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Career learning to tackle career stereotypes





★ P R I M E ★



„a **preconceived attitude about a particular occupation**, about people who are employed in that occupation or about one’s suitability for that occupation”

(Lipton, O'Connor, Terry & Bellamy, 1991).

“people’s **overgeneralized, only partially true, often misleading, and almost always oversimplified** ideas and perceptions” about jobs and people doing those jobs

(<http://career.iresearchnet.com/career-development/occupational-stereotypes>).

Career stereotype

young people (that have limited and irrelevant direct experience with the world of work) **can be influenced by occupational stereotypes, mainly through stereotyped thinking.**

This strongly emphasises on the important role of teachers and the early career educations, as is it well known that information is the most effective way of tackling stereotypes.



gender stereotypes

- “reflect traditional female and male role models, which have been hardened over years and are very resistant to change” (WITEC, 2006);
- some professions are associated more often with men or woman, and also that men are more often associated with some professions and women with other professions, and, unfortunately, this bias affects our way of perceiving the world of work;
- are probably the most common occupational stereotypes, this making them also the hardest to tackle.





age/generational stereotypes

- mostly refer to professional characteristics that are attributed to entire groups of people based only on their age, being defined as “judgements about individual employees based upon their age rather than on their actual knowledge, skills or abilities” (Hedge, Borman, 2012);
- for instance, stereotypes about older workers include negative aspects (“less motivated, generally less willing to participate in training and career development, more resistant and less willing to change, less trusting, less healthy, and more vulnerable to work-family imbalance” (Vickerstaff, Van der Horst, 2021)), but also positive aspects (“they are more reliable and committed, and possess better social skills than younger workers” (Mulders, 2019)).





financial stereotypes

- some professions are perceived as “well paid” and others as “underpaid”,
- usually due to over-generalizations of some very well-known examples,
- with mass media playing a key role into promoting this bias in perception;

- explain the strong social pressure on young people to choose professions that are perceived as ensuring them a financial comfort “for sure”, especially on the children with high educational performance, almost irrespective of their interests, abilities, preferences etc.





status stereotypes

- linked to the perception of some careers as providing a higher status in the society, sometimes irrespective of the payment for that job;
- the social perception of having high status professions determines a high social pressure for young people to choose those professions, especially in the case of students with high grades and performance.



emigration stereotypes

- linked to perceiving the migration as a “career path”, as the only solution that allows a better harnessing of one’s skills and knowledge, mostly present in poorer countries;
- can have important negative consequences on children’s career planning, as some teenagers don't plan a career and don't prepare themselves for a specific career (including education and acquiring knowledge and skills for that career), but only plan their migration.



ethnic stereotypes

- linked to strong convictions related to the perfect match between an ethnicity and some professions, usually associated with the stereotypes about the ethnicity itself;
- are more present in the countries that are usually a destination for migrants, countries with many ethnic minorities;
- the most well-known ethnic stereotype is the „Polish plumber“, a stereotype of cheap labour from Eastern Europe that includes some indirect reference to the fact that immigrants can only do low-qualified jobs.

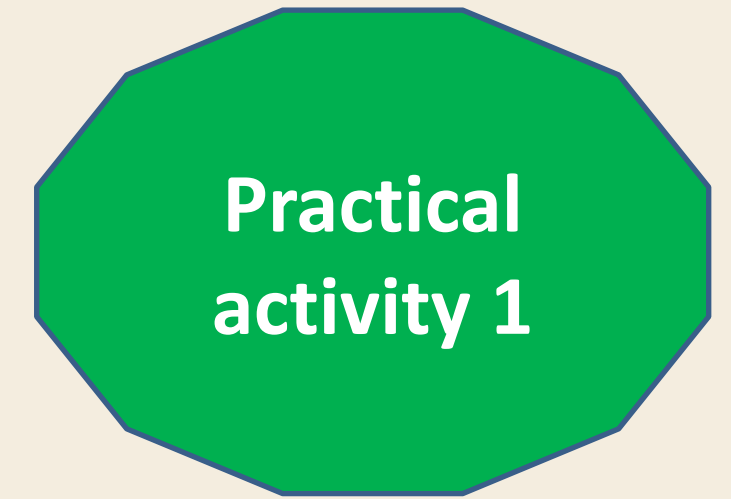




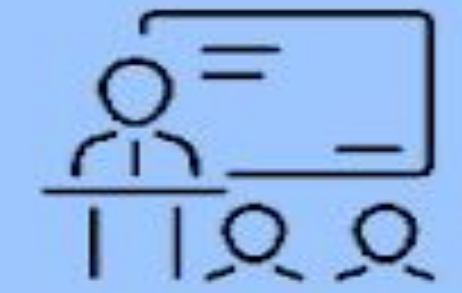
stereotypes about specific jobs and people

- particular stereotypes that target specific jobs and specific people, usually explained by lack of information and over-generalization of a very particular situation;
- there are many stereotypes about movies stars, and still most of the people believing in those stereotypes never met a movie star;
- the most inciting specific stereotypes are the ones related to the new professions that appeared due to the important changes in the world of work in the past years (“content creators”, “bloggers” etc.)





