

CAREERS PASSPORT

Workshop 3

Serendipity



OVERVIEW OF THE CAREER PASSPORT PROGRAM

Career management skills are an essential tool for the successful navigation of repeated career transition processes that individuals will engage in during their adult life.

In order to enable UNE students to develop the competencies required to develop these skills, the UNE Careers Service has developed the Career Education Passport. This series of interactive workshops are designed to be undertaken in sequence, as each succeeding workshop assumes certain knowledge and competencies.

Topic	Duration	Workshop Titles
Career self-management	3x3 hr workshops	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Self-reflection2. Surveying the work environment3. Serendipity
Job seeking skills	2x2 hr workshops	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resume writing & applying for jobs2. Interviews & assessment centres
Making the transition from study to workplace	Various	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Preparation for Virtual Careers Fair2. Internships3. WorkReady4. Work Experience

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this workshop we will be developing problem solving and decision making skills. We will be incorporating the elements of chance and the unexpected into the career development process. After completing this workshop you should

- have the skills needed to successfully engage in successive career transitions throughout your working life
- be comfortable holding apparently contradictory ideas simultaneously – that is, the need for planning with the awareness of having to be able to adapt as circumstances change
- have an increased awareness of potential career options and how to best position yourself to take advantage of serendipitous events
- be able to make better informed choices in subject selection and see the connection between their course of study and desired career destination
- be more mindful of the importance of developing Graduate Attributes and generic employability skills, identified by DEETYA as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning and technology

This course will contribute to the development of the following Graduate Attributes: communication skills, information literacy, lifelong learning, problem solving, and teamwork.

CAREER NARRATIVE

- Recap Workshop 1 and 2
- Seeking congruence and meaningfulness
- Career development as a planned and predictable journey?
- Consider examples of career narratives - DISCUSSION
- Observe how frequently 'chance events' play a role – in a recent (Bell, 2002) study of career transition experiences 75% of respondents reported serendipity as a significant influence.

CHAOS THEORY AND CAREER PLANNING

(Based on the work of Bright & Pryor, 2003)

- Rational, thoughtful and logical career planning and decision making is worth pursuing BUT
- We know from experience that this 'ideal' fails to take into account the following:
 - **Complexity** of human experience and influences
 - **Change** – the dynamic, interactive and adaptive nature of human functioning in the world
 - **Constructiveness** – making meaningful and congruent narratives out of our experience and perceptions
 - **Chance** – the impact of the unplanned and the unpredictable
- Preference for the predictable, linear progression because it assumes a degree of control (the gambler's fallacy)
- Reality reflects a fractal pattern – incorporating unpredictable elements with potential for myriad possibilities
- A career transition involves changing the existing fractal pattern by virtue of acting on one career option (sand pile)
- If the world is chaotic and unpredictable and 'stuff happens', how are we to best cope?
- Notion of '**career adaptability**' as measure of career maturity

ACCEPTING AN OXYMORONIC STATUS QUO

- Career adaptability – skills portfolios, occupational clusters
- Planned happenstance, or planful serendipity, or positive uncertainty – learning not to jump to a solution, not to write off options, being comfortable with 'maybe' or 'a possibility'. (lateral thinking skills)
- 'Meandering and manoeuvring'

THE 4 C'S OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY

(Based on the work of Mark L. Savickas, 2001)

- CONCERN

Concern about one's own vocational future is the first and most important dimension of career adaptability. Career concern means essentially a future orientation, a sense that it is important to prepare for tomorrow. ...Thinking about one's worklife across time is the essence of career because a subjective career is not a behaviour, it is an idea – a reflection on the self.

- CONTROL

Control over one's own vocational future is the second most important dimension in career adaptability. Career control means that individuals feel and believe that they are responsible for constructing their careers. Assertive attitudes and belief in personal responsibility incline individuals to engage in activities and experiences that promote decisiveness and competence in decision making.

- CURIOSITY

With a sense of control comes the initiative for learning about the types of work that one might want to do and the occupational opportunities to do it.When acted upon, curiosity produces a fund of knowledge with which to make choices that fit self to situation.

