Career learning to promote inclusion and to fight career stereotypes

PR4. Training

Career stereotype is "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). Evidence suggests that there are "cross-culturally cutting dimensions of social judgment" (Strinic, Carlsson, Agerstrom, 2022). Therefore, the occupational stereotypes can be seen ad "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).

Many times, specific persons, especially young people that have limited and irrelevant direct experience with the world of work, can be influenced by occupational stereotypes, mainly through stereotyped thinking, characterized often by oversimplification, prejudice, projection of individuals' own inadequacies onto others; authority figures might have an important role in transmitting stereotypes and generalizing them.

Among the most common career stereotypes one could find:

- gender stereotypes that "reflect traditional female and male role models, which have been hardened over years and are very resistant to change" (WITEC, 2006);

- age stereotypes, that 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);

- financial stereotypes related to perceived payment in different professions: 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;

- 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;

- 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;

- 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. The most well-known ethic 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.

Career learning includes a "wide range of activities which support young people to think about their futures, build the skills they need, and make successful transitions" and shifts focus from the specialists that provide career guidance and counselling to the teachers that "should be at the heart of a long-term approach to enhancing career and employability learning, especially as schools now have the primary responsibility for the delivery of career and employability learning for young people" (Hooley, Watts, Andrews, 2015).

Practical activity 1. 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 this roles in presented in data sheet 1.

The trainees are kindly asked to read carefully the information in data sheet 1 and to reflect on the specific situation of career learning in their school, as well as on their personal involvement (and their colleagues' involvement) in career learning activities; the trainer emphasizes on trainees taking into consideration all the different roles that a teacher might have in this field.

Task 1. Teachers attending the training activity are divided in smaller groups according to the subject that they are teaching (in case of very small number of teachers for some specific topics, they are grouped with teachers of similar subjects). 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.

Additional information is added for teachers, as the trainer explains that unconscious stereotypes might be tackled in a different way that the stereotypes that the person is aware of. Data sheet 2 is provided to the trainees and explained by the trainer.

According to the information in the data sheet 2, the trainers strongly recommend to the trainees to reflect to the potential effect of their proposed activities in reinforcing the stereotypes. Also, the trainer could decide with the different groups on different career stereotypes to be analysed by different groups, so that diverse solution could be presented for all participants to learn from each-other.

Each group could have 15 minutes to identify their potential action strategy; then each group presents their solutions and the trainer moderates a 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;

Task 2. 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 on this topic, the trainer moderates a group discussion started by participants that voluntarily want to share their reflections, focusing on encouraging the trainees for thinking on higher level and about a more general strategy; the key element in this discussion is to analyse only realistic ideas that can really be implemented in the participants' schools, according to the specific condition and resources available.

The trainer finishes the activity by emphasising to the participants that maybe the role of leader of career learning programmes is more difficult and might require specific skills and expertise, but the teaching role is manageable for any teacher that really want to support their pupils in building the skills they need for a successful transition to the world of work.

Practical activity 2. Career learning – teachers and career counsellors/advicers

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 synthetises the specific roles of teachers, career advisers and career leaders (Hooley, Watts, Andrews, 2015).

The trainees are kindly asked to read carefully the information in data sheet 2 and to reflect on the specific situation of career learning in their school and collaboration among different specialists in their school for organizing and delivering career learning activities; the trainer emphasizes on trainees taking into consideration all specialist involved in those activities, if other that teachers and career counsellors are present and active in their school.

Task 1. 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.

The trainer finds 2-3 volunteers that want to share their ideas and starts and moderates a 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.

Task 2. 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.) and the trainees should focus on specific roles of each specialist involved in the activity.

The trainer emphasizes that the trainees task is to draft a realistic approach, an activity that can be implemented in their school, with the resources they have available, and come up with a convincing scenario of integrating that activity in the educational plan of their school. 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 is responsible of creating a positive working environment so that all trainees feel safe and comfortable to share their ideas, as well as for encouraging positive feed-back from other trainees.

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 that 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 have their own expertise and their can enhance each other 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.

Practical activity 3. Training activity that teachers can use with their pupils

The trainer emphasizes on the fact that people in front of him are teachers, therefore they have a clear career path and already made their career decisions; but, in the same time, for sure all of them had also different career path in mind before taking the decision of becoming teachers.

The trainer asks for the trainees to reflect on the career they might have had if they would have decided not to become teachers (clearly mentioning that they don't have to share their thoughts if they are not comfortable in doing this) and to answer some simple, but yet very meaningful questions:

- how would the world be without that profession? Is it even possible?

- was the decision of dropping that career linked in any way with being a man / woman?

- was the decision of dropping that career linked in any way with the perceived status of the jobs taken into consideration? Or the perceived financial level associated with each profession?