Teachers' role in tackling career stereotypes through career learning

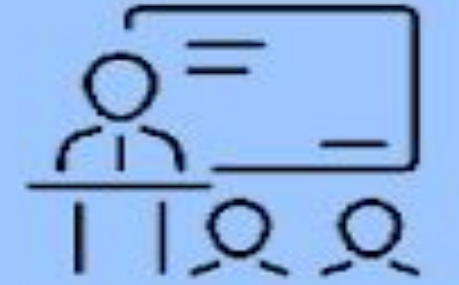


The involvement of teachers in career and employability learning and, therefore, in tackling career stereotypes, is described by Hooley, Watts, Andrews (2015) in terms of tutorial, teaching and leadership roles; a synthesis of these roles is presented in data sheet 1.

Please read carefully the information in data sheet 1 and reflect on the specific situation of career learning in your school, as well as on your personal involvement (and your colleagues' involvement) in career learning activities.



Tutorial roles of teachers *



Career informant

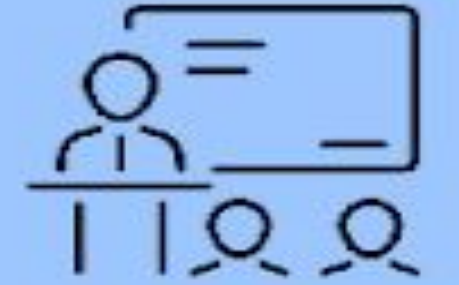
- provides resources and experiences that an individual can use to help shape their career thinking, but takes care to clarify that this is not the only option or only way to build a career.
- offer young people an opportunity to discuss their futures with a trusted adult.

Pastoral support

- teachers are approached by students with their concerns and issues; sometimes these issues will be explicitly framed as career conversations, but at other times they may not;
- although they are not expected to be able to solve all of these issues, teachers are expected to talk about them with students, help where appropriate and make referrals to other professionals who may be able to help further.



Teaching roles of teachers *



Within-subject

- teachers can include career learning activities and discussions in the subject they teach, creating career-related learning opportunities within and beside the subject curriculum.
- career learning can be approached as a formal cross-curricular theme, but different experiments have found it difficult to realise in practice.

Specific career learning programmes

- students are provided with a clearly demarcated space for learning about the world of work and considering their future.
- allows for consideration of occupations which do not directly link to subject-based curricula and for the consideration of strategies for effective career development and career management.



Leadership roles of teachers *



Leading career learning programmes

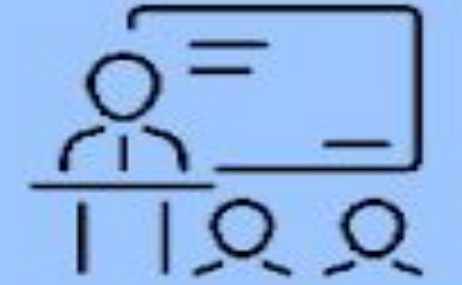
- a school's careers leader needs to work with teachers, guidance professionals and other groups to deliver a school's careers programme and to have an understanding of the work of all these groups.
- the role also has an important external component to engage employers, post-secondary providers and other key community stakeholders.

Senior leadership

- where career and employability learning is effectively realised, it tends to be dependent on strong direction from the school's senior leadership;
- therefore, ideally, schools should identify a member of the senior leadership team as having responsibility for the area.



First task



Teachers are divided into smaller groups (or online rooms if online training) according to the subject they teach.

Each group is asked to focus on the teaching role (within subject) and on a specific career stereotype and to identify at least **one example of an effective way to include a career learning activity in their teaching hours** to tackle that specific stereotype.

Each group could have 15 minutes to identify their potential action strategy.



each group presents their solutions, with the group discussion focusing on:

- emphasising on the positive aspects of the proposed strategy and harnessing the potential effectiveness of each proposed activities;
- encouraging the participants to reflect to the potential of including the activities proposed by other groups in their school or on their subjects, and what adaptation is needed;
- analysing the potential risks that teachers implementing that activity might have to face and establishing the specific measures to minimize those risks, as well as the level of expertise that teachers might need to implement the activity;
- establishing with the trainees the potential ways to involve more teachers in the same / similar activities, or other stakeholders;
- reflecting on the potential effectiveness of such activities and ways to make the activity even more effective;



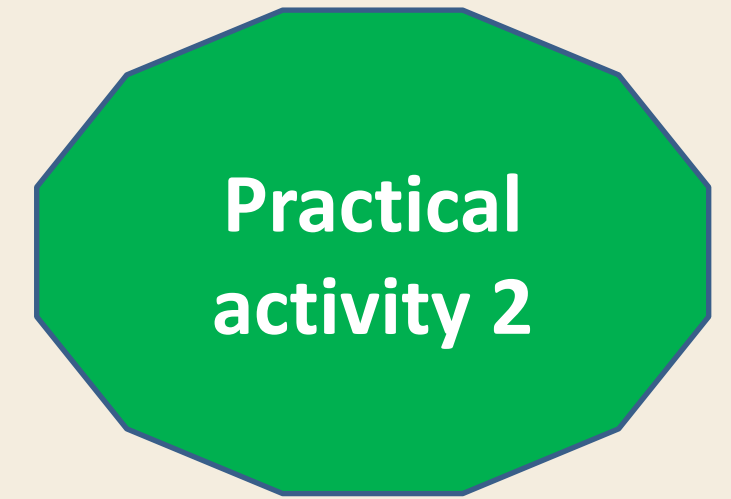
Second task

Teachers are asked to select, individually, one activity from the ones presented by all groups, an activity that he / she feels it's the most relevant for their class and personal teaching style.

