# The role of career adaptability in facilitating individual career development

## Alan Brown and Jenny Bimrose

Paper given at International Conference on Vocational Designing & Careers Counseling: Challenges & New Horizons

Padua, Italy, 12 – 14th September 2011

**Contact details:**
**alan.brown@warwick.ac.uk**
**jenny.bimrose@warwick.ac.uk**


**Professor Alan Brown and Professor Jenny Bimrose**
**Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick,**
**Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK**

# The role of career adaptability in facilitating individual career development

**Alan Brown and Jenny Bimrose**

**Abstract:**

This research presentation examines the potential of career adaptability for enabling individuals to become self-sufficient by supporting themselves and by increasing the quality of careers support services. An explicitly qualitative evaluation was undertaken of the career biographies of 64 adults across two different country contexts – the UK and Norway (32 in each) – to identify how adaptive individuals had navigated their career pathways over time and across occupations and sectors. For this study, interview data from 32 interviews with adults in the Norwegian labour market previously undertaken for a European study have been analysed and compared with data from 32 interviews with adults in transition in the UK labour market, undertaken specifically for this study. The research complements and extends an ongoing international study into career adaptability, which is developing a quantitative measurement of this concept (Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2010).

Findings indicate that adopting a competency approach to developing career adaptive behaviour could provide a useful framework to promote the need for individuals to adopt certain behaviours to help them to realise their career aspirations. Additionally, this approach offers a potentially constructive framework for raising awareness of self-defeating behaviours in which individuals may be inclined to engage. Individuals have a wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements and identities, which emerge in a variety of community contexts, institutions, qualification structures and labour markets. Those who do not engage in substantive up-skilling or re-skilling through either formal learning or learning through work, for periods of five to ten years, run the risk of being 'locked into' a particular way of working. They become more vulnerable in the labour market, especially where there is a significant change in their job or their circumstances, because their ability to be adaptable with regard their career progression can decay. The need for a stronger policy framework that helps motivate and inspire individuals to take action at different ages and stages in the life course (that is, new ways of combining learning, earning and active citizenship) is strongly highlighted by the study.

## 1. Introduction

This study explored the concept of career adaptability and builds on existing national and international research, as it seeks to represent the wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements and identities that shape the way that individuals interact with and move through the labour market. It highlights the dynamic way in which individuals engage with learning and development pathways, sometimes with transformational shifts in perspective as their careers unfold, which can involve periods of up-skilling and re-skilling. The research considers the potential advantages of career adaptability: for improving public policy in areas such as the quality and effectiveness of career support services; and for encouraging greater autonomy and control by individuals of their careers (Bimrose, Brown *et al.*, 2011). What is missing in this analysis of the skills problem, however, is a sense of the progression of individuals through work across the life course, particularly insofar as this involves movement between sectors. As a consequence, the dynamic way in which individuals become engaged with learning and development pathways, which can involve up-skilling, re-skilling and sometimes transformational shifts in perspective as their careers unfold, has remained largely absent from current policy analysis in this area.

This research examined the potential of the concept of career adaptability for increasing the quality of careers support services and enabling individuals to become self-sufficient by supporting themselves. The inter-relationship between career adaptability and employability is considered alongside relevant policy initiatives that could benefit, potentially, from the adoption of career adaptability both by individuals and organisations. Findings highlight the need for a stronger policy framework that helps motivate and inspire individuals to take action at different ages and stages in the life course (that is, new ways of combining learning, earning and active citizenship). Individuals have a wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements and identities, which emerge in a variety of community contexts, institutions, qualification structures and labour markets. Those who do not engage in substantive up-skilling or re-skilling through either formal learning or learning through work, for periods of five to ten years, run the risk of being 'locked into' a particular way of working. They become more vulnerable in the labour market, especially where there is a significant change in their job or their circumstances, because their ability to be adaptable with regard to their career progression can decay. The research findings indicate that adopting a competency approach to developing career adaptive behaviour could provide a useful framework to promote the need for individuals to adopt certain behaviours to help realise their career aspirations. Additionally, this approach offers a potentially constructive framework for raising awareness of self-defeating behaviours in which some individuals may be inclined to engage.

## 2. What is 'career adaptability'?

A key focus for this study was to explore whether and how, career adaptability can impact positively on skills development and supply in the UK by encouraging and supporting autonomy in individuals. The term career adaptability describes the conscious and continuous exploration of both the self and the environment, where the eventual aim is to achieve synergy between the individual, their identity and an occupational environment. Developing career adaptability has a focus on supporting and encouraging individuals to be autonomous, by taking responsibility for their own career development. The operational definition of career adaptability used for this study was: '**The capability of an individual to make a series of successful transitions where the labour market, organisation of work and underlying occupational and organisational knowledge bases may all be subject to considerable change'.** Using this definition, it has been possible to focus on the practical implications of career adaptability, alongside the drivers for its development at the level of the individual.

A psycho-social perspective was adopted for the study, which looks at the psychological development of individuals within a social environment. This approach distinguishes between personality characteristics related to adaptability (like being proactive or flexible), which can be regarded as pre-requisites of adaptive behaviour, alongside the psycho-social self-regulatory competencies that shape career adaptive strategies and behaviours within work. It is also helpful in that it focuses on the need for individuals to self-regulate to accommodate change that has the potential to impact on the particular social context in which they are located. This includes the disequilibrium that is likely to be caused by: occupational traumas (like redundancy); employment transitions (like job change); and developmental tasks (like the need to up-skill or re-skill). It can be driven by an individual seeking new challenges or wishing to adopt new perspectives associated with engagement in substantive personal development. Because adaptability is closely linked to identity development, the willingness to engage with a complex career trajectory, rather than seeking stability, is likely to vary amongst individuals.

## 3. Individual characteristics of career adaptability

Career adaptability is mediated by a number of individual personality factors and is associated with other closely related variables. A set of five career adaptive competencies (control, curiosity, commitment, confidence and concern) developed from on-going international research, provides a useful framework for a retrospective examination of career adaptive behaviour in 64 career narratives of adults from two countries (the UK and

Norway). Not all personality factors and associated variables are evident in the stories of all the adults who demonstrated career adaptive behaviour in this research. For example, some adults did not regard themselves as planful, recognising, with the benefit of hindsight, that this had been something of an impediment. They were, however, still able to demonstrate how they could be adaptive in their approach to their own career progression.

