building on what we know

career-learning thinking
for contemporary working life

Bill Law
The Career-learning CAFÉ
www.hihohiho.com

Bill Law (2010)
career-learning thinking
for contemporary working life

free-on-line at
www.hihohiho.com/newthinking/crlrnupdate.pdf

career-learning theory - its distinctive take on career management - now applied to
contemporary conditions - why its ideas are useful - how they now work out in practice

_____

a companion piece with the re-release of

Bill Law (1992, 2010)
career-learning theory

in A G Watts, Bill Law, John Killeen, Jennifer M Kidd and Ruth Hawthorn
Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance - Theory, Policy and Practice
London: Routledge

now free-on-line at
www.hihohiho.com/newthinking/crlrnoriginal.pdf

an account of critical thinking in career management - thinking-feeling - processing stage-by-
stage - leading to readiness for action

contents

career-learning thinking - the argument

> career-learning thinking is a **meta-analysis** of enquiries into psychological and social learning;

> it is organised around a **sequence of questions** about how people engage in the management of their careers;

> it sets out a process on a **different dimension** from accounts which match impartial information to reliable assessment;

> this is important because all such **information is overtaken** - in a perpetual process of extending, supplanting, revising, and updating;

> we need therefore to enable people in their own **self-propelled control** of learning processes;

> this is critical where people are influenced by informal **social-and-emotional pressures** - in family, neighbourhood, social groups, the media and the net;

> it has **life-long** and **life-wide** usefulness - applying to any quality-of-life concern, in any context and at any time in life;

> all of this is **career management** - but we cannot expand our **career-development** expertise without understanding it, neither can we know what to do in **careers-work** practice;

> career learning is **layered** and **dynamic** - taking **one thing with another**, engaging with **thoughts-and-feelings**, arriving at a **basis for action**;

> what people gather from both formal or informal sources can never be more than the first steps in a **progressive-learning** journey;

> career learning is a **stage-by-stage** progression - what is learned first makes way for, and shapes, what we later need to learn for **self-propelled** action;

> effective career learning has an **eyes-open outcome** - people move on, seeing both that something else is possible, and why they will move on as they say;

> outcome criteria are that the learning is **useful** - people can see what they can do about it; it is **fulfilling** - they can recognise the point of it; and it is **sustainable** - they can make it work without damage to themselves or anybody else;

> this is not a soft outcome - central features of career learning are **critical thinking** and **mindfulness** - which are learned abilities for probing the credibility of any discovery, encounter, or action;

> the uses of career learning throw up issues for the relationship between **public brands** and **private life**;

> they pose questions about the difference, in inner life, between compelling **impulse** and reflective **intuition** - the most 'personalised' of drivers;

> they raise doubts about whether careers education will ever gain the kind of **curriculum space** now required for effective and useful career learning;

> they also raise questions about whether the term 'information advice and guidance' has done **harm to face-to-face careers work**;

> all of this, alongside recent policy and professional developments, suggests that our most hopeful opportunities for innovative expansion may be in **partnership** with social entrepreneurs and volunteers - in **civil society**.

scene

Career-learning thinking is an account of how people learn to manage working life. It speaks of what they find, what they think-and-feel about that, the sense they make of it, and the bases they find for acting on it.

The theory was first published more than a decade ago (Bill Law, 1996). This monograph updates it and applies it to contemporary conditions.

Career management is about what people do. There are few research-and-development spheres that must cope with greater complexity. Manhattan-project leader, Robert Oppenheimer, once observed that, compared with child's play, nuclear physics is child's play. Working with that kind of complexity is why you get so tired.

Career-learning thinking sets out to track the elements. There is nothing wrong with complexity: the more ways we find for usefully looking at things, the more ideas we can find for knowing how to deal with them. If career-learning thinking is effective it will expand ideas for useful action.

players: When it comes to knowing how to deal with things there are three groups of players - the experts, the people they help to help, and the people those people are helping. Every time you sit down with a client, or start up a lesson, you are engaged in those three conversations...

> what do I know - expertise in **career development**;
> how can I help - techniques for **careers work**.
> what do they make of it - experience of **career management**;

Table one signposts the three fields of enquiry.

table one
career thinking

field	core idea	expanding ideas
career development	expertise about what is going on	facts and factors which explain and predict what happens
careers work	practice in how we try to help	techniques and strategies we can use
career management	experience of what people do	how things work out in the way people manage the action

But table one is too simple. In our thinking the three rows flow into each other. Much of our expanding literature is concurrently talking about them all. Personal construct thinking occupies all three areas (e.g. Mark Savickas, 1994). So does narrative thinking (e.g. Bill Law, 2010a).

