

What's in it for me?
Space Solutions for the Smithereens of Career Management in Education

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“Although I search myself, it’s always someone else I see” (Elton John and Bernie Taupin, 1974)

Abstract

Adopting a discussion approach enables experiences of career management to be shared in a supportive manner with the potential to identify a number of practical solutions which reflect the complexity and time pressures experienced in the contemporary education sector. The notions of space, corralling, recovery and hindrance are introduced together with models with the potential to support peer coaching. Encouragement in order to set and prioritize goals, think in ink and garner support from available sources is debated as welcome contributions to prioritizing effective career management practices and subsequently limiting smithereens in workplace practices.

Key words: Career management, hindrances, coaching

Introduction

The purpose of the discussion is first is to establish the frequency and extent to which educators actively participate in career management practices and what the results reveal.

Secondly, ascertain the prevailing levels of enthusiasm related to the career choice of being an educator, how this changes over time and why. Based on what the initial responses, probe into the sources, from the participant’s perspective. These findings would be noted and used as a foundation to initially discuss ways in which these aspects of an educator’s role can be given a higher priority.

Thirdly, the discussion would progress to consider the practicalities of embedding a pathway progression route in a way that it does not become an additional burden to such an extent that it subsequently detracts from ongoing participation. Finally the discussion will ask for a view on the prevailing scope of opportunity for progression and the potential benefits of peer career coaching, concluding in the stating of two personal objectives.

The intended outcome is for attendees to identify or focus on a career goal and enthusiasm booster practices before considering potential actions to reach a career goal. This

activity will contribute towards developing and enhancing career management as an additional skill, which has longevity over the course of a career.

Early and mid-career educators are the target audience; however this would not preclude anyone at other career stages wishing to contribute or expressing an interest in career management or coaching.

Theoretical Foundations

This section is limited to an introduction covering several diverse bodies of knowledge that have the potential to contribute to effective career management.

As educators, the concept of learning is a central construct of the role. Learning is referred to as “a process of becoming a member of a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation,” (Kolb and Kolb, 2005:200). There are different ways of learning which flourish through a map of territories and frames of reference, but all require a space. It is expected that the educator attends to learning styles in delivery but may subsequently omit to consider personal circumstances and create a space as a result of fatigue or work pressures.

Career attitudes have changed in line with the impact of the economic and business environment with expectations that individuals increasingly self-manage their careers (Barnett and Bradley, 2007) resulting in the psychological contract undergoing considerable revision. Subjective career success is increasingly internal, however access to organizational support and resources predict that people are more likely to take actions to achieve their goals. Agreeing with the view that a proactive personality is also an influencing factor for engaging in career management behaviour, Barnett and Bradley (2007) also link personal pursuit of relevant career goals to individual wellbeing. Therefore both personal and organizational benefits are potentially derived from the management of careers. However the

evaluation of career development remains somewhat vague against other more tangible opportunities (Wright and Belcourt, 1994), thus many developmental programmes fail to meet participants' career expectations. The literature is scant in the intervening period.

Embedding mini cycles around the notion of 'what just happened' with storytelling activities that anchor learning is identified by Miller (2017) to participate in a three-phase learning cycle model of perform-reflect-design which has fit with a demanding and often urgent agenda. Sharing a vocabulary that describes and explains learning to manage oneself has "three distinct coherent and consistent narrative threads to provide a conceptual framework" (Miller, 2017:342) which involves a performance description, meaningful reflection and sound design as a foundation of meeting the challenge in needing to know what we need to know now and putting aside the rest.

Green and Binsardi (2014) note that limited attention has been given to behaviours of engaged and motivated individuals who do strive to undertake personal development and career aspirations in education. What is practised has been theorized as systematic advocating and incorporates a novel approach to the interpretation of development work through synthesis with the way in which hobbies are practised. This theory identifies barricading out other pressing requirements, referred to as corralling, which is creates a selective space maintained through effective diary keeping and reducing the detrimental impact of task switching leading to polyphasic thinking. Supportive or cajoling colleagues play a major role, assisting with mental mustering along with a sense of purpose and the consumption of thinking calories.