- CONFIDENCE

The fourth and final dimension of career adaptability is confidence. Career choices require solving complex problems. It takes confidence to do what is required to master these problems.

Mark Savickas (1997) has defined 'career adaptability' as **'the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions.'**

In this session we will focus on the second pair of attributes – **curiosity and confidence.**

CURIOSITY

- Reticular activating system – what it is and how to use it
- Developing sensory awareness
- Notice when you are interested in something
- How? What? Where? When? Why? What if?

EXERCISE

1. What are you interested in?

2. Generate a list of roles, tasks, activities associated with this field of interest – dig behind the obvious.

3. Do any of these roles match your own skills and interests?

4. How could you potentially get an 'in'?

SERENDIPITY

- **“Serendipity is not serendipitous. Serendipity is ubiquitous”** (Krumboltz, 1998)
- Unplanned events are a normal and expected part of the career development process
- Small group exercise

1. How did some unplanned event affect your life or career?

2. What did you do that enabled this unplanned event to happen?

3. Reflecting on your response to the preceding questions, generalise about some of the things you could do in the future to precipitate ‘serendipitous events’.

4. Make a commitment to follow through with one or more of the actions you have identified.

“Serendipity is not merely waiting for a fortuitous event to happen. Serendipity requires action on the part of the recipient – action to create favourable circumstances, action to recognise opportunities when they arise and action to capitalise on unplanned events in a timely manner.” (Krumboltz, 1998)

LOGIC & LATERAL THINKING

- Use logic **together with** lateral thinking to generate more options (example of BBC documentary department)
- Challenge assumptions and occupational stereotypes
- Challenge 'accepted wisdom' eg there are no jobs for Arts graduates, there is no future in such-and-such occupation, you can't get into a decent law firm unless you went to one of the 'sandstone' law schools
- Query occupational information – what context or experience is informing or colouring the advice?
- Don't take the first answer that presents itself. Approach to the 'problem' of finding out what you want to do – find an answer, and then proceed to find more answers. Refer Mix and Match exercise from Workshop 2 – generate possibilities, multiple 'right answers'
- Suspend critical judgement – self editing.
- Reframe the question – “I am graduating with a degree in xyz, what can I do?” Start by thinking about what you want to do, then see how you go about best equipping yourself for that occupation.
- 'Cognitive restructuring' often called reframing, involves learning to see a problem from a different perspective. Experiments carried out by Mitchell and Krumboltz (1987) showed college students who were having difficulty making a career decision found that the cognitive restructuring intervention was most effective in reducing anxiety and promoting career exploration. These students also reported more satisfaction in using the decision making skills they had learned.

EXERCISE

CONFIDENCE

- Mistakes are OK if we learn from them
- What's the worst that can happen?
- How could you prepare to handle a worst case scenario?
- What would be a best case scenario?
- What would happen if you never tried at all?

LUCK IS NO ACCIDENT

(From the 2004 book of the same name by John Krumboltz and Al Levin, pages 159-160)

- You never need to decide what you are going to be in the future. You may formulate some goals at various times, but those goals are always subject to change as you grow and learn, and as the world changes around you. Better to keep your eyes and mind open at all times.
- Unplanned events will inevitably have an impact on your career. Be alert and ready to take advantage of them when they occur.
- Reality may be offering you better options than you could have dreamed. Stay awake while you are dreaming.
- Engaging in a variety of activities will help you discover what you like and dislike.
- Expect to make mistakes and experience failure. They provide great learning experiences, and sometimes they lead to even better outcomes than you could have predicted.
- You can create your own unplanned luck events by volunteering your assistance, joining organisations, taking courses, striking up conversations with friends and strangers, surfing the web, reading books and magazines, and making yourself valuable to others.
- Every experience is a way to learn.
- You can discover a variety of activities that are satisfying, even if you are not employed.
- Beliefs that keep you open to new ideas and experiences will help you overcome internal obstacles.