And each row in table one is getting more crowded: important new thinking is coming out of neurology (e.g. Antonio Damasio, 1999), from cultural thinking (e.g. Howard Williamson, 2004), and from digital technologies (e.g. Tristram Hooley and colleagues. 2010).

It means that every time you sit down with an individual or try to fire-up a group, you need to stay in inner contact with how any of this may come into play. No wonder you get so tired.

The case for career-learning thinking is that it is now more-than-ever important that we understand what is going on in your students' and clients' experience. And it's no easier for them than it is for you. And, for all of us, it has to do with the rate at which things are changing.

change: Career-learning thinking was first published as a response to the change and complexity that people must negotiate in their working lives. It was an urgent concern then. The working world, the way people relate to it, the pressures on their action - all was changing and diversifying. It was important to get hold of as much as we could about what people can do to take their own command of those dynamics.

That case is more-than-ever urgent. Talk of change is becoming clichéd - and it's easy to posture cynical dismissal. It's true that every generation must deal with change. But rate-of-change is becoming exponential, building pressures which flow through a system - global, scientific, technological, commercial, political, national, cultural, local and personal. They are intensifying. And change in any one area has impact in the rest. The complexity of our literature, and the overload of information, are reflections of that experience - both yours and your students' and clients'.

Career-learning thinking sets out to understand how people manage these things. In particular, it looks for how people now need to take one thing with another, and it looks for their thoughts and feelings as they deal with them. That is their *career management*. But we cannot expand our *career-development* expertise without understanding it. Neither can we know what to do in *careers-work* practice.

journey: This is not short-cut learning - for us, or for them. Career-learning thinking therefore sees learning developing over time, like a journey. Finding some new place to go, meeting some significant person to talk with, discovering some surprising ability to work on - any of these is never more than a first step on that journey. It leads to where they can make sense of what they find. And every teacher who has ever listened to her students knows that the sense that students make of it is not necessarily what we intend. It's their journey, not ours.

So what kind of outcomes do people take away from effective career-learning thinking? It is that, however they move on, with or without a nod from us, they know that this is not all they might do - something else is possible. But they know that this is good for them - on three criteria:

> **useful:** they can see what they can do about it;
> **fulfilling**: they can recognise the point of it;
> **sustainable:** they can make it work without damage to themselves or anybody else.

Put another way: you can know when a person has done something significant with this process when you can see that a change-of-mind is possible - not certain or required, but possible. It is an eye-opening moment. It may or may not mean that the person has benefited from our expertise. It may or may not comply with policy recommendations,

with home-life expectations, or with peer-group pressure. It is not necessarily employability; it may not even raise aspirations. These are not what everybody most needs to pursue at every stage in their life. Career learning is knowing what needs doing now, and why it's a good idea. That can't be scripted by any ready-made agenda. It is enablement for self-propelled action. There is obviously more that needs saying about this. It is not a soft option.

ideas

Career-learning theory's ideas are particularly its own - it assembles a distinctive package:

on...	because...
process:	how people learn is more important than what they learn;
progression:	career learning is a stage-by-stage process;
learning verbs:	how we engage them in action is more important than what we say;
interrogation:	the key abilities are to probe, to scrutinise and to question;
inner life and other people:	learning is a thinking-feeling engagement with social influences.

This section of the monograph shows how career-learning thinking feeds into these five ideas - each of them now becoming more important to contemporary career thinking.

process: Before this thinking was first mooted, a dominant way of talking about career sought to link people to work by matching their qualities to its demands. A common analysis was DOTS - covering what people should learn about 'self', 'opportunity', 'decision' and 'transition'. It was originally designed to map what happens in careers-education-and-guidance - it was about careers work. But it has expanded its scope, to the point where it is bursting at the seams. The DOTS careers-work containers will no longer hold career-management freight (Bill Law, 2005).

