

# Client perceptions of the usefulness of careers guidance over time

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## **Transforming careers, unleashing potential**

*The International Careers Conference  
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## Tale of two studies:

- England: 5 year, longitudinal study (50 cases)
- Europe: 2 year study in 10 countries (on-line survey of over 1,000)

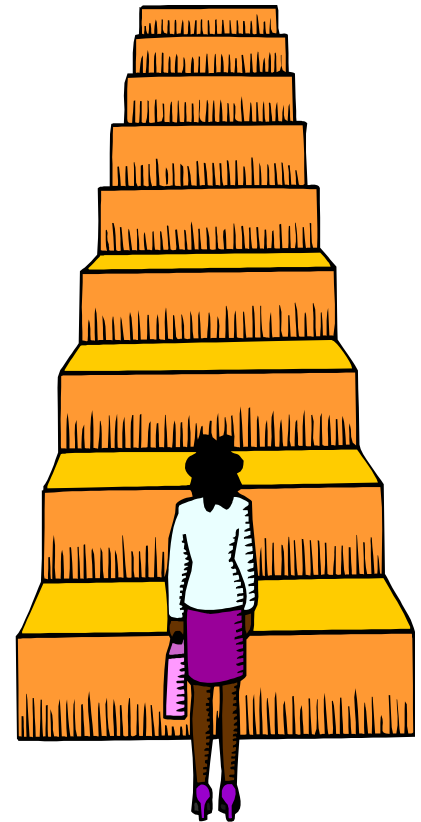
← *Career progression* →

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## Challenging context:

- Economic turbulence
- Labour force mobility
- Social justice & equity
- Policy drivers



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## Stakeholder perspectives:

- Clients: *high quality services*
- Managers: *formative issues*
- Policy-makers: *summative issues*
- Employers: *outputs*

*Ref: Bimrose, J., D. Hughes and A. Colin (2006) Quality assurance mechanisms for Information, Advice and Guidance: A critical review. Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick.*

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**Imagine a scenario.....**

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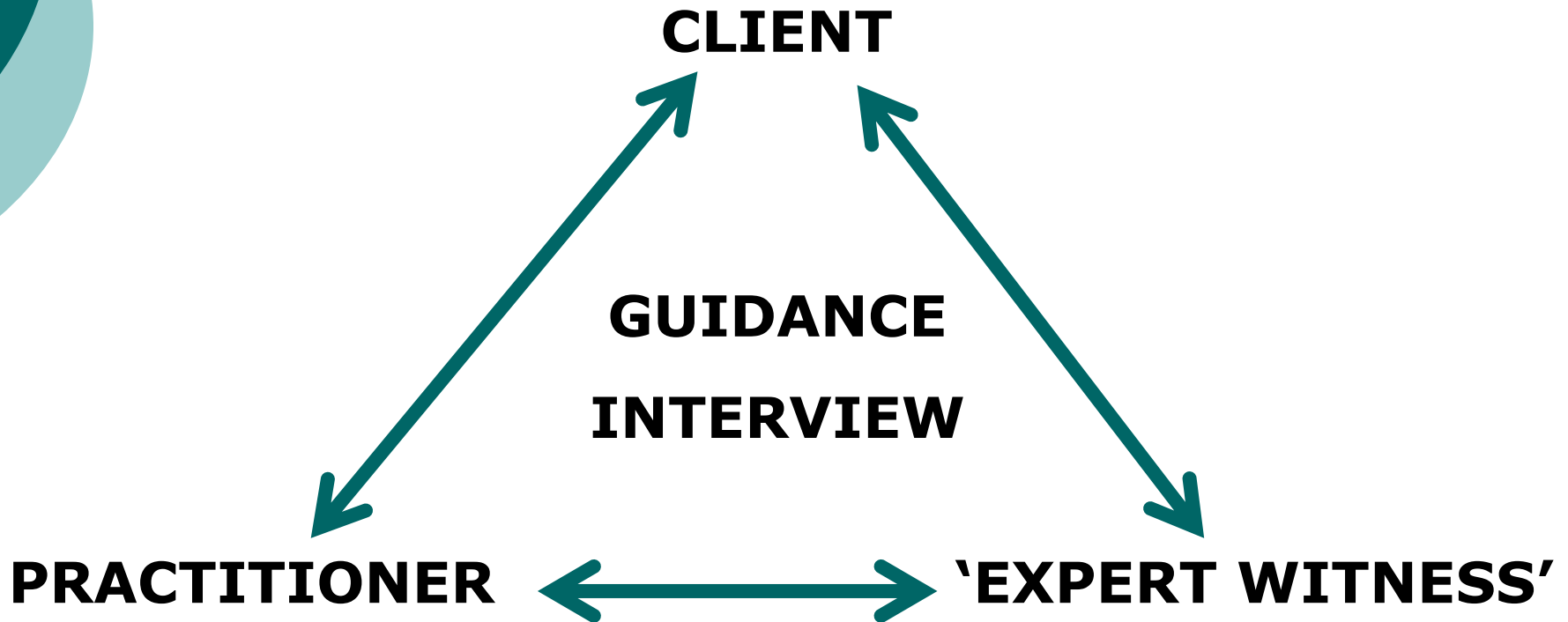
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## **English study - aim:**