What is evident from this research is that varied combinations of the factors and behaviours associated with career adaptability are identifiable across both different career trajectories and across country contexts. The competencies for developing career adaptive behaviour, however, seemed to hold constant in those demonstrating high levels of adaptability.

This study involved an explicitly qualitative evaluation of the career biographies of 64 adults across two different country contexts: the UK and Norway (32 in each). It sought to identify how adaptive individuals had navigated their career pathways over time and across occupations and sectors. For this study, interview data from 32 interviews with adults in the Norwegian labour market previously undertaken for a European study have been analysed and compared with data from 32 interviews with adults in transition in the UK labour market, undertaken specifically for this study. Additionally, the research complements and extends an ongoing international, twenty country study into the concept of career adaptability and quantitative measurement of this concept (Savickas *et al.*, 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2010).

## 4. Research Methodology

This study was built upon a major ten country investigation into changing patterns of career development across Europe, which highlighted how some people were much more successful than others in negotiating a series of work-related transitions (Brown *et al.*, 2010). From this European study, interview data from 32 interviews with adults in the Norwegian labour market have been analysed and compared with data from 32 interviews with adults in transition in the UK labour market, undertaken specifically for this study. For the UK sample, data were collected from a variety of individuals to ensure a varied and interesting sample. The sample was primarily drawn from people currently in occupations requiring a high level of skill, but it should be noted that preference was given to those who had changed career and/or who had at some stage of their career worked in low skilled employment, with a minority of respondents currently working in relatively low skilled occupations. Researchers were selective in the sampling, but only to the extent of ensuring a balance of male and female participants across the age range employed in a variety of sectors. Women

outnumbered men, which is typical of research populations generally, where volunteers are sought. Of the 32 interviewees comprising the UK sample, 62.5 per cent (n=20) were female and 37.5 per cent (n=12) were male. A small proportion of the interviewees 9 per cent (n=3) and 3 per cent (n=1) were aged 19-29 years and 60 plus, respectively. Higher proportions were aged 30-39 years (28 per cent, n=9), 40-49 years (28 per cent, n=9) and 50-59 years (31 per cent, n=9). Nearly half of interviewees were in full-time employment at the time of the interview (47 per cent, n=15). Nineteen per cent (n=6) of interviewees were in part-time work, 22 per cent (n=7) were self-employed and the remaining 13 per cent (n=4) were unemployed (one of these interviewees was in full-time education). Further details of the sample (that is, qualification, levels and sectors in which individuals had been employed) can be found in the Technical Report for this study (Bimrose, Barnes *et al.*, 2011).

Secondary data analysis used 32 existing interview transcripts from Norway. Data were collected from a variety of individuals to ensure a varied and interesting sample. The criteria for drawing the broad sample was the same as for the UK: individuals were contacted who had participated in a previous European Commission project, which had focused mainly upon highly skilled workers in health, engineering and ICT, and had given their individual consent to be interviewed (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The Norwegian sample for the survey research had in part initially been raised by contacting some large companies in target sectors (health service; oil and gas industry; public sector IT department; transportation), which explains the narrower distribution of current sectors in the Norwegian sample. The interviews took place in summer 2010, before this project was commissioned by the UK Commission. Researchers were selective in the sampling, but only to the extent of trying to ensure a balance of male and female participants across the age range in a variety of positions.

The research complements and extends an ongoing international, twenty country study into the concept of career adaptability, which we argue is a key concept for understanding successful labour market transitions and accumulation of skills at the individual level. The psycho-social approach to career adaptability adopted by this ongoing international study was also adopted and, therefore, has taken place against international scholarship into the nature, validity and applicability of the concept of career adaptability in supporting individual aspiration and transition.

The aim of the study was to assess and develop existing (national and international) knowledge about career adaptability, with particular emphasis on skills accumulation, in order to provide a platform for the development and support of career adaptability in a UK context. The objectives linked to this aim were to:

- examine how career adaptability can be used to raise the aspirations of individuals at both higher and lower levels of skills;

- explore the potential of the concept of career adaptability to empower individuals to take positive decisions and actions regarding their skills development;

- consider whether career adaptability has a role in making access to training and learning more equitable;

- understand how career adaptability facilitates participation in skill development in a range of employment, education, training and other contexts; and

- investigate the influence of particular labour market conditions in supporting career adaptability (through an Anglo-Norwegian comparison).

## 5. Individual characteristics and career adaptability

Individual characteristics can play a key role in the development of career adaptability. These include personality characteristics that influence how well individuals adjust to working in different work contexts, how flexible individuals are when faced with change, how proactive they are in looking for new challenges, and how willing they are to make plans with implications for their future career. Alongside personality characteristics, individuals also differ in the extent to which they explore possible future career roles, identities and work environments; display career resilience in the face of change; and how decisive they are in making career decisions in the light of changed circumstances. A life design approach to career development that proposes a focus upon key career adaptability competencies (control, curiosity, commitment, confidence and concern).

### 5.1 Personality characteristics

### 5.1.1 Control and self-regulation

Self-regulation and control figure prominently in the literature and research into career adaptability (Balin and Hirschi, 2010; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Duffy, 2010; Fugate *et al.*, 2004; Savickas, 2008; Savickas and Porfeli, 2010). Self-regulation is regarded as part of control and in this particular context refers to the strategies that individuals employ to adjust to different occupational settings. Control refers to the strategies that individuals employ to influence different settings. Research indicates how individuals need to feel in control of their

lives to adapt their careers (Blustein *et al.*, 2008; Duffy, 2010) and that individuals with a clear sense of control engage more in career exploration activities, take responsibility for their career development and are more decisive in terms of their career (Luzzo and Ward, 1995). It was striking that many research participants highlighted how important it was that they were in control of own career development and that they were able to self-regulate their behaviour. For example, one Norwegian male (aged 47), who had started his working life in the engineering sector but was working in the oil industry at the time of the interview, demonstrated a high propensity for control by saying that he was:

> 'Always seeking a move before getting into a rut. I have made major industry shifts – and am willing to do so again. I always have my eyes and ears open for possible changes. My career development is very self-generated' (N 43).

A UK male participant (aged 30), who had worked after leaving school at 18, then spent time abroad in employment in the Far East, has recently returned to the UK to undergraduate study. He has found the transition to mature student difficult, but feels that this has helped him learn how to be self-regulated because of the importance of maintaining momentum by studying every day. This change from employee to student status represents something of a high risk strategy for him, as part of the process of re-directing his career, so he has 'moments of panic, but then quickly moves into a strategic reflection of what to do next' and takes action (UK 9).