We need another dimension. Career-learning theory maps that dimension as learning processes - it is not about what people learn, but how they learn it. It is expressed in a four-stage sequence - the acronym is SeSiFU:

'**Se**nsing	'**Si**fting	'**F**ocusing'	'**U**nderstanding
'finding out'	'sorting out'	'checking out'	'figuring out'

The second line uses a more conversational form. The two resulting dimensions - DOTS and SeSiFU - are set out in table two (following page).

table two
coverage and process in career management

coverage

process	self	opportunity	decision	transition
sensing:		finding these DOTS-things out		
sifting:		sorting them into useful order		
focusing:		checking out what is important		
understanding:		figuring out what can be done		

What people need to know about - this is coverage - is constantly being added to, updated and revised. The more there is of that change and complexity, then the more important it is - not just to know - but to know how you know, and how you can keep up. This is a process - and it enables self-propelled control of learning.

learning verbs: Coverage is readily expressed in nouns - 'self', 'opportunity', 'decision', 'transition' are nouns. Career-learning processes - 'sense', 'sift', 'focus', 'understand' - are best expressed as verbs.

In career-*development* terms, this language helps to show how things generally work. In career-*management* terms, it helps to voice what people make of their experience. In careers-*work* terms, it suggests what we need to enable in our students and clients.

The SeSiFU verbs are generic: each can be elaborated in an unlimited range of other verbs - for example...

sensing:	finding / meeting / seeing / listening / saying / etc...
sifting:	sorting / noticing / comparing / shaping / arranging / etc...
focusing:	checking / pin-pointing / prioritising / probing / testing / etc...
understanding:	figuring / explaining / anticipating / trying-out / planning / etc...

What people do is a narrative. Verbs carry a plot - speaking of how one thing leads to another...
> *he said... and she noticed... but you pin-pointed... so we tried out...*

progression: That is why career learning theory sets out learning as a journey. It moves - stage-by-stage - from a departure to an arrival. This is, in curriculum terms, is a 'progression' [*] It refers to how each thing that a person learns will be taken on board in a way which makes way for, and shapes, future learning.

---

[*]   **progression**: The term is sometimes used to refer to the ascending levels of qualification - which move people forward in positioning for selection or recruitment. It an assessment procedure. Curriculum progression is forward movement in what people learn. It is a learning process.

SeSiFU is a progression: 'Se' makes way for 'Si', which, by shaping 'F', leads to 'U'...

Se:	**find enough to go on** >>>
Si:	>>> which means ready to **shape things into order** >>>
F:	>>> which means set up to **focus what is important** >>>
U:	>>> which means enabled to **plan for consequences**

Progression shows how everything we have learned influences what we will learn - what is learned early will shape what is learned later. It calls for thinking about what is basic to career-learning - and how developed and useful learning can be built, stage-by-stage.

In career-management terms it can enable people to be less dependent on what they first find: more able to take one thing with another, and to probe for the credibility and usefulness of what they work on. This is not about transmitting content - however impartial and reliable that may be. These are the stages by which people to take charge of their own learning.

Career-learning thinking shows how a start is made on any learning sequence. And, no less importantly, it shows when that sequence has reached a useful resolution - enabled for action. Matching-based on coverage - of the kind suggested by DOTS - cannot do this. It has no answer to the question 'how much is enough?'.

interrogation: These days people are less reliant on expert sources. That kind of deference to authority is being eroded: people increasingly turn to other sources - and to each other. Community-interaction thinking (Bill Law, 2009), which laid out part of the basis for career-learning thinking, sets out ways in which local influence is transmitted. And, now, post-coded enclaves - with their family-, neighbourhood- and peer-connections - are accounting for much of how people manage working life. We don't yet know enough about the influence of the media and net-based social networking. But we know that people can easily find all sorts of sources for what seems to be 'information', 'advice' and 'guidance'.

These sources need interrogating. And the SeSiFU verbs, which enable a person to relate his own story, will also enable him to interrogate other people's - of what is going on, and what can be done about it. The verbs voice the questions...

is there enough real information here?	**found** enough to go on;
who has an interest in telling it this way?	**sorted** into useful order;
would somebody else tell it differently?	**checked** out on what is important;
how would a useful version work out for me?	**figured** what to do about it.

It raises questions ranging from...

> *whether what works well for some other person*
> *would work that way for me,*

to...

> *whether economics-based labour-market information*
> *says enough about the carbon footprint of work,*

It makes your clients and students each their own career theorist

inner life and other people: Career is not managed in a social vacuum. It is

> sought in response to both your own and other people's interests;
> negotiated with other people;
> carried out with other people; and
> undertaken largely for other people's benefit.

