

TITLE: “UNHEARD VOICES, UNTOLD STORIES:

An exploration of young people’s experiences in and out of post-compulsory education.”

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research study was to provide young people who had dropped out of post-compulsory education with the opportunity to tell their stories, in order to begin to understand their experiences.

A number of key themes emerge related to the help available to them in making career-related decisions, the factors that led to their dropping out and their subsequent experiences in the labour market. These themes are examined in the light of the concept of “pragmatic rationality” (Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996) and linked to Bassot’s (2003) work on the applicability of Vygotsky’s learning theory to career decision making.

Conclusions drawn from this analysis suggest that there is a perceived need for more help with career decisions than is currently available. Career advice is often delivered by people without the experience or qualifications to do this. The Connexions Service is failing many young people in relation to delivery of the “universal” service, and in not picking up those who drop out. Providers of post-compulsory education are also failing young people in not ensuring that they have enough information about courses on which base their decisions.

A case is suggested for the re-establishment of a specialist, professional career guidance role to meet the needs of young people in the future.