Both these examples demonstrate the importance of control and self-regulation in the management of career progression.

### 5.1.2   Flexibility and openness

The concepts of flexibility and openness are also embedded in the literature on career adaptability (Blustein, 1997; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Fugate *et al.*, 2004; Herr, 1992; Heslin, 2005; Morrison and Hall, 2002). Flexibility relates to an individual's willingness to transform and develop themselves, in response to demanding circumstances, with openness being part of flexibility, since it relates to receptiveness to change. More particularly, flexibility is defined as fluidity in a dynamic environment (Blustein, 1997). For change to occur, an individual needs to be convinced that they can be flexible in learning new competencies, as well as the skills to develop and adapt, such as keeping abreast of technological developments and changing work processes. This is achieved through a process of reflection, during which 'defensive reasoning' should be reduced, so that individuals can learn from their experiences (Heslin 2005, p. 385). Flexible and open behaviour then enables individuals to incorporate new roles and responsibilities into their personal identities

as well as learning continuously throughout their career (Briscoe *et al.*, 2006; Morrison and Hall, 2002; Verbruggen and Sels, 2008).

A UK research participant, John (aged 58), provides a vivid example of these concepts. He left school with few qualifications and trained as a carpet fitter. He: 'grew up in an era where you had a job-for-life' and worked in the same sector for over three decades, until he suffered a stroke due to over-work and stress. His medical consultant recommended that he changed career, but he had lost confidence and doubted his ability to return to any type of full time work. Able to access professional support, his potential for working in social care was highlighted by a careers practitioner. This was not an area of work he had ever considered, but he was flexible, open and willing to try anything to get work. First, he secured a placement in social care, which led to part-time employment and eventually a portfolio of two part-time jobs in social care. He has now worked in social care for the last seven years, has completed relevant work-based qualifications and feels: 'very lucky and very happy working' and is 'nowhere near' to considering retirement (UK 13).

From the Norwegian sample, a woman (aged 42) currently employed in the oil and gas industry, also illustrates the value of flexibility and openness. She reported how she had consciously planned to get as wide an experience as possible in different roles, because: 'I have seen that those with the most experience are flexible and can be used in many different roles' (N 6). From her personal observations of colleagues in the workplace, she had understood the value of opening herself up to varied experiences because of the way this led to progression. Further, she was also able to appreciate the premium that was attached to flexibility in the workplace.

### 5.1.3 Proactivity

Individuals who are proactive anticipate change and react accordingly (Cronshaw and Jethmalani, 2005; Ebberwein *et al.*, 2004). Proactivity, that is, being investigative and looking for fresh challenges, is strongly associated with career adaptability. Its importance in career development has been emphasised (Cronshaw and Jethmalani, 2005; Duffy, 2010; Ebberwein, *et al.*, 2004; Morrison and Hall, 2002; Savickas, *et al.*, 2009; Savickas and Porfeli, 2010), since it can drive the willingness to seek out new contexts in which to work, together with the readiness to face change and engage in transitions. Conscientious, well-organised individuals can also be proactive through action, so it is not just individuals who change – they will also aim to change their environment (Super and Knasel, 1981), to achieve a better fit – even when the environment is not requesting this type of change (Duffy, 2010; Morrison and Hall, 2002; Savickas, *et al.*, 2009).

Many research participants who had experienced successful career transitions had been proactive by, for example, actively seeking challenging tasks and having a very positive attitude towards change. One Norwegian woman in her early 40's explained how she changed her previous job because: 'I was ready for new tasks, new things' and had 'changed other jobs for greater challenge, as they became boring'. She likes working with people and thinks of change as something good: 'If I still was at the same place where I was 25 years ago, I would turn insane, you know? Change is important for your own development and your competence development' (N 21).

A UK woman (aged 35) described how she left her job in scientific research and development after three years, because she wanted to develop her communication skills, which she regarded as being under-developed at that time. She went to Africa to take a job in sales, since she recognised that working in a culturally different context would not only extend her communication skills, but also provide the type of experiences that would be crucially important for the type of management position she saw for herself in the future (UK 1).

A third female participant, also from the UK (aged 41), started out at age 16 in retail and has moved to the education sector via a number of labour market moves. One significant transition occurred when she had been working for a large retail organisation that had just begun a programme of redundancies. She could see the '*catastrophic impact*' that the redundancies were having on both those who were being made redundant and their families. On Millennium Eve, aged 30, she thought: 'My life is not what I want it to be and that's not going to happen to me!' She decided to resign from her current position and took a high risk career break to think about what she wanted to do next:

> 'You've got to make changes happen – be proactive! Move away from being powerless to being powerful – making choices is not about accepting your lot. You can influence your own life hugely (UK 2)'.

All of these three examples of proactive behaviour highlight its importance – taking the initiative in identifying and implementing change to achieve a particular career goal.

### 5.1.4  Planfulness

The ability to plan for the future, or a planfulness aptitude, is widely regarded as integral to career adaptability (Creed *et al.*, 2009; Ebberwein, *et al.*, 2004; Gunkel *et al.*, 2010; Hirschi, 2009; Morrison and Hall, 2002; Patton *et al.*, 2004; Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2005; Super and Knasel, 1981). This refers to being able to plan, map out the future direction and anticipate

change and when individuals have: 'a sense of realism about personal and contextual factors affecting the situation, they have a head start when the transition begins' (Ebberwein, *et al.*, 2004, p. 304).

Integral to planfulness is goal setting. This is not limited to an individual's ability to shape their own career goals, but also their ability to set and achieve realistic goals (Ebberwein, *et al.*, 2004; Fouad and Bynner, 2008; Patton *et al.*, 2004; Savickas, 2008). Those facing job loss and involuntary career transitions need to be able to anticipate and react to changes, as well as understanding how to achieve realistic goals to navigate themselves out of the situation in which they find themselves (Ebberwein, *et al.*, 2004).

While there may be considerable differences regarding individuals' willingness to make plans, data from this study indicate how being able to plan for the future and set career goals helps people cope with problems that arise in their career development. A Norwegian woman (aged 45) had worked in three different jobs, starting in the hospitality industry, but then switching to transport. She felt 'held up' in her current job because it required a greater level of commitment than she was currently able to give, so was using the following planful coping strategy: 'I don't think it is very disappointing and sad. I just think, "my time will come!" In the meantime, I develop my skills so that I'm ready' (N 238).