And so much of what we do about working life must have meaning, not just for us, but for other people. We therefore need to be able to say what meaning we share with those people. This applies both to how we voice what goes into recruitment applications, and what we say and do once we have been selected. Work is like that - no career can be wholly your own thing. It is not private property.

But work also engages an inner life, where thoughts and feelings shape what we find and what we do about it. There is no straight-line from finding to knowing - knowing is what we need to make of what we first find. And that means that there is always some way of seeing work which is yours and yours alone - and which other people do not share. It could be why they need you.

These ideas of what is visible and public, and what is inner and especially your own, has been around career-management talk for some time. They are reflected in ideas on 'objective' and 'subjective' contracts - the one deal cut with others, the other with yourself.

The distinction has a wider resonance: it is interwoven with current preoccupations with ideas of public branding and inner privacy - on the street, on the net, and in work.

Can SeSiFU cope? Figure one locates objective and subjective elements in its sequence. What, on the left, is found through the senses can, to some significant extent, be shared with other people - it may well be registered in much the same way from any point-of-view. And, on the right, whatever meaning emerges through understanding can also be understood in more-or-less the same way by everybody. Sensing and understanding can live in the objective zone concerning what is is said and done.

figure one
public and private ways-of-seeing
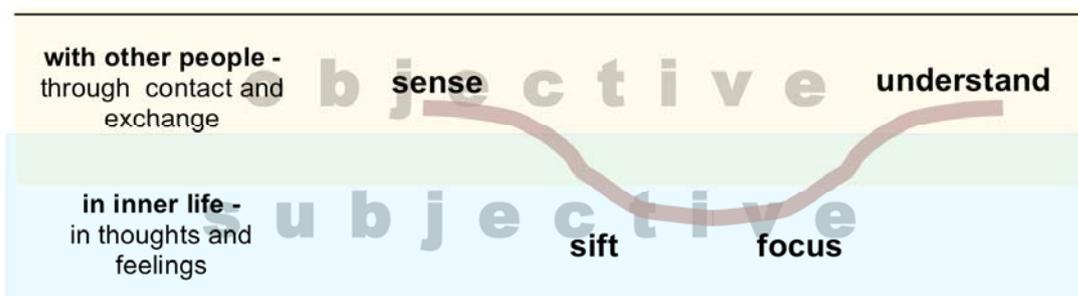
However, 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' are fuzzy ideas - in figure one they are shaded into each other, For much of the time we are are juggling ways-of-seeing which are partly shared and partly our own.

Furthermore, in mid-sequence, the figure also suggests how career learning takes a person deeper into inner life. Sifting things into useful order is done differently by different people. The comparisons often turn out to be arranged around '*personal constructs*'. So the ordering they make of things is each their own. And, moving on, each individual's attention is drawn to what is important to them - a personal priority. Sifting and focusing belong to inner life - adopting its own point-ofview.

There is in career management a rhythmic exchange between public and personal processes. That exchange is a feature of career management on the net (Bill Law, 2010b). But the original career-learning article paid it little heed. It's true that SeSiFU made sensing a matter of looking both inward and outward. But it offered no account of how that exchange is inwardly experienced in thinking and feeling. So, for example, there are no ideas for how SeSiFU relates either to intuitive feel, or instinctive impulse. Career-learning theory is, of course, not the only theory to neglect them. Both intuition and instinct belong to inner life; but they are different from each other, and the difference needs examining. That appreciation will equip careers work with ways of working with 'personalised' learning. Its undertanding of what people mean by...

<p align="center">'getting sorted' - Si?</p>

and...

<p align="center">'getting real' - F?</p>

...will help.

The original article did not argue that career learning is a function of intellectual abilities. It explicitly argues that we all able enough to work through the SeSiFU sequence. And that leaves open the question 'why don't we all?'.

mindfulness: Career-learning thinking is not an account of career management for the brainy. It engages the way in which our evolution has equipped us all for survival - our ability to work out what is going on, and what to do about it. The requirement is not a three-digit IQ, but a willingness to take on the task - not braininess, but mindfulness. Mindfulness is not an innate characteristics, it is learned behaviour.

Ideas about mindfulness stem from religious ideas about attentiveness to what is going on now - in your self and in your environment. But it does not need to belong to any particular belief system - it is about process not content. It has become part of a secular repertoire of help in more than one profession (Sharona Jacobs and colleague, 2008). In such settings it is set out in three phases: 'stopping', in order to attend and focus in a here-and-now; 'observing' what is going on; and, after some time, 'returning' to the matter in hand with those clear thoughts and feelings now on board. There is more than one area of overlap here with sensing, sifting, focusing and understanding.