Each teacher is asked to reflect, individually, on the specific measures that he / she would implement as leader of career learning programmes in their school in order to transform that activity into a learning programme done at school level, focusing on the both the difficulties and potential positive impact.

After some minutes (5-10) of reflection, the trainer moderates a group discussion started by participants that voluntarily want to share their reflections





**Career learning – teachers and
career counsellors / career advisers**



An important aspect of the involvement of teachers is that career learning does not exclude career advisers, but encourages the interaction and cooperation of different professionals with sometimes overlapping responsibilities and skills.

Data sheet 2 synthesises the specific roles of teachers, career advisers and career leaders (Hooley, Watts, Andrews, 2015). Please read carefully the information and reflect on the specific situation of career learning in your school and collaboration among different specialists in your school for organizing and delivering career learning activities.



Teachers		Career advisers
A stable careers programme	Delivers the careers programme in the school.	Provides specialist input and resources for the programme.
Learning from career and labour market information	Should have an awareness of career and labour market and where to get it	Provides up-to-date intelligence on opportunities beyond school/college, including expectations of employers, training providers. Also has a strong awareness of the various sources of career and labour market



Teachers		Career advisers
Addressing the needs of each pupil	Contributes to recordkeeping and remains aware of students' individual needs.	Provides individualised support for students as required.
Linking curriculum learning to careers	Leads on curriculum. Has a responsibility for integrating CEL where appropriate.	Provides specialised input and support as needed.



Teachers		Career advisers
Encounters with employers and employees	Identifies curriculum space where employer input would be useful. Helps students to prepare for, and reflect on, encounters.	Provides reflective opportunities for students to talk about their experience with employers and how this impacts on their career development.
Experiences of workplaces	Identifies curriculum space where employer input would be useful. Helps students to prepare for, and reflect on, encounters.	Provides reflective opportunities for students to talk about their experience with employers and how this impacts on their career development.



Teachers		Career advisers
Encounters with further and higher education	Discusses possible further and higher education routes related to their subject. Provides support and a framework for postsecondary applications.	Provides detailed technical information about entry requirements and application processes. Provides reflective spaces for students to discuss their encounters.
Personal guidance	Engages in informal career conversations. Refers students to guidance professionals for more in-depth support.	Provides in-depth guidance.



First task: After a period of reflection (5-10 minutes), the trainer asks the trainees to select from the activities they thought an activity that has a potential strong contribution to tackling a career stereotype and to reflect on their contribution as teachers and other specialists' contribution in that activity.



2-3 volunteers share their ideas, with the group discussion focusing on:

- emphasising on the positive aspects of the proposed collaboration strategy and harnessing the potential effectiveness of each proposed activities;
- encouraging the participants to reflect to potential ways to enhance the participation of teachers in career learning and to enhance the cooperation with the career counsellor in tackling career stereotypes through career learning activities;
- establishing with the trainees the potential ways to involve more teachers in the same / similar activities, or other stakeholders;
- reflecting on the specific role of teachers in career learning, as the career counsellor / adviser cannot do all activities by himself.



Second task



Teachers attending the training activity are divided in smaller groups from the same school (if all training group comes from one school, other grouping criteria can be used, including random grouping).

Each group is asked to focus on a specific career stereotype and to create a draft for a career learning activity to tackle that stereotype. The activity should involve more teachers, but also other specialists (career counsellor / adviser, other stakeholders, invited experts etc.)

The trainees task is to draft a realistic approach, an activity that can be implemented in their school, with the resources they have available.



Trainees have 20-25 minutes to draft their planned activity and, after that, 5 minutes to share their ideas with the other participants.



The trainer actively listens to all groups and moderates a debate focusing on:

- the existence of many original ideas about involving different specialists in career learning to tackle different career stereotypes;
- the importance of teachers' involvement in those activities, and especially the importance of teachers having initiative in this field; the trainer emphasizes on the fact that teachers know their class better than anyone else and can plan specific, adapted career learning activities, while the career counsellor that addresses all classes in the school probably will come up with a more general strategy;
- the importance of collaboration between teachers and other specialists, as each of them has their own expertise and they can enhance each other's skills and expertise in the benefit of the children;
- the conclusion is related to the fact that any teacher can and should design such activities for their pupils, as sometimes it can be very short activities that can be integrated in the curriculum.



Thank you for
your attention!