Paideia seeks to realise human potential and restore purposefulness and meaningfulness according to Antonacopoulou (2016). The related suggestion is a revision of a professional career with future-oriented endeavour through ideas that are generated and shared through teaching. Four keys principles are proposed by Antonacopoulou (2016) to

provide meaning to a career; they are cultivate, character, conscience and competence which require conduits for learning and filling-in skill gaps. The conduits are attentiveness, alertness, awareness and appreciation which describe the framework within which meaningful coaching occurs.

Coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve (Parsloe, 1999). In terms of assistance the staying off-court impartial resource of meaningful coaching (Mertel, 2010) is a mechanism for drawing on support and help, acceptance of challenges to achieve results and validate individual beliefs. A view of peer coaching, that is lateral in nature is a recognition of “a long-term, regularly scheduled interaction that is generally dyadic in nature.” (Hagen, Bialek and Peterson, 2017:541). However, according to D’Abate (2003) it is more likely to involve interactions related to performance improvement and there is widespread agreement within the literature that clear/specific goals are an important aspect of peer coaching with a defined purpose and the provision of help or assistance.

To support career development two additional aspects require attention; recovery and hindrance. Sonnentag and Frtitz (2015) have written extensively about recovery from job-stresses by refraining from job-related activities and thoughts during non-work time. This is increasingly difficult as technology invades all aspects of life, adding to workload and reducing opportunities for mental disengagement and detachment. Limiting detachment is a predictor of reduced well-being and higher levels of strain. Educators experience deadlines that also encroach on non-work time. Additional layers of hindrance tend to constrain or interfere with individual’s work achievement and do not tend to be associated with potential gains (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling and Boudrea, 2000). Lepine, Podsakoggf and Lepin (2005) take this view further and report negative effects on work performance, this view

being endorsed by Zhu and Wang (2016) who propose hindrance as having a negative effect on academic achievement.

Teaching Implications

Creating a space within the workplace in a perpetually busy environment is a challenge for educators, particularly when there is a high frequency of hindrance in various formats. Being proactive in taking action to focus on activities related to career management and the potential for progression requires space.

Developing a space to think, plan and undertake career-related activities can contribute to the personal meaning and worthwhileness of a job role. It has the potential to rekindle enthusiasm as there is a greater sense of ‘there is something in it for me’.

The implications, therefore, have two potential benefits for teaching. One is linked to the actual role of teaching and career progression which may require a portfolio of material, teaching plans, assignments and suggestions for change and improvement as supporting evidence. This provides a meaningful opportunity to encourage a revision of style and material and provide a sense of freshness to what may have become a workaday environment, resulting in improved teaching.

A further benefit is more personal and clear sense of purpose to reach a career goal requiring proactive behaviours to corral the space, improve self-management, support well-being and contribute to overall enthusiasm. These traits are infectious and have the potential to extend into the classroom, enhance engagement and interactivity particularly when linked with the benefits of peer coaching to engage in conversation and set a goal.

Session Description

Introduction- five minutes - The purpose of the session, the discussion contents and how participants will be involved before outlining the contents which have been previously referred to in the introduction of the paper to produce individual action points in the concluding section.

Part one – collecting data, sharing views (Appendix A) How often to you allocate time to consider your personal career management? What resources are available to you in connection with your career management?

Part two – personal mojo (Sheet 2) - How enthusiastic and motivated do you feel in relation to your future career progression? In your opinion why is this the case?

Part three – pathway progress - Levels, frequency and extent of hindrance occurrences.
Benefits of peer coaching

Part four – individual goal and concluding remarks

Part one – ACTIVITY - five minutes to complete pizza and resource box

Many years ago, in my corporate days, I was undertaking a lengthy taxi journey across central Ireland and struck up a conversation with the driver who suggested that life is like a pizza and it is good practice to keep a slice for personal activities. As academics we may be slicing our life pizza in portion sizes that leave us feeling we are on a long-standing deprivation diet in relation to our personal career.

Resource – life pizza diagram for participants to complete on an individual basis and discuss as a group. Box below the pizza - to list resources and their effectiveness in relation

to career management. Resource – scale of 0 – 100 rate your enthusiasm and motivation.

Write one sentence to explain why this is the case

Part one DISCUSSION – 15 minutes – ask for key points from participants, prioritise in terms of frequency/popularity of choices – what should we, as educators, do to address the findings? Participants to note specific action points of relevance to their situation, circumstances and aspirations

Part two – ACTIVITY - Pathway progress – 5 minutes reflection and listing hindrances

Within the recovery and performance literature, which have links to career management and progression there are several references a number of psychological models, however one aspect that is given scant attention of the impact of hindrance. A small sample survey from work colleagues reported hindrance (or interruption) as being the most frequent occurrence within the work place that restricted and limited them from undertaking tasks related specifically to career progression.

