Constructing professional identity through adopting critical perspectives

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Outline

How career development professionals construct their identity

The challenges to developing, sustaining and enhancing professional identity

How to create a sense of belonging within the profession

Moving forward - Opportunities

Final thoughts
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
Influences on professional identity

Ibarra (1999) suggests that professional identity evolves through socialisation and observation of peers.

Definition of role

Self-image

Expectations of others

Contributors to Identity Formation

Qualification and skill acquisition (dynamic)

External recognition important

Occupational identity formation (& reformation)

Socially constructed linked to communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991)

Brown, A (1997)
Factors contributing to professional identity

• Critical reflexion
• Empowerment and autonomy
• Learning (Bimrose et al, 2019)
• Nomenclature (Neary, 2014)
• Intellectual engagement- contributing to the evidence base
• Societal value and recognition
• Increased professional pride
• Belonging (Colley et al, 2007)
Challenges to professional identity

- Lack of cohesion across career guidance settings i.e. HE, Youth, Adult, Private practice
- Decentralisation – multi-professional teams
- Inability to articulate expertise
- Anomie – isolation
- Lack of community
- Dominance of neoliberal agenda’s – targets, payment by results
- Lack of evidence – base, theoretical underpinnings
How do we create a sense of belonging?

• Critical and intellectual engagement in our profession
  • Practitioner research
  • Critical challenge
  • Emancipatory careers education and guidance (Bengtsson, 2018)
  • Openness to evolving and developing practice
• Contributing to local, regional, national and global networks
• Congressional approach to practice which focuses on society and community, collaboration and cooperation, rather than ingressive approaches which are individualistic, competitive and adversarial (Cheng, 2020)
“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)

- Global recognition (Gough & Neary, 2020)
  - Similar issues
  - Shared experiences

- Opportunities resulting from lockdown
  - Global community i.e. Cedefop, Web based CPD, opportunity
  - Connectivity with practitioners
  - Shared agenda and learning
  - Digital practice
  - Access to CPD through digital

- Individual and collective professional identity
Final thoughts

Professionalisation and professional identity are important issues for our sector.

Working collectively, collaboratively and globally – there is power in reaching out and connecting with other career development professionals.

Taking individual responsibility for your own CPD.

Developing the profession and perceptions so career development supports the many not just the few.

Promote the evidence base - what we do makes a difference.

Professional career guidance more important than ever.

Individual and collective responsibility to promote the careers sector and the professionalism of our practitioners.
“But for those who do qualify and engage in autonomous professional Practice, the realisation dawns that qualifying is not the point of arrival, but the point of departure”.

Mulvey, 2004
References


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