Jan Lexmond and her colleague (2009) develop the idea of mindfulness - although they attach it to what they call 'character'. It is what equips people to be empathetic, emotionally controlled, and able to apply themselves. That capacity for application shows itself as...

> seeing tasks through to the end;
> able to be still and concentrated;
> resisting distractions;
> stopping and thinking before acting.

Mindfulness is not a 'soft' characteristic - it is an un-cuddly way of maintaining one's own well-being. The evidence is hard-edged - and set out by Leon Feinstein and colleagues (2000, 2004). He describes conditions for manifesting self control, self respect and orderliness. And he shows them to be acquired characteristics, not innate. At the time of writing Leon Feinstein points in particular to the influence of what is learned at home.

There are some variously arranged overlaps with SeSiFU here. Whether 'character' is a useful basis for thinking about them is another matter. But career-learning theory would not be out-of-place in the mindful mix.

figure two
career learning and mindfulness
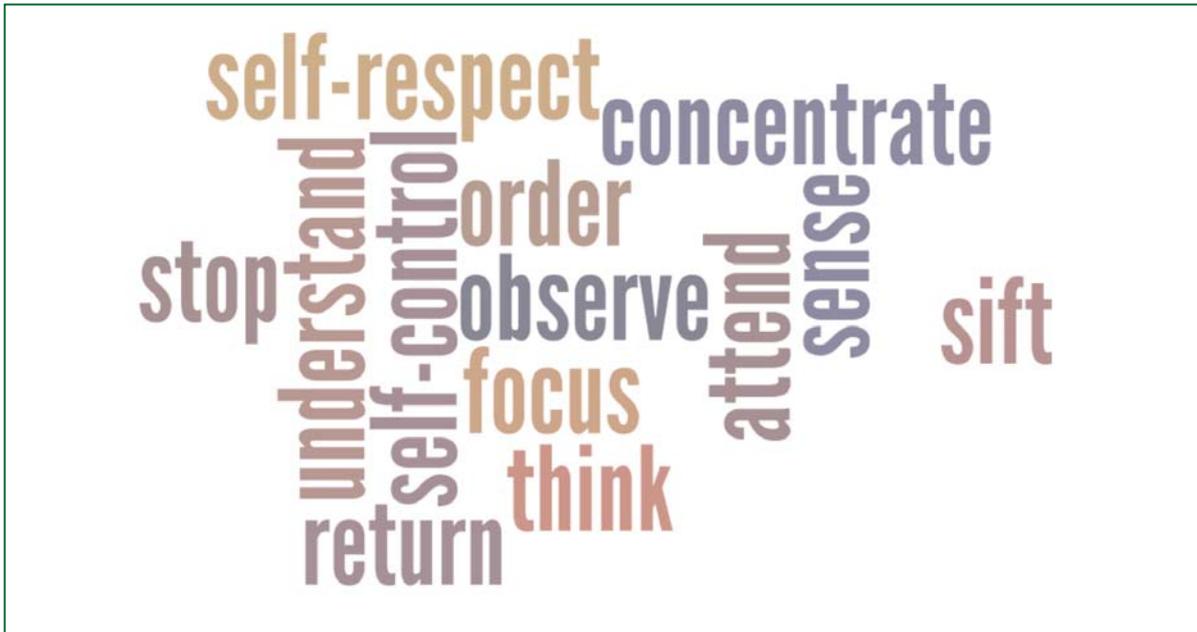
More work to do on these links.

sources

As we've seen, career-learning thinking re-examines some common-sense assumptions about whether and how teaching leads to learning. It seriously undermines the idea that curriculum is best thought of in terms of what we should tell students. It goes in search of evidence about how people learn. Those roots are fully documented in its citations (Bill Law, 1996, 2010). The thinking is a meta-analysis of those enquires.

not career-learning: There are some omissions. Among them is the learning circle (David Kolb, and others, 1991). It sets out a cyclic account of learning. There is some resonance between the circle's abstract nouns and SeSiFU's learning verbs.

CONCRETENESS	REFLECTIVENESS.	ABSTRACTION	EXPERIMENTATION
sense?	sift?	focus?	understand?