Action: write a list of when hindrances occur, with what frequency, how long they last and what is the impact on you

Part 2 DISCUSSION – 15 minutes – what actions can we/you/management educators do to reduce hindrances, create a space and use peer coaching to support career management?

Concluding Section (Appendix B) – ten minutes – goals; compose discuss and agree

- one month action point / one three month action point

Any questions and thank everyone for attending, summary and close – if there is time I will tell a story about how my career has progressed using these techniques.

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Appendices:

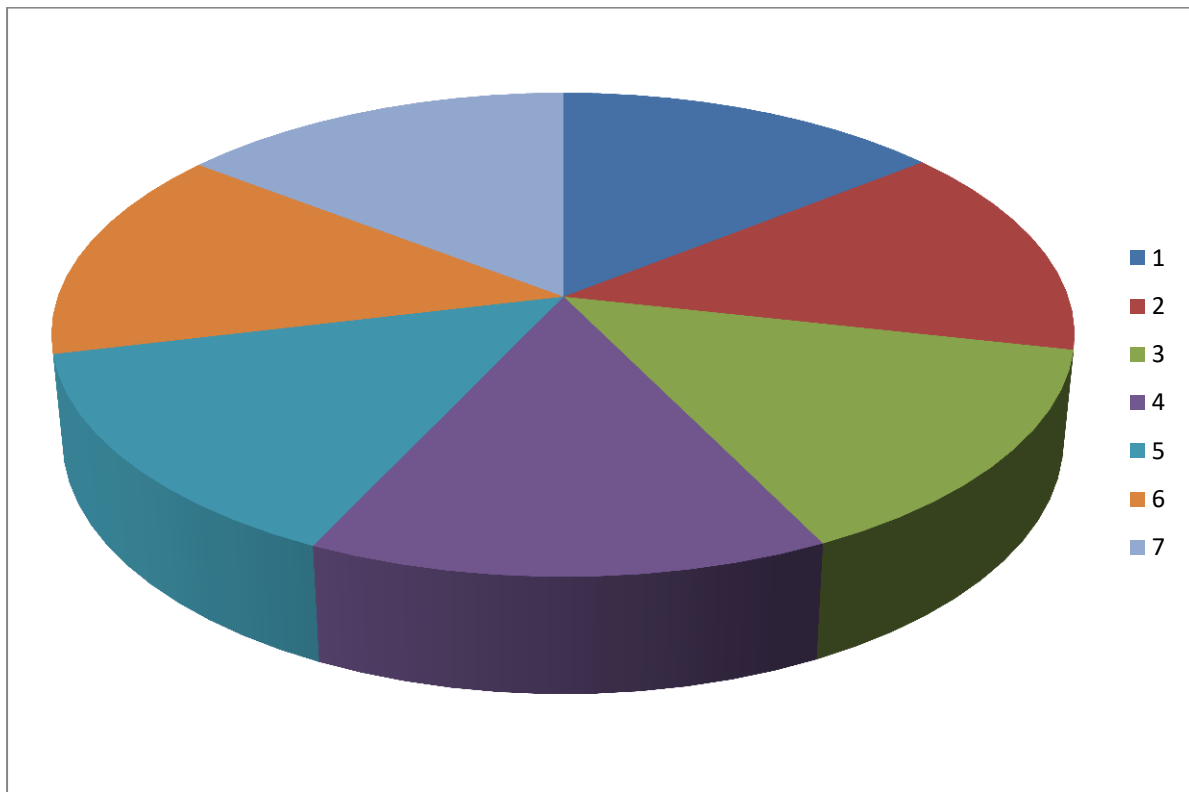
To copy and provide a copy to all participants of the roundtable discussion.

Appendix A: The pizza of life

Suggested segments: family/ home/domestic, social/leisure, work, CAREER, work enthusiasm, personal/interests, recovery/sleep.

However this list is not exhaustive and the illustration divides the pizza into equal segments based on the above segments.

Please draw your own pie chart with slice sizes to reflect your individual segmentation and label each one – to include career and enthusiasm, ensuring there is a slice for you – whatever the size!