A UK male participant (aged 66), also illustrates the value of a planful approach to career development. He started his working life in the education sector and is now 'fully occupied as a self-employed management consultant', having engaged with multiple transitions. He describes his approach as: 'planful and conscious that decisions often have to be made, so it's always best to be prepared for the worst case scenario – and have a strategy for response when and if, needed'. He also realises that transitions were often a: 'leap into the unknown', with life being essentially unpredictable. Nevertheless, it is important to 'Be aware at the back of your mind that nothing is stable. Keep thinking about contingency plans: what might you do if things don't go to plan?' (UK 23).

In addition to these individual personality characteristics that are often pre-requisites for career adaptive behaviour, there are a number of factors with which it is strongly associated.

## 5.2    Other individual factors associated with career adaptability

### 5.2.1    Career, self and environmental exploration

A major element of career adaptive behaviour is exploration, which is defined broadly in terms of career exploration, self-exploration and environmental exploration (Blustein, 1997; Creed , *et al.*, 2009; Duarte, 1995; Duffy, 2010; Patton , *et al.*, 2004; Super, 1988; van Vianen *et al.*, 2009; Zikic and Klehe, 2006). Exploration relates to a certain curiosity about possible selves and identities, together with available opportunities (Savickas, *et al.*, 2009). The three types of exploration, relevant to career adaptability, can be identified from the literature.

Career exploration, relating to those who seek out careers information, as well as reflect on their career and future plans (see Balin and Hirschi, 2010; Creed, *et al.*, 2009; Patton *et al.*, 2004; Super and Knasel, 1981).

Self-exploration, characteristic of those who have an understanding of themselves, their competences and skills, which can be gained through a process of self-reflection (Creed *et al.*, 2009; Duarte, 1995; Fouad and Bynner, 2008).

Environmental exploration, describing those who investigate and understand employment opportunities available to them and also those who actively seek out support from family, friends and significant others (Creed *et al.*, 2009; Duarte, 1995; Fouad and Bynner, 2008).

Together, these behaviours reflect the interplay between the individual, their context and environment and are pivotal to successful navigation of the world of work (Duffy, 2010). The management of employability is largely a question of how cultural capital is translated into personal capital, with cultural capital being partly dependent upon the different familial, employment and educational contexts through which people pass and which give rise to different ways of being and becoming that prepare people for alternative futures (Brown *et al.*, 2003). The importance of developing social and human capital is also emphasised in the career adaptability literature (Creed *et al.*, 2009; Franz, 1983; Fugate *et al.*, 2004; Karaevli and Hall, 2006; McArdle *et al.*, 2007) and can be regarded as being closely aligned to systematic exploration and recognition of personal assets, as well as liabilities.

Where individuals are located outside the labour market, it is crucial for them to gain knowledge of opportunities and choices by undertaking greater career exploration (Blustein, 1997; Duarte, 1995; Duffy, 2010; Fouad and Bynner, 2008; Super and Knasel, 1981; van Vianen *et al.*, 2009; Zikic and Klehe, 2006). It was noticeable that a number of the

Norwegian research participants (for example, N 49; N 28; N 51) had either never consciously 'had ambitions or dreams for a career', or else only made a forced job change: 'It is strange, that it has become so important to have a career'[1]. However, others regarded career development and career exploration as inter-related processes. One Norwegian respondent, for example, explained how study or work overseas provides you with a different perspective: 'My career development has also been a very useful experience, getting insight in different fields. Also important is travel to foreign countries; human relations and intercultural competence' (N 43). In cases such as this career exploration could act to raise individual aspirations.

### 5.2.2  Career resilience

Resilience refers to the capability and capacity to withstand change, implying the development of individual (and institutional) coping strategies. Career resilience refers to the capacity of an individual to respond to both positive and negative events and to move forward. It is about being able to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity, whilst at the same time being flexible and autonomous. Some (Goodman, 1994; Kohn *et al.*, 2003) have argued that career resilience is close to the definition of career adaptability proposed by Super and Knasel (1981). However, resilience seems to imply the ability to survive change once it happens, whereas career adaptability has a stronger proactive dimension.

A UK male participant (aged 57) provides an example of career resilience defined in this way. Trained as an apprentice craft engineer from the age of 16, Bill had worked in production on factory shop floors for many years of his working life. Then he was given the chance to move into the stores, after which he moved into the office. This triggered the opportunity to go on a two year course at his local University, with the fees paid by his employer. The first taste of study in higher education was stimulating and validating for Bill, but half way through the course, his company collapsed and he was made redundant. Because he would have had to pay the remaining course fees, he left half way through and now 'bitterly regrets it'. Though able to find employment again fairly quickly, he was made redundant from this next job after only a relatively short time. He found another job, this time with an American company, but after the catastrophe of 9/11, the company withdrew from its

---

[1] Career in Norwegian can be translated as *karriere*, but with connotations of profession *profesjon*. In this sense it may be that 'career' in Norwegian is interpreted closer to the German sense of *Beruf* - something more than a series of jobs - closer to a chosen occupation or vocation. While UK participants were more likely to regard their career as referring to the series of jobs, they had held even if they did not have a career in a broader sense.

operations in the UK, so he was made redundant yet again. By now he was over 55 and felt that he was coming up against age discrimination in his attempts to re-enter the labour market, so decided to use some of his redundancy money to set up a small business. This process provided him with an interesting set of challenges, but now the business is set up, Bill recognises that it is not what he really wants to be doing. His main motivation was to create a small business for his wife to move into and manage, when she is ready. He is ready to move on to something that is more stimulating and personally challenging.

Bill's career trajectory is vivid testimony to his considerable career resilience. In a volatile and contracting labour market, he was able to demonstrate various coping strategies, tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity over long periods of time, whilst at the same time demonstrating flexibility and autonomy. With the benefit of hindsight, he now feels that he should have continued with his University course, because: 'Knowledge is the key to everything' (UK 8). He believes that getting a qualification may very well have made all the difference to his job prospects, because it would have increased his potential to look for jobs in different sectors, rather than becoming the victim of successive redundancies.

### 5.2.3   Career decisiveness and career-decision-making

In order to prepare for, develop and progress careers, individuals have to make career decisions throughout their lifespan. In the current economic situation in the UK, these decisions can have a profound impact on job prospects. Career decision making is a complex process involving a range of processes, behaviours, environment and contextual factors, together with individual preferences and beliefs. Some researchers regard career decision making and decisiveness as an integral part of career adaptability (Blustein, 1997; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Duffy and Blustein, 2005; Duffy and Raque-Bogdan, 2010; Gunkel, *et al.*, 2010; Koen *et al.*, 2010; Krieshok *et al.*, 2009; Super and Knasel, 1981; van Vianen *et al.*, 2009; Zikic and Klehe, 2006). Undoubtedly, they are part of successful career transitions, since they contribute positively to preparing for and managing, voluntary and involuntary changes in the workplace.

This notion receives support from our career biographies, with some individuals taking decisive action, while others recognise that they had a tendency to let opportunities slip by. One example of career decisiveness relates to a Norwegian man (aged 47) who recommends: 'it is important not to get in a rut in the workplace, and therefore move within the organisation or to other companies. I always have my eyes and ears open for possible changes'. Another example from the UK sample is of a woman (aged 35), who described

how all her job moves have been 'conscious decisions to change' and that she is a 'logical decision-maker', writing a list of 'pros and cons' for each decision to be made (UK 16).

In contrast, there were examples of research participants who recognised that they had not demonstrated career decisiveness over their careers and consequently had incurred penalties. For example, a Norwegian woman (aged 59) stated that: 'I am not very good at planning, so I deal with things as they come' (N 211), then went on to caution against this pattern of behaviour for others, who she felt should be more decisive in making a career plan and then building their career in a more systematic fashion:

> 'To have too many detours in your career path is not smart. To plan a career path and take the appropriate training and the appropriate jobs that will help you get the right experience, meaning you build your career stone by stone and not as I have done'.

Similarly, a female from the UK sample (aged 49) reflected on how even now she was 'still an opportunist', but that this was risky – she had become more 'risk averse' over the years because of her changing context – with caring responsibilities for two school-age children and elderly parents (UK 4).

Career decision-making has aspects of planfulness and decisiveness, which are often, but not always inter-related. Planfulness allows individuals to take decisive action in a technically rational sense of review, plan and act. However, it is possible to take decisive action by responding quickly to opportunities which arise, even if they are not planned for, an example of what Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) identify as 'pragmatic rationality'.

## 5.3    Competencies for career adaptability

A life design approach to career development has been proposed, with five key career adaptability competencies – the five "C"s – as one focal point (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). This argues that a support system for life designing and building must do more than just help people acquire skills to deal with current changes and developmental issues. It should also help them to determine for themselves which skills and knowledge they value in their lifelong learning development and then help them to determine "how" (the needed method), "who" (the person or specialist that can give the support), "where" (the environment in which it should take place) and "when" (the best moment for the intervention) these skills and knowledge may be acquired (Savickas *et al.*, 2009 p. 244). Helping individuals become autonomous is paramount.

Within this approach, five separate but inter-related competencies are identified as crucial for increasing individuals' career adaptive responses to transitions. They are: control, curiosity, commitment, confidence and concern. In this context:

- control emphasises the need for individuals to exert a degree of influence on their situations;
- curiosity emphasises the value in broadening horizons by exploring social opportunities and possibilities;
- commitment stresses how individuals should experiment with new and different activities and projects, rather than being focused narrowly on getting into a particular job, so that new possibilities can be generated;
- confidence relates to believing in yourself and your ability to achieve what is necessary to achieve your career goal;
- concern refers to stimulating or developing a positive and optimistic attitude to the future. (Savickas *et al.*, 2009, p.245).

This research study was expressly set up to explore the potential of the concept of career adaptability to empower individuals to take positive decisions and actions regarding their skill development (see page 3, second bullet). A case study of a UK participant, aged 44 years old, illustrates the approach adopted (UK 5).

Claudia describes herself as being from an African family. She was a microbiologist for the National Health Service (NHS) for 13 years and holds three Masters qualifications as well her initial BSc. There was a strong parental expectation that she would study the sciences – and it was 'never an option to fail or not to do well'.

After completing her first Masters, she got a job with a hospital as a trainee microbiology scientist. Then she moved to another large specialist hospital and started her second Masters. Soon, she began to feel 'limited' in her job. One day, colleagues were talking about pensions. She decided that remaining in that environment: 'would drive me mad!' She left without a job to go to, but the following day, was offered employment with a private hospital through an agency: 'So you've always got options'. After a while, she was approached by a health clinic to work in the area of business development. She took the job and enrolled on an MBA, but when she discovered that her employer would not allow her the flexibility necessary to undertake her part time study, she resigned.

To support herself financially while studying her MBA, she worked as a locum. During this period she became interested in recruitment. The Director of the Business School where

she was studying her MBA offered her a part-time job where she had to organise work placements and work experience for students. As a consequence, she was 'head hunted'. She worked for this company for some time before leaving for a similar organisation.

During these multiple transitions, she 'networked like mad', finding that she was good at connecting with people and helping people connect with others. Her learning experiences were all positive – or at least 'none were bad – it's the person, not the qualifications!' At the same time, she recognises that some groups in society may have to work harder than others: 'For an African family, to progress in this society, you need education – that piece of paper'. Claudia has always tried to help others and feels that this is a core personal value. Helping others also provides networking opportunities.

She believes that: '...if there is something you really want to do – if it's a passion – you don't give up!' However, this has to be tempered with common sense. She does recognise that something can still be a passion when an individual is not perhaps sufficiently competent. In this case, you just have to be realistic. Now she wants to set up her own business. At the moment, she's taking a break, for about 6 months, to 'get my head right'. Then she intends 'to actively pursue a job'. The current economic context represents 'really hard times'. The mantra is that there are no jobs – but Claudia firmly believes that there are still opportunities. It is just that the 'candidate pool' is larger: 'The trick is to distinguish yourself from others out there! That's what's happening now!' Claudia identified her aspirations: to write a book; own a really good retail outlet; and teach. She is particularly keen to develop her creative talents. At the moment, she is: '...taking it one day at a time. You know you're running but not going anywhere – like a treadmill. It always works out in the end. Sometimes you need luck – and if you're not out there, you won't be in the game. Just got to keep going!'

The five career adaptive competencies provide a framework for evaluating the extent to which Claudia has become adaptive over her years in the labour market.

*Control:* Claudia's career story illustrates the way she has consistently taken control of her career direction. After spending over a decade working in a scientific laboratory for which she had become very well qualified, she left as soon as she found this occupational environment confining, even though she did not have a job to go to. Again, after enrolling on an MBA and finding that her employer was not prepared to support her professional development by giving her the flexibility needed to study part-time, she resigned and found another way of financing her way through study.