But the cyclic and sequential analyses have different roots, and are developed with different purposes in mind. While David Kolb maps a learning terrain for continuous re-visiting, career-learning theory looks for a basis for moving forward. It sets out to suggest whether a person has moved into finding widely enough, got down to sorting accurately enough, pursued checking vigorously enough, and engaged figuring carefully enough.

That search needs a completion - for knowing 'enough'. A career-manager needs to know that she has enough to move on: in this situation..., with these people..., on this matter..., now. In order to move anywhere you need to break out of the circle.

roots: Career-learning thinking's account of teaching and learning undermines the idea that curriculum is best thought of in terms of content coverage. There are more important dimensions to learning than that. And their importance is accelerating.

Not all of the meta-analysis draws on work in career-development - although it does pay attention to Alec Rodger and to Paul Willis. But it looks wider. It includes work on multiple intelligences by P B Vernon, on humanistic psychology by Abraham Maslow, on personal construct theory of G A Kelly, on constructivism by W R Howard, and on social-learning by S T Fisk. But among its strongest influence is the Piagetian school of developmental psychology - Jean Piaget, Jerome Brunner, Ronald Goldman and Reuven Feuerstein are all cited. All of these sources are referenced in the article (Bill Law, 1996, 2010).

The piagetian line-of-thinking undermines any idea that what people learn corresponds with what we teach. A person is not a 'blank slate', on which we can inscribe knowledge. Jean Piaget shows how children are engaged in processing their learning into a way of understanding their own experience. He also shows how that learning is acquired over time. He characterises these processes as deeply natural. In order to understand what children know we need to understand how they themselves develop their own learning. Jean Piaget sets out a series of age-related stages - for learning at different levels of understanding - beginning in infancy. Jean Piaget has been thought to have mis-timed the age-by-age development of learning stages. But his work is again attracting favourable attention.

The idea of learning as the sense that we make of experience, and as acquired over time, has massive implications for careers work. It calls for learning programmes which unfold in a way which will not fit into the sort of timetabling that careers education can command.

new evidence: Steven Pinker (2002) does not cite Jean Piaget. But he has notably set out the evidence-base which supports the idea that learning is shaped by natural and innate neurological factors.

Jean Piaget gets more acknowledgement elsewhere. Brain-scanning techniques support much of his thinking about children's engagement with learning as active processing of what they experience. In this way neuro-psychology is now able to show how, from early infancy, children draw on innate abilities - progressively organising sensory experience into understanding (Usha Goswami, 1998). We are all, from the beginning, active processors of what we know.

Learning for career management cannot, then, rest on the proposition that students learn what we present - they learn what they make of what we present. That learning is enabled in a process of 'Socratic' interrogation with an enquiring mind, rather than with a formal presentation of content. It is found frequently to hinge on what Jean Piaget calls a 'decentration' - a refocusing of the attention of the student on another way of seeing things. (Antonio Battro, 2010).

keeping up: The argument here is that career-learning thinking is far from played out - it is on-going work. But the sheer volume of new material is becoming overwhelming. The internet is useful enquiry tool. For example, David Winter, with his associates in the University of London's careers group, occasionally summarises and gives links to new material (David Winter, 2010a). And, on a more-or-less daily basis, he alerts people to the appearance of new information (2010b).

usefulness

What a person does about career management has consequences for that person, and for anybody who depends on that person, and for anybody who ever will depend on that person. This is the sort of usefulness we are seeking to enable.

Being process-driven means that career-learning thinking examines how people learn for that use - both from experience and from what they are told. A key response to both sources is asking questions.

career-learning questions: A test of this thinking's usefulness is, then, whether people actually ask the sort of questions it suggests.

David Winter (2010b) assembles a series of such questions (set out following page 19). It is a provocative list - pushing boundaries by suggesting that people may not be questioning enough. It therefore sets up a useful discourse for our work. The questions that David Winter has unearthed can be located in the four unfolding stages of SeSiFU - they suggest quite a conversation.

David Winter makes no link with career-learning thinking. But, if that thinking is of any use, it will accommodate the questions on the following-pages. It will also suggest further ones.

Some of the entries in the list could appear in more than one place on the SeSiFU analysis. In thinking about career almost everything that anybody says has more than one resonance - we have seen the variety of ways in which career-learning is multi-dimensional. Indeed moving questions from location to location on the SeSiFU analysis can help you to see how the resonance you first pick up may not be the only one.

But we are not trying to quantify anything here, just trying to show how what people ask themselves about managing their career can be understood in terms of a career-learning progression.

