



Prifysgol Cymru

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Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

ECGE6002Q

Skills for Life: Employability and Future Pathways
Planned Happenstance



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- In this Session we will consider:
 - The role that chance plays in career planning and career choice
 - Develop a concept of 'planned happenstance'
 - Contrast this with the traditional career matching model of career planning
 - Explore the implications for your personal development planning





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Planned Happenstance?

- ‘Chance favours only the prepared mind’ – Louis Pasteur
- What do you understand this quote to mean?

Panned Happenstance

- **Chance – dictionary definitions** (OED, 2007, p.380)
 - 1. *noun* – the way things happen of themselves; the absence of design or discoverable cause
 - 2. *noun* – an event that is without apparent cause or unexpected; a casual circumstance; an accident
- **Happenstance – dictionary definition** (OED, 2007, p.1203)
 - 1. *noun* – chance; a chance event

Planned Happenstance

- **Career – dictionary definition**
- 4. *noun* – a course or progress through life or history; an occupation or profession; a way of making a living and advancing oneself
- The traditional view of a ‘career’ was that it was a planned, teleological progress through ones chosen profession, e.g.;

The Jobs Boys Aspire To



Jobs for Young Girls



Traditional Career Planning

- Theorists such as John Holland (1959) came up with what became known as ‘career matching’ models for career planning
- Using psychological assessments Holland argued that people fell into one of six personality traits, namely;
 - Realistic
 - Investigative
 - Artistic
 - Social
 - Enterprising
 - Conventional
- For this reason it is often known as the RIASEC model

Traditional Career Planning

- Holland went on to argue that people who fell into each of the six categories had similar traits, interests and qualities
- These could be matched to groups of jobs for which these traits, interests and qualities made that person suited
- The jobs were grouped together because they had factors, elements or components in common
- This resulted in the assumption that 'By matching an individual's interests to occupational characteristics by Holland category, it is possible to identify potential career choices for career counselling' (Armstrong *et al*, 2008)
- This has become known as **rational** career planning

Trait and Factor Matching:

Based on Holland (1959)

People (traits, interests, qualities)	Jobs (factors, elements, environments)
Realistic: mechanical activities, objects, co-ordination, manipulating tools, physical	Motoric: Pilot, farmer, horticulturalist, builder, engineer, armed services personnel, mechanic, upholsterer, electrician, computer technologist, park ranger, sportsperson
Investigative: analytical, organising, curious, reserved, scientific/ scholarly	Intellectual: Science, research, medical and health occupations, chemist, marine scientist, forestry technician, medical or agricultural laboratory technician, zoologist, dentist, doctor
Artistic: performing athletically or artistically. Emotional, aesthetic, autonomous, unconventional, impulsive, imaginative	Aesthetic: Artist, illustrator, photographer, <u>signwriter</u> , composer, singer, instrument player, dancer, actor, reporter, writer, editor, advertiser, hairdresser, fashion designer
Social: helping, teaching, serving. gregarious, friendly, Co-operative, tactful	Supportive: Teacher, nurse, nurse aide, counsellor, police officer, social worker, salesperson, customer service officer, waiter, secretary
Enterprising: organising, directing persuading, exercising authority. Possess leadership, ambitious, and optimistic	Persuasive: Salesperson, lawyer, politician, accountant, business owner, executive or manager, travel agent, music or sports promoter
Conventional: Prefer orderly, structured situations; clerical, systems, precise, accurate	Conforming: Secretary, receptionist, office worker, librarian, bank clerk, computer operator, stores and dispatch clerk
	<i>N.B. This is still being used e.g. Careers.Govt.NZ</i>

Trait and Factor Matching

- Criticisms of Holland's model include;
- That the groupings of both personality traits and job factors are simplistic;
- That some of the occupational environments are open to interpretation; and,
- That women consistently seem to score more highly in three personality types (artistic, social and conventional)

Trait and Factor Matching

- Such models are still widely used (e.g. in the U.S.A.)
- However, as well as the specific criticisms of Holland's model it can be argued that such models do not meeting the needs of people in a world where;
- Technological development is increasing exponentially (Moore's Law)
- Some work is being done by 'intelligent' machines (car production)
- Traditional jobs are disappearing and new jobs being created
- New working practices such as Zero Hours contracts and the 'Gig' economy require greater flexibility
- This is where **planned happenstance** comes into play

Planned Happenstance

- So, thinking of your 'career', what role has chance played? for example;
- A company restructuring/ take-over?
- A company closing down / redundancy?
- Being in the 'right place at the right time'?
- Being given a lead by a friend, colleague or connection?
- Knowing the right person to ask?

Why work with chance?

- Life is complex and changeable therefore **rational** matching is not sufficient (Hambly, 2007)
- ‘classical decision theory or rational decision strategies ... are simply no longer sufficient for today’s complex changing world [...] changing one’s mind will be an essential skill in the future’. (Gelatt 1989)
- People have **diverse decision making mindsets** ...these can be as effective (if not more so) as rational decision making (Hambly, 2007)
- Coping with uncertainty and being flexible are desirable employability skills (Hambly, 2007)

Planned Happenstance

- So, in order to be able to adapt to the changing world one needs to adopt a mindset of;

PLANNED	e.g. learning, planning, networking, work experience, volunteering, developing, researching
HAPPEN	i.e. responding to unexpected opportunities as they happen rather than having a plan 'set in stone'
STANCE	i.e. adopting an attitude or <u>stance</u> of curious enquiry, keeping an open mind

Planned Happenstance in Practice

- How you can respond to **chance** events?
- By being ready and willing to take action
- By being open-minded and flexible
- By taking a risk and seizing the opportunity
- By networking being 'out there' talking to people
- By being involved ... voluntary work, interests, learning
- By exploring, being curious
- By staying positive/ optimistic

Planned Happenstance in Practice: The Mindset to adopt

- Curiosity:** Exploring new developments, subscribing to newsletters, asking how people got the job they are doing
- Persistence:** Exerting effort despite setbacks, learning from a negative outcome
- Flexibility:** changing attitudes and goals to meet the new circumstances
- Optimism:** Finding connections between your experience and new or different opportunities
- Risk Taking:** Willingness to take action in the face of uncertain outcomes

Planned Happenstance in Practice

- **Reframe out of date career myths:** e.g. instead of thinking “there is a perfect job out there”, think “what job can I adapt my skills and experience to?”
- Challenge the notion that you need to decide before taking action e.g. you don’t have to be certain that a job is for you to find out more / ask for a placement
- Adopt an attitude of **curious exploration** i.e. some avenues might not lead anywhere but you won’t know if you don’t go down them

More links to previous Learning

- In many ways, what we have been discussing has strong links with our discussions on Reflective Practice
- Particularly our discussion regarding Schön's *Reflective Practitioner* and how we can extend his work to include **reflection for action**
- The planned happenstance mindset means that one can reflect on ones experience, skills and attitudes and adapt these, using research and sources of support*, to take advantage of changing circumstances and new opportunities
- * Don't forget that you can access UWTSD Careers Guidance at any time after Graduation.

Advice for Career Practitioners

- Acknowledge that it is normal, inevitable and even desirable for unplanned events to influence careers
- Think of indecision not as a problem to be remedied but a useful state of exploration
- Develop skills that will enable you to take advantage of unplanned events

Final Thoughts

‘Careers are seldom planned but are often developed by being aware of and acting on the landmarks that appear on the way’

‘An unplanned career is full of opportunity’

Kathleen Mitchell: *The Unplanned Career* 2004

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