devoted to competencies required for effective use of social media technology. Thus, the purpose of this presentation is to deepen our understanding of career practitioners' conceptions regarding the competencies needed in social media. Such a description may contribute to expanding the understanding of aspects that are seen as critical in the successful use of new technologies in career services. It is important to see this body of knowledge not only from the perspective of researcher but also as a potentially transforming approach to the work of career practitioners.

This presentation presents an empirically derived conceptual framework for understanding career practitioners' conceptions of social media and competency for social media. The framework can serve as a pedagogical tool for trainers by enabling them to ground and convert these new competences into the future practice and continuous professional development. The framework has already been successfully applied to curriculum development in the international summer course for ICT in guidance and counselling, and it offers a basis for further development of the wider training curriculum. Practical examples and strategies for developing the necessary skills and competencies for social media are presented.

**3) Alan Brown & Rachel Mulvey, University of Warwick:
Online learning for professionals: developing communities of practice**

Professionals delivering career and counselling services to their users are operating under increased pressure, because of the volatility of labour markets across the world that have resulted in rising levels of unemployment and decreasing resources resulting from austerity measures introduced into the policies of many countries. The use of on-line learning programmes to support the continuing professional development and identity transformation of staff in public employment agencies will be explored, harnessing user engagement as the key driver. A key emphasis will be on the ways in which the social justice agenda can be integrated into online learning and the extent to which professionals problematize this issue in their learning and work. Specifically, the presentation will focus on selected findings from a European Framework Project, which is supporting 'identity transformation for staff working in European Public Employment Services.' One strand of development has involved the use of a MOOC (on-line learning programme) to support the continuing professional development and identity transformation of staff in public employment agencies, using user engagement as the key driver. The MOOC on the 'changing world of work' ran for six weeks in March – May 2018 and involved over 360 learners from across Europe (plus a few learners from further afield). Textual analysis of shared posts and comments will show how individual meanings are made through a shared online

global community from across the EU and well beyond, with thoughtful reflections on the need for professionals to integrate and/or expand a social justice agenda in their work.

**4) Jenny Bimrose, University of Warwick:
Integrating LMI and ICT to support practice sensitive to social justice.**

There has been a consistency in recent policy pointing to the importance of high quality careers guidance, with labour market information (LMI) at its centre, both for young people and for adults. Alongside LMI, an increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is also highlighted as an essential component for both widening access to services to a broader population of clients and the efficient delivery of high quality, robust LMI to clients. Career guidance and counselling professionals need and want different types of LMI for different purposes and are generally able to see the potential of ICT for their professional practice in this area. As well as LMI for use with their clients, they need it for their own professional development. The effective integration of LMI into practice inevitably implicates the use of ICT.

However, the 'digital divide' poses a considerable challenge for the delivery of LMI. For example, ensuring that the most disadvantaged young people are not left behind because they lack the technical facilities they need in their homes. There is equal concern about adults who are disadvantaged because they lack crucial digital life and work skills. Personalised labour market information can now be delivered to individual clients through mobile applications. In the UK, 'LMI for All' is a government funded online open data portal, which connects and standardises existing sources of high quality, reliable labour market information (LMI) with the aim of informing careers decisions. These data are made freely available via an Application Programming Interface (API) for use in websites and applications. There is, however, a real danger that disadvantaged individuals, with a particular need for careers guidance support, will be excluded if service delivery comes to depend on access to ICT before national policies address the twin issues of digital infrastructure and digital user skills.

Jenny Bimrose, 29th April, 2017