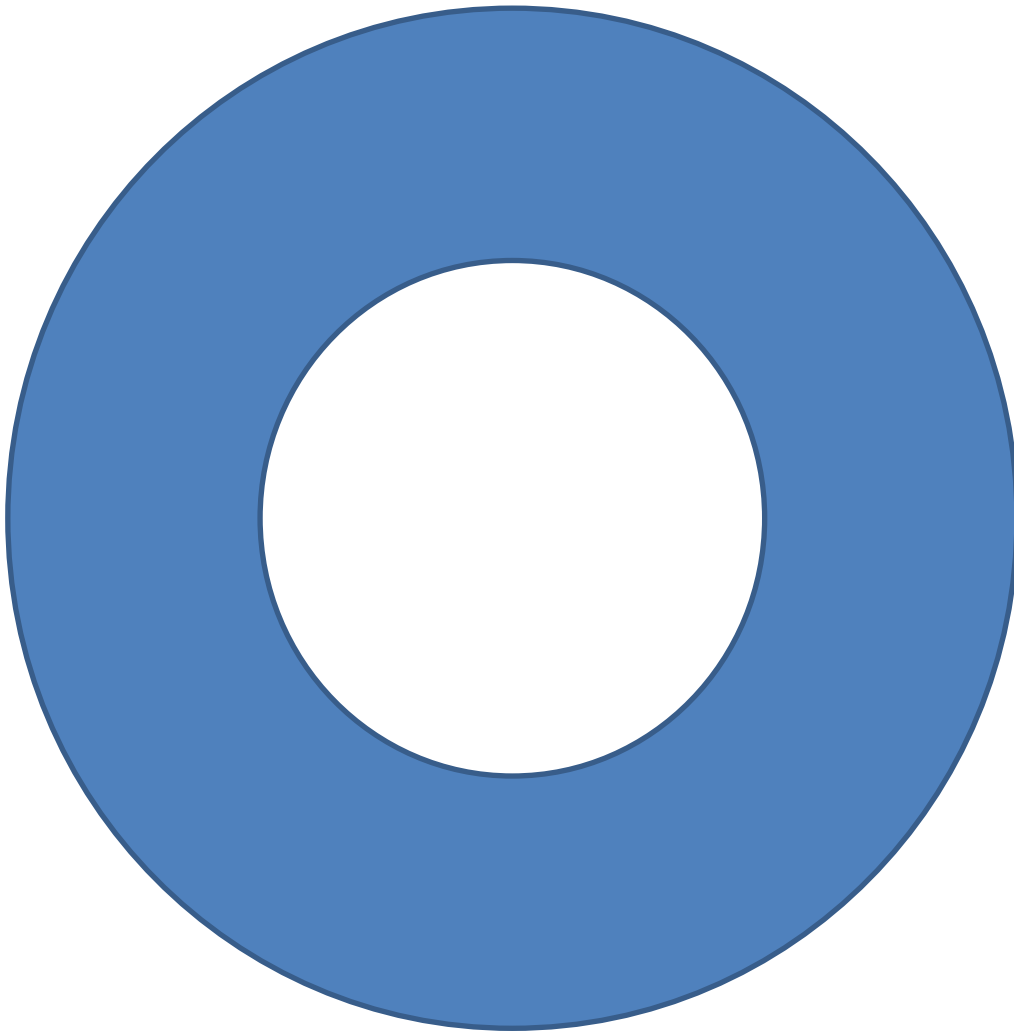


Sheet 1

Name:

Date:

Please divide the circle into segments to reflect your current life and name each segment



Which segments require attention to provide sufficient space for enthusiasm and career management?

Appendix B

Rating of current enthusiasm and motivation in relation to your career as an educator.

0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	80-90%	90-100%
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Why have you chosen this percentage segment?

What type of hindrances occur whilst you doing your job?

How frequently do hindrances occur and how long do they last?

During the discussion, please note any ideas and suggestions to address this issue of hindrances which you could incorporate into your work role

Please write two SMARTER goal related to your career management:

One to complete within one month, the second to complete in three months:

1.
2.

Thanks for attending and contributing – good luck with your career management and when work is very busy remember to have fun – it is great way of enhancing enthusiasm!

I'd be pleased to hear from you as you progress: jan.green@glyndwr.ac.uk