*Curiosity:* the desire to broaden her horizons is evident throughout Claudia's story. Her propensity to study, first an undergraduate degree, followed by no fewer than three Masters' qualifications, indicates her determination to add to her knowledge and understanding. She has also consistently updated her knowledge by undertaking informal learning activities. Now at something of a crossroads in her life, she is contemplating taking quite different career directions – so her appetite for expanding her knowledge and experience remains.

*Commitment:* along the way, Claudia has held to her core belief of helping others. This had not only helped expand horizons, but also develop networks. Her openness to change and opportunity has ensured a diverse set of employment experiences in contrasting occupational environments. From each, she has benefitted by developing her knowledge base and horizons for future action. Being passionate about the future is a key factor in her success.

*Confidence:* recognising that her family inculcated strong values around academic achievement, she understands how achievement became the norm. She has created opportunities for herself and taken full advantage of other opportunities, when they came along. Even when challenges were not within the direct sphere of her expertise and experience, she never held back – being willing to embrace new environments and new learning challenges.

*Concern:* Claudia's story is illustrative of her optimistic and positive attitude to the future. She has developed a number of coping strategies that fit with her values and aspirations, with her aspirations being lifted in turn by her adaptability. These coping strategies include a series of positive beliefs: never give up; follow your dream; and understand that there is nothing wrong with people rejecting you, because it might be for the best.

The same five competencies were used as a framework to examine how one of the Norwegian sample (Ingrid, in her 40's) has become adaptive over her years in the labour market (N 21).

*Control:* Ingrid's career narrative shows she has consistently taken control of her career direction. Ingrid quit her first job (in the Post Office) to study for a degree in international marketing. She then had a series of jobs in sales and marketing, moving expressly 'for greater challenge – I was so young and fearless at the time'. She then moved into Human Resources and is now a Human Relations Manager in the oil industry, while also studying part-time for a Masters degree. She has been in the same job for nine years, partly because of her two children (11 and 13):

> 'the practical everyday life plays its role of course, taking the children to activities and so on. There is a lot of freedom [in my job and] since I have been here for so long I do the job faster and with less effort than I did as a newcomer. But maybe within a year…? Now I work very close to home so that's an aspect to keep in mind also.'

*Curiosity:* the desire for Ingrid to broaden her horizons is a clear thread running through her story. Besides doing degrees in two different subject areas, working in different jobs, sectors and industries, Ingrid has been geographically mobile, working in cities across the country. Even though she likes her current work, she recognises that future opportunities are likely to lie further afield:

> 'this is a fantastic exciting industry: my company operates globally and those kind of challenges I can't find in a national or local industry. I'd rather consider a change in the same industry but in another company. Maybe I expect a promotion after finishing my master degree, even though my motivation is my own learning experience and the new insight that comes with it.'

Her curiosity is clear throughout her story.

*Commitment:* Ingrid has consistently demonstrated a willingness to experiment with new and different activities and projects, rather than being narrowly focused upon performing a single job role, so that new possibilities can be generated. Ingrid drew attention to how she learns at the workplace through 'informal training, learning by doing and guidance from others with more experience all the time.' She also identified having been engaged with internal and external formal training; interdisciplinary project work; learning from customers; continuing education at a technical school; courses in English; intercultural understanding; project management (global course); learning through job rotation (abroad); formal training by participation in learning circles; formal self-directed learning and participation in conferences.

*Confidence:* Ingrid believes in herself and has the ability to achieve what is necessary to achieve her career goals and this includes harnessing support from others:

> 'I have always had people around me who have given me support, even if I can remember that my parents were shocked when I quit my job (laughing). I have always had good role models around me and never felt that I didn't get support. Also working with colleagues with more professional knowledge and experience than me (guidance and coaching) has always been a useful way to develop knowledge and skills.'

Ingrid's confidence is not based on an unrealistic assessment of her own skills and abilities – she is prepared to work hard and her confidence is built on that foundation: 'there have been periods of a lot of learning, a lot of frustration and thinking of how to solve the tasks, but eventually, after solving them I have taken new steps to find new challenges and so on.'

*Concern:* Ingrid's story is illustrative of her optimistic and positive attitude to the future. She has a positive view of her past, present and future and weaves it altogether in a compelling narrative: 'today I consider changes more carefully, because I have children and have responsibility for others. These days, it's nothing spectacular taking a Master degree, but when I grew up, there were few in my family that took higher education.'

Her proactive approach to work is based on doing a job well; mastery of a knowledge base (she explicitly acknowledged how she had developed her 'professional knowledge by academically based practical learning') and strong organisational and relational skills. With regard to her own future, Ingrid emphasises in looking for her next job: 'I will use my networks to ensure that I take the right decision' and that you need 'to find out what you really want'. Interestingly, even with Ingrid's endorsement of needing to embrace change, this has to be strategic not uncritical: 'it must not be a change just for the sake of change'.

These two case studies demonstrate that the framework of adaptive competencies, developed from international research, has utility across the two different country contexts represented in this study.

## 6. Context and opportunities

The potential for individuals to develop career adaptive responses to their career progression and the labour market are mediated not only by the broad economic context in which individuals are operating, but also by the opportunities to which they have access. Different economic conditions, for example, provide different labour market opportunities. The UK and Norway currently represent contrasting economies: Norway has a buoyant and growing economy, while the UK is emerging from economic recession. Irrespective of the prevailing economic conditions, career adaptability appears to have relevance to individuals. For those struggling with unemployment or facing redundancy, adaptive responses to situations beyond the control of the individual are essential for individuals to sustain a positive disposition to personal development. Even for individuals in buoyant economies, unexpected and traumatic circumstances out of the control of the individual (like relocation of a company, death of a family member or divorce) place demands on individuals for adaptive responses.

In addition, individuals operating in the same labour market face structural disadvantage. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, socio economic status are associated with social inequality and under-achievement, and their impact is magnified when more than one converges in an individual (for example, an older woman from a minority ethnic group). For

many facing structural disadvantage, the research data show how these mediators of career adaptability have impeded and inhibited progress. For many others however, the data illustrates how facing barriers that are beyond the control of the individual can, for some, serve to sharpen and harden resolve to overcome difficulties and contribute to the development of career adaptive competencies.

## 7. Learning and development

The research undertaken for this study indicates that the role of learning in developing career adaptability at work has four dimensions. The first involves learning through challenging work: mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes. The second has a primary cognitive focus and involves updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base). Knowledge updating may play an important role in extending adaptability beyond a focus on the current work role. The third dimension has a primary communicative focus and comprises learning through (and beyond) interactions at work. Finally, the fourth dimension focuses upon how career adaptability is facilitated by individuals becoming more self-directed and self-reflexive in their learning and development.

## 8. Career orientation and transitioning styles

Critiques of the matching approach to skills supply are increasing in number and subtlety. According to the traditional 'matching model', choice of the 'right' job occurs when individuals have achieved first, an accurate understanding of their individual traits (e.g. personal abilities, aptitudes, interests, etc.); second, knowledge of jobs and the labour market; and third, made a rational and objective judgement about the relationship between these two groups of facts. When individuals are in the 'right' job, this means the jobs that are most suited to their aptitudes and abilities, in which they can be expected to perform best and where their productivity is highest.

However, the model (developed over a century ago) is based on some questionable assumptions. These include that it is possible to measure, objectively and accurately, individual aptitudes and attributes required for particular jobs. Another assumption is that individuals are naturally pre-disposed to engage in 'rational' behaviours that focus on maximising their economic benefits whenever it comes to job choice. Further, it assumes a degree of labour market stability, with jobs and sectors having predictable requirements, to which the objectively measured abilities of individuals can be matched. Whilst this may have

been the case over a century ago, when the model was developed, it is certainly no longer true, with volatility and fluidity being defining characteristics of global labour markets.

If it is accepted that a rational approach to career progression is by no means universal. Notions of reflection, happenstance, opportunism, adaptability and intuition need to be incorporated in attempts to try to develop a more rigorous understanding of adult transitional and career behaviour. Individuals have different approaches to career progression, and three main orientations have been identified within this study which embody career adaptive behaviours in different ways: strategic; evaluative and opportunistic. The matching approach requires a strategic orientation, which was found in only a small number of cases in this study. More common were evaluative and opportunistic approaches to progressing careers. Whilst the individuals who participated in this study differed in their orientations to career progression, all in some way engaged in the development of career adaptive competencies

## 9. Policy implications

The research identified six key areas for action in building a more robust policy framework within which career adaptability could play a key role.

- The design and development of careers support services, both within and outside of the workplace, must take full account of individuals' 'state of readiness' to manage and implement effective decision-making in relation to learning and work. This means finding new ways of personalising services for the individual and developing innovative strategies so that careers professionals, welfare to work providers, teachers and employers can make more effective use of 'career stories and trajectories' within education and employment settings. The working relationship between careers professionals and human resource professionals merits more detailed attention given this is currently under-researched within public, private and voluntary/community sector contexts and these contrasting, yet complementary professional roles, bridge the education and employment divide.

- There is a new requirement to move beyond traditional and static concepts of 'employability' so that individuals are better equipped to be more resilient and to manage risk and uncertainty in fast changing education and labour markets. A critical issue is how best individuals can learn to develop and apply career adaptive competencies most effectively. Learners, teachers, lecturers, trainers, employers (and others involved in the education and employment sectors) all have a very wide range of perspectives, though need to understand that, given demographic trends, it is crucial that young people and adults at all stages of their career progression are 'ready' to continue their development

in increasingly demanding employment, education or training contexts.

- The use of the term 'opportunity structures' conveys the existing tension between the need for openness and flexibility on the one hand and structured pathways on the other. Finding an accommodation which works well for most members of a society by providing opportunities for those who do not fit initially, should be the goal of a Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) policy, informed by concerns for individual career development. The principles of flexicurity can be helpful in this respect, but extending the breadth and quality of the opportunity structures should be a primary goal of policy in this area.

- The focus on formal qualifications as a proxy for learning and development does not do justice to the range, depth and variety of different forms of learning-while-working that contributes to the acquisition of career adaptive competencies. The latter should be promoted and the most appropriate timing for validation of different forms of learning and the use of qualifications in this process be considered.

- Existing progression measures that capture individuals' learning and work destinations must operate beyond a one-off 'snapshot approach' in order to build and extend the body of knowledge of individuals' career trajectories and career adaptability competencies. In this context, there is scope to further review how government plans to incorporate new 'destination measures' will assess impact and individuals' progression in learning and work (BIS, 2011). By doing so, greater emphasis on capturing career adaptive competencies and the lessons learned can be disseminated more effectively within and across professional networks. Also, greater use can be made of information communications technologies (ICT) developments as a potentially low cost tool for capturing data and tracking individuals' career trajectories over time. However, both of these have staff training and workforce development implications.

- Exploring a 'career clusters' approach to supporting individual progression at a local level, as recently outlined by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES, 2011), could be extended further to include the use of career adaptive competencies designed to enhance individuals' understanding of the structure of jobs, job requirements and advancement pathways. There is scope to consider how this might link and further enhance relevant government initiatives such as 'Investors in People', 'Lifelong Learning Accounts' and the emerging new 'National Careers Service' in England.

## 10. Implications for practice

The findings from this study indicate there are a number of implications for professionals and allied workers who have responsibility for supporting young people and adults' career adaptive needs. These include:

- Greater investment is required in CPD for careers professionals, to widen strategies for helping to motivate and encourage individuals to learn using careers narratives and the application of career adaptability competencies. Theory, research and practice in this area should be embedded within both accredited and non-accredited learning programmes.

- New opportunities for joint professional training and development between careers professionals, careers educators and other allied workers including HR, Job Centre Plus workers and the wider welfare to work provider base are needed. This could potentially yield closer co-operation, collaboration and communication on what works best with clients, learning more about career trajectories and outcomes in fast changing education and labour markets, as well as improvement in service design and delivery.

- A market in careers work has been stimulated by government in England, which is likely to result in an increase in more sole traders, mutuals and new consortia formations. There is significant scope to make openly available research findings on career adaptability linked to skills supply and to build upon this by fostering innovative approaches to build career narratives that can be shared as part of an ongoing learning process with young people and adults.

- Use of ICT can make career adaptive competencies and how these translate into everyday lives more visible. For example, the link between the individual and the world of work can be evaluated to help determine the level of engagement or disengagement so that career adaptive competencies can be filtered into the process of online and offline learning. To support this, practitioner competencies in the use of ICT and Labour Market Information needs to be enhanced.

# References

Balin, E. and Hirschi, A. (2010) 'Who seeks career counselling? A prospective study of personality and career variables among Swiss adolescents', in *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 161-176.

Bimrose, J., Brown, A., Barnes, S-A. and Hughes, D. (2011) The role of career adaptability in skills supply, Evidence report 35. Main Report. Wath-upon-Dearne: UKCES.

Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A., Brown, A. and Hughes, D. (2011) The role of career adaptability in skills supply, Evidence Report 35. Technical Report. Wath-upon-Dearne: UKCES.BIS (2011) *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.

Blustein, D. L. (1997) 'A context-rich perspective of career exploration across the life roles', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 260-274.

Blustein, D. L., Kenna, A. C., Gill, N. and DeVoy, J. E. (2008) 'The psychology working: A new framework for counseling practice and public policy', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 4, pp. 294-298.

Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T. and DeMuth, R. L. F. (2006) 'Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 69, pp. 30-47.

Brown, A., Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A, Kirpal, S., Grønning, T. and Dæhlen M. (2010) *Changing patterns of working, learning and career development across Europe*. Coventry: IER, University of Warwick. Available: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/people/abrown/publications/eacea_warwick_final_report_31st_may_2010.doc. [Accessed 14th December 2010].

Brown, P.A., Hesketh, A. & Willisams, S. (2003) 'Employability in a knowledge-driven economy', in *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp 107-127.

Creed, P. A., Fallon, T. and Hood, M. (2009) 'The relationship between career adaptability, person and situation variables and career concerns in young adults', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 219-229.

Cronshaw, S. F. and Jethmalani, S. (2005) 'The structure of workplace adaptive skill in a career inexperienced group', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 45-65.

Duarte, M. E. (1995) 'Career concerns, values and role salience in employed men', in *The Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 338-350.

Duffy, R. D. (2010) 'Sense of Control and Career Adaptability Among Undergraduate Students', in *Journal of Career Assessment*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 420-430.

Duffy, R. D. and Blustein, D. L. (2005) 'The relationship between spirituality, religiousness and career adaptability', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp. 429-440.

Duffy, R. and Raque-Bogdan, T. L. (2010) 'The Motivation to Serve Others: Exploring Relations to Career Development', in *Journal of Career Assessment*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 250-265.

Ebberwein, C. A., Krieshok, T. S., Ulven, J. C. and Prosser, E. C. (2004) 'Voices in Transition: Lessons on Career Adaptability', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, pp. 292-309.

Fouad, N. A. and Bynner, J. (2008) 'Work Transitions', in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 63, No. 4, pp. 241-251.

Franz, J. (1983) 'Cognitive development and career retraining in older adults. Educational Gerontology', in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 9, No. 5-6, pp. 443-462.

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A. J. and Ashforth, B. E. (2004) 'Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions and applications', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 65, No. 1, pp. 14-38.

Goodman, J. (1994). 'Career adaptability in adults: A construct whose time has come', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 74-85.

Gunkel, M., Schlaegel, C., Langella, I. M. and Peluchette, J. V. (2010) 'Personality and career decisiveness: An international empirical comparison of business students' career planning', in *Personnel Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 503-254.

Herr, E. (1992) 'Emerging trends in career counselling', in *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 255-288.

Heslin, P. A. (2005) 'Experiencing Career Success', in *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 376-390.

Hirschi, A. (2009) 'Career adaptability development in adolescence: Multiple predictors and effect on sense of power and life satisfaction', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 145-155.

Hodkinson, P. & Sparkes, A. (1997) 'Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making', in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 29-44.

Karaevli, A. and Hall, D. T. T. (2006) 'How career variety promotes the adaptability of managers: A theoretical model', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 69, No. 3, pp. 359-373.

Koen, J., Klehe, U., van Vianen, A., Zikic, J. and Nauta, A. (2010) 'Job-search strategies and reemployment quality: The impact of career adaptability', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 77, No. 1, pp. 126.

Kohn, P. M., O'Brien Wood, C., Pickering, D. I. and Decicco, T. L. (2003) 'The Personal Functioning Inventory: A Reliable and Valid Measure of Adaptiveness in Coping', in *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 111-123.

Krieshok, T. S., Black, M. D. and McKay, R. A. (2009) 'Career decision making: The limits of rationality and the abundance of non-conscious processes', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 75, No. 3, pp. 275-290.

Luzzo, D. A. and Ward, B. E. (1995) 'The relative contributions of self-efficacy and locus of control to the prediction of vocational congruence', in *Journal of Career Development*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 307-317.

McArdle, S., Waters, L., Briscoe, J. P. and Hall, D. T. (2007) 'Employability during unemployment: Adaptability, career identity and human and social capital', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 71, No. 2, pp. 247-264.

Morrison, R. F. and Hall, D. T. (2002) 'Career adaptability', in Hall, D.T. (ed.), *Protean careers in and out or organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, W., Bartrum, D. A. and Creed, P. A. (2004) 'Gender Differences for Optimism, Self-esteem, Expectations and Goals in Predicting Career Planning and Exploration in Adolescents', in *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 193-209.

Rottinghaus, P. J., Day, S. X. and Borgen, F. H. (2005) 'The Career Futures Inventory: A Measure of Career-Related Adaptability and Optimism', in *Journal of Career Assessment*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 3-24.

Savickas, M. (2008) *Report of framework and follow-up studies (Meeting 19 July 2008)*. Berlin: Life-design International Research Group – Career Adaptability Project, Humboldt Universität.

Savickas, M. L. (1997) 'Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 247-259.

Savickas, M. L. and Porfeli, E. J. (2010) *Career adaptability: Psychological readiness and psycho-social resources*. Paper presented at the 27th Congress of Applied Psychology, Melbourne, Australia.

Savickas, M. L., Nota, L., Rossier, J., Dauwalder, J.-P., Duarte, M. E., Guichard, J., Soresi, S., Van Esbroeck, R. and van Vianen, A. E. M. (2009) 'Life designing: A paradigm for career construction in the 21st century', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 75, No. 3, pp. 239-250.

Super, D. E. (1988) 'Vocational adjustment: Implementing a self-concept', in *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 188-194.

Super, D. and Knasel, E. (1981) 'Career development in adulthood: Some theoretical problems and a possible solution', in *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 194-201.

UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) (2011) *Review of Employment and Skills*. UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Wath-upon-Dearne.

van Vianen, A., De Pater, I. and Preenen, P. (2009) 'Adaptable Careers: Maximizing Less and Exploring More', in *The Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4, pp. 298-309.

Verbruggen, M. and Sels, L. (2008) 'Can career self-directedness be improved through counseling?', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 318-327.

Zikic, J. and Klehe, U.-C. (2006) 'Job loss as a blessing in disguise: The role of career exploration and career planning in predicting reemployment quality', in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 69, No. 3, pp. 391-409.