It would be complacent to assume that we have thought of all of the questions that might be raised - that is David Winter's point. The lists following page 19 - set out in handout format - have space for more.

The most telling test of a theory is its ability to suggest possibilities that would not have been anticipated in any other way. That would be a creative use of career-learning thinking - extending our appreciation of the usefulness of questions that people do not ask enough.

We don't have sample-data to support quantification. But we can be forgiven for noticing that David Winter's sample clusters towards the follow-through resolution of the SeSiFU sequence. That is where people have stopped gathering information or looking for assessment, and begun to wonder what it means to them, and what they can do about it.

There are hypotheses here for methodologically-defensible research into the language of career-learning. Have we invested too much in impartial 'information' and reliable 'assessment'? - much of what these people ask seeks neither. There are levels of questioning: not all seeks facts, some tests opinions, and the most-important explores preferences. So was 'guidance' ever an appropriate term for the resolution of the process? - it's directive connotations sit uneasily with the kind of open questions that these people are posing. The characterisation of face-to-face careers work as 'information, advice and guidance' may be doing it less than justice.

critical thinking: The philosophical roots of critical thinking are in an enlightenment rejection of arbitrary hierarchically directed pressure - which some saw in crown and mitre. They are distinctively 'critical' because they are sceptical, independent and - at times subversive. They fed both the American and French revolutions.

Educationists in philosophy claim to enable students in critical thinking (for example Robert Fisher, 2005). The claim is sometimes linked to the way in which employers seek critical thinking in job applicants (CBI, 2009). We are, however, bound to wonder how many employers are looking for subversives. The problem is that fingering critical thinking, as distinct from any other kind of thinking, is not always precise. One employment-based account (AMA, 2010) suggests that it is interchangeable with 'problem solving' and close to 'communication', 'collaboration', and 'creativity'. Should we believe that the term was included because it gave a slogan its fourth 'c'? Is it possible that employers don't know what philosophers are talking about?

Stephen Law (2006) demonstrates that such independence of mind is not always welcome among dominant cultures. And, these days, dominant cultures are as likely to be commercially - as politically, or religiously - persuasive. Indeed, Tim Birkhead (2010) claims that business-oriented vocationalism in education has undermined capacity for critical thinking - its point-scoring assessment stultifying independent thought.

The very term *critical* thinking sounds as though it ought to mean more than just efficient thinking. The implication is that the thinking will probe, interrogate and scrutinise - in order to expose the merely plausible, and to applaud the robustly credible. That is to separate the defensible from the indefensible, the real from the posturing, the self-serving from the helpful.

We could, then, ask how we stand in relation to employers who are not looking for that kind of 'critical' thinking, and with educators who daren't risk it. Career-learning thinking holds out the possibility that 'questions we don't ask enough' may include 'questions we dare not ask?'. Career-learning thinking can be that awkward. It can probe for...

>	what is hidden?	a variation on **finding** what is going on;
>	... does not fit?	... on **sorting** what is useful order;
>	... is troublesome?	... on **checking** what is important;
>	... calls for instant rejection?	... on **figuring** what is a basis for action;

And critical thinking can do this in order to expose the posturing, the self-serving, and the uncaring - which is how some enlightenment writers, at the time, saw church and state. Our students need to be able to recognise such-like, when they see it in other places.

It is an open question whether people are in a position to be openly critical in a work role they already *occupy*. What is beyond doubt is that they need to pose critical questions to themselves concerning any role they are *considering* - particularly when they are doing it on the net.

life-long life-wide: Learning to manage a work role calls on the same sort of abilities as learning to manage any life role. Indeed process abilities may be the most transferable of any abilities - once you've got a grip on what to do in any part of your life, you're more able to grasp what to do in another. There may, then, be no limit to how far command of the learning verbs can take a person.

Taking that broader view of how people manage their lives needs a more embracing term - and that term is, often enough, 'well-being'.

areas of well-being	managing life roles
physical well-being	all life roles / etc...
personal well-being	friend / lover / recluse / etc...
social well-being	partner / colleague / neighbour / mate / member / etc...
domestic well-being	partner / parent / householder / carer / etc...
economic well-being	employee / entrepreneur / consumer / investor / etc...
spiritual well-being	believer / celebrant / disciple / guru / etc...
civil well-being	volunteer / citizen / social entrepreneur / campaigner / etc...

