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Professionalising career guidance: Shaping an identity

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Mary McMahon



- **Who am I?**
- **Who are you?**
- **What do you do?**
- **What is career guidance?**



Identity

- **Sense of self**
 - **Self-awareness**
 - **Self-definition**
 - **Self-belief**
 - **Self-perception**
 - **Self-understanding**
- **Identities are constructed socially through interaction**
- **Individuals may hold multiple identities**



Professional identity

- how people define themselves in professional work roles (O'Reilly et al., 2020)
- manifests in the connection between professional people and professional occupations
- associated with specialist knowledge and expertise related to initial professional learning at university level, ongoing professional development (Billett, 2014) and membership in a professional organisation (Lester, 2009)
- reflected in the titles professionals use to define their roles (Oen & Cooper, 1988)



What is a profession?

- ‘recognised occupations that require specialised knowledge, training, and skills’

(O’Reilly et al., 2020, p. 79)

- ‘a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special 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’

(Australian Council of Professions, 2003)



Elements of a profession

- **A profession must have the following elements:**
 - **A systematic body of theory or knowledge**
 - **Authority and credibility**
 - **Community sanction, or regulation and control of its members**
 - **Code of ethics**
 - **Professional culture, or a culture of values, norms and symbols**

(Greenwood, 1957)



Is career guidance a profession?



Brief history of career guidance

- **Three interrelated factors**
 - Social reform response to labour market transformation during the industrial revolution
 - Concern about the educational outcomes and school to work transitions of young people
 - A “soft policy instrument” (Hooley et al., 2018, p. 17; Watts, 1998, p. 5) for policy makers by serving their social inclusion, educational, and labour market policy agendas
- **Social justice**
- **Primarily western**



OECD international review of career guidance

- “career guidance is weakly professionalised in most countries”

(OECD, 2004, p. 93)

- “In many countries insufficient training, inappropriate training, or both, constitute significant barriers to the capacity of career guidance services to contribute to the implementation of lifelong learning and active labour market policies.”

(OECD, 2004, p. 93)



Professionalisation

- ‘professionalisation is complex and involves developing systems and procedures to claim the autonomy, status, and social acceptance accorded to other professions ... professionalising a field requires a prodigious and sustained effort’

(O’Reilly et al., 2020, p. 83)

- **5 Es of professionalisation**
 - Education
 - Ethics
 - Experience
 - Examination
 - Entity

(Professional Standards Councils, nd)



Professional standards

- Define the career industry, its membership and its services
- Recognise the diverse skills and knowledge of career practitioners
- Guide practitioner entry into the industry
- Provide a foundation for designing career practitioner training
- Provide quality assurance to the public and other stakeholders
- Establish a benchmark against which career practitioners can be assessed, evaluated and judged by their peers and by others
- Require career practitioners to undertake continuing professional development
- Create an agreed terminology for the industry

(adapted from National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines & Standards, 2004)



Professional standards

- **Elements of the professional standards**
 - Terminology
 - Membership of the Profession
 - A Code of Ethics
 - Entry-Level Qualifications
 - Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
 - Competency Guidelines



Do professional standards make a difference?

- YES
- **Professional identity**
 - It is important the industry has developed professional standards (98%)
 - I belong to a national profession (90%)
 - The career development profession is defined through professional standards (91%)
- **Professional practice**
 - I now maintain PD records (95%)
- **Service delivery**
 - Standards will improve delivery of career development services (91%)

(Career Industry Council of Australia, 2012)



Do professional standards make a difference?

- YES
- Training
 - It is important that:
 - career development courses are endorsed by CICA (86%)
 - entry into the profession has been clarified by the Professional Standards (90%)

(Career Industry Council of Australia, 2012)



Is career guidance a profession?

- ‘Although similar to other professions, recognition by governments, employers, and the public of an identity for career development as a profession is not the same as for other fields.’

(O’Reilly et al., 2020, p. 84)

- Some challenges
 - Entry to the profession
 - Multiple titles
 - Multiple settings
 - Isolation
 - Public acceptance of the profession
 - Internationalisation of career guidance



Professionalising career guidance: Shaping an identity

- Career guidance ‘has over time been constructing a distinct professional identity within changing social and cultural contexts.’
(O’Reilly et al., 2020, p. 83)
- ‘Professional identity is not static but fluid; it is strongly influenced by how we see ourselves, how we perceive others perceive us and how we are viewed by society at large.’

(Neary, 2014)



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Thank you

Email: marylmcmahon@uq.edu.au