- was the decision of dropping that career linked in any way with the information they had about that profession or people doing that job? Looking in retrospect, was that information accurate? Would having accurate information change their decision?

The trainer builds on the answers publicly given by the volunteering participants focusing especially on two different things:

- on the one hand, all jobs are important and any job well done is a successful career;

- on the other hand, there are a lot of stereotypes influencing the career choice and having relevant and accurate information is the most important factor in tackling career stereotypes and making the right career choices.

The trainer finishes by clearly stating that this can be a very simple, yet effective activity that can be done with children to tackle career stereotypes (obviously, pupils task is to think about a career they would like, and questions addressed to pupils need to be slightly adapted), but this kind of questions and reflection not only can provide relevant information for pupils, but can also tackle career stereotypes without even mentioning them.

Data sheet 1. Different roles of teachers in career and employability learning (Hooley, Watts, Andrews, 2015).

| Tutorial roles | Career informant | The role of career informant is a valuable one to support young people's career development, but it is distinct from the role of careers adviser. The 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. Where this is done well, it will offer young

people an opportunity to discuss their futures with a trusted adult and provide them with examples of how others have managed the challenges that they are

addressing.

Typical tasks: talking about decisions that they made and how they made them; talking about their career building; providing specific subject or occupational information, etc. |
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| | 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.

Typical tasks: providing a first port of call for career conversations; discussing |

			the value of work experience and helping to debrief students' experiences of work; acting as a facilitator and advocate for students to help them to have career conversations with other staff, parents and employers, etc.
Teaching roles	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. If handled well, including career learning within subjects can increase engagement and offer a range of perspectives that can enhance both subject learning and career learning. Also, career learning can be approched as as a formal cross-curricular theme, but different experiments have found it difficult to realise in practice. By connecting career learning to the subject-based curriculum, the relevance of subjects is enhanced and bridges are built between students' lived experience and their futures. Typical tasks: using the curriculum to develop core employability skills; explaining to pupils the relevance in the workplace of the knowledge and skills developed in their subject; using work and career as a way of making cross-curricular links with other subjects; using work-related projects within their subject teaching, etc.

	Specific career learning programmes	Where career learning is delivered effectively as a discrete subject, students are provided with a clearly demarcated space for learning about the world of work and considering their future. This is important because it 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. Having a distinct curriculum space for career learning is likely to include teaching staff beyond the school's main specialist in career and employability learning.
		Typical tasks: delivering career learning lessons, drawing on lesson plans and resources developed by the careers leader; contributing particular career learning inputs related to subject expertise; facilitating groups within off-timetable days, etc.
Leadership roles	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.

		Typical tasks: contributing to the development of the school's strategy and policy relating to career learning and associated areas; supporting the implementation of career learning across the school; planning and delivering career learning programmes within the school; communicating models of effective career learning and advocating for its value with
	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.

Typical tasks: connecting career and employability learning to the school's mission and ethos; building strategic partnerships with employers, learning providers and

other stakeholders to support career learning; working with other school senior leaders to develop collaborative

arrangements. |

Data sheet 2. Tackling unconscious and conscious stereotypes

The irrational stereotypes are the believes that children might have without being aware of them and without considering those thoughts to be stereotypical. For instance, children are usually raised with love for their country and positive attitudes towards their conationals; irrespective of

calling this patriotism or nationalism, it might determine the future adults to have very strong positive stereotypes about their ethnicity and about all persons from their ethnic group, that might affect their social integration, their career plans and might interfere with their job, especially if they work with persona from other ethnic group. The most effective way to tackle these unconscious stereotypes is to make the person think, usually by addressing direct questions. For instance, whenever the kid makes over generalized statements ("us, from our ethnic group, we are all…"), a direct question such as "do you know all the people from your ethnic group?" or "you really don't know any member from your ethnic group that is not like that?" can make the child think and re-analyse its believes. But, if the child tries to find arguments for its original statement, then the stereotype is not unconscious anymore, and any other challenge aggressed to its believes will only reinforce his stereotype.

The rational stereotypes are the believes that children are aware of, conscious thoughts that children believe as true. Tackling those stereotypes in a direct manned will only reinforce them, as the person trusts his judgement and will not be eager to accept he was wrong. In this case, stereotypes can only be tackled in indirect ways, without even mentioning the stereotype, through activities that seems to have no link with the stereotype itself.

Data sheet 3: Sharing responsibilities across different professional roles (Hooley, Watts, Andrews, 2015)

	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
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.
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.
Encounters with further and higher education	Discusses possible further and higher education routes related to their subject. Provides support and a	Provides detailed technical information about entry requirements and application processes.

	framework for postsecondary applications.	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.

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