To use a longitudinal (5 year), qualitative case study approach to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance (2003 – 2008)

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## Four key questions:

- From whose point-of-view is 'effective' defined?
- Whose account counts?
- How is 'effectiveness' defined?
- How is 'guidance' defined?



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## Data sources (50 case studies):

- digital recordings of the guidance interviews
- open-ended, semi-structured questionnaires
- 'baseline data' on delivery contexts, practitioners and clients

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## Delivery contexts:

- Higher Education (18 +)
- Further Education (16 +)
- Adult guidance organisations
- Voluntary, charity sector
- Private sector

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## Low attrition rate:

- 2003/4                      50 participants
- 2004/5                      45 participants
- 2005/6                      36 participants
- 2006/7                      30 participants
- 2007/8                      29 participants

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## 'Useful' guidance

- **Positive outcomes**  
(insights, focus, confirmation, confusion reduction)
- **Access**  
to knowledge, networks & information
- **Supporting positive change**  
(self- confidence, motivation)
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- **Positive experience** (self-reflection, interested professional)

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## **'Useful' guidance:**

Clients finding their guidance 'useful', in the longer term:

- 2003/2004: [50] 98% (n=49)
- 2004/2005: [45] 87% (n= 39)
- 2005/2006: [36] 72% (n=26)
- 2006/2007: [30] 77% (n= 23)
- 2007/2008: [29] 69% (n=20)

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## Transitioning styles:

- Evaluative
- Strategic
- Aspirational
- Opportunistic



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## **Informal guidance:**

- 90% (n=26): from a range of sources
- 38% (n=11): from formal sources

## **Formal guidance:**

- 72% (n=21): wanted formal guidance in the future

*[i.e. training, funding, job search, job prospects, skills assessment, relocating, pay & maternity]*

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## **Action Plans:**

- 4 of the 12 (of 29) were actively pursuing plans related to their guidance
- Changed circumstances, priorities, etc. Also transitioning styles, etc.

Traditional practice: co-development & /or administration – different approach indicated?



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## **European study - aim:**

- Examine the implications for continuing vocational training & training (CVET) for changing patterns of career development across Europe

## **Methods:**

- literature review & study of 1150 people in 10 countries

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How are individual careers changing across the life-course in response to national and international change?

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## Key findings:

- Intensive *episodes of learning* across the life-course
- Many *actively shape* their personal work biographies (but value help)

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## Implications for learning:

- Key to career success of older workers is a *positive disposition* towards learning
- Employees in *learning-rich* work environments more likely to have a positive disposition towards learning
- *Lack of engagement* with substantive learning & development is linked to *downward career drift*

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## Implications for career progression:

- Important to develop *coherent career narratives*
- More likelihood of engagement with CVET & lifelong learning - when there is a *proactive approach to career development*
- Proactive approach to career development requires *encouragement, time & space* (for self-directed learning and critical reflection)

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## Implications for career progression & learning:

- *Linking* continuing learning to career development is strategically important.
- *Breadth* and *depth* of learning crucial
- *Work attachment*, aligned to a *career anchor*, can discourage up-skilling and re-skilling

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## **Career development - important:**

- Learning to learn
- Transferable skill sets (i.e. ability to switch between different contexts)
- Supporting the learning of others

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## Conclusions:

- *Mid-career change* essential to retain older workers in the labour market
- *Support required* to develop coherent career narratives: past, present, future
- *Developmental model of expertise* needed (not a binary competence model)
- *Various ways required* to encourage development of skills, knowledge and understanding



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Next stop?