This breadth of thinking resonates with the way people now relate to working life. It is reflected in the use of terms like 'family friendly', 'work-life balance' and 'quality of life'. It is also reflected in questions about the impact of work on neigbourhoods, on the developing world, on the living world, and on the physical environment. What happens at work is understood alongside what that means at home, in the neighbourhood and across the globe. People increasingly need to take one thing with another. There are few straight learning lines in contemporary living - everything is an interruption of everything else. This is life-wide learning.

Life-wide means life-long. The original article implies the need to do something about career-related learning in early education. The SeSiFU analysis generated material for primary and middle-school teachers. It invited them to recognise the usefulness of what they do - working with children on gathering and sorting out impressions of work in people's lives (Bill Law and colleague, undated).

Life-wide - and sometimes life-long - ideas are also built into proposals for extended schools, for Connexions and for Sure Start. All rest on the idea that people need familiar and accessible routes to help - where they can work on all the issues that confront them, in any life role.

The thinking is also incorporated into an open-learning pack offering training for secondary-school curriculum development (Bill Law and colleague, 1999). Its implications informed a response to a policy invitation to re-think conventional careers-education (Bill Law, 2006).

The re-think had some impact on ideas for an English-and-Welsh curriculum review - there are parallels in Scottish policy. The review makes primary and secondary curriculum more coherently responsive to learning for well-being. (There is what political events have since made an over-optimistic account of this at Bill Law, 2007a.)

Coherence is critical. In all these developments a service offering help on one aspect of life connects people to sources of help on other aspects. It is an acknowledgement that what life joins together no policy should put asunder. Such a service can be seen as widely useful, it can become familiar, it can be seen as accessible. Our professionals urge arguments for a life-long careers service. The greater promise for that would be to establish life-wide accessibility. It would invite people in. It would create a demand that politicos might find it difficult to resist. And it would need to be built on an understanding of how people learn.

In all events, policy is no longer supportive. A reaction from Cambridge Primary Review (Christine Howe and colleague, 2007) draws on piagetian thinking to urge greater respect for active learning - taking account of children's life-wide experience and background.

But policy seeks behavioural outcomes - particularly of enhanced employability and raised aspirations. Career-learning thinking sees employability and aspiration as options, not imperatives. The imperative is that, whatever people decide to do, they do it with their eyes open.

Underlying all of this is the career-learning idea: that learning content will serve you for a while; but learning process will serve you life-long and life-wide. That idea is now proving professionally more disturbing and politically less welcome. We may have to look elsewhere.

settings

Careers work is to enable people to learn how to manage their lives. It is educative: a careers worker's most basic understanding is of how people learn. In whatever setting it operates, it's outcomes are learning outcomes. Four settings are considered here: face-to-face, curriculum, community, and culture.

face-to-face: Face-to-face work includes information-advice-and-guidance, counselling, coaching and mentoring. In all these settings what goes on is shaped by an agreement between client and helper. An opening question might be 'how can I help you?'. The answer becomes the presenting issue - the first line on a helping agenda.

There is a tension: career-learning thinking has its own starting point - finding things out. And that may or may not be what the client's presenting issue seeks. We need to think more about how face-to-face work can call on career-learning theory. Face-to-face work, organised over a series of sessions, could follow a client-led agenda - though it would offer a different set of questions on each occasion. It could mean organising small shared-interest groups on a four-phase basis - working on...

finding out: what you each know and what you can find out;

sorting out: making sense of what you each find;

checking out: probing what is important to each of you;

figuring out: what you each can do about it.

There's more work to do on strengthening links between career-learning thinking and face-to face work. Training for careers counselling already plays a part (Phil Mignot and others, 1999, 2001).

curriculum: Curriculum includes careers education, and - more widely - a range of integrative links we make in personal-and-social development and mainstream curriculum.

There is a critical symbiosis between face-to-face work and curriculum. Each brings a distinctive, yet necessary, element to learning for career management. Face-to-face work is better placed to work on a personalised examination of what is going on. Curriculum is better placed to work on a progressive journey into what might be possible.

Progression is a curriculum concept. It is necessary to any understanding of learning which has any degree of complexity. And curriculum presents few issues that are more complicated than learning for well-being. Is rocket science that complex?

But progression means that a teacher needs to know - as she walks into a classroom - how she is going to start, where that process is leading, and how anybody can know that it has been completed. This is not much like an open agenda - agreed as we go. It is a scheme-of-work. The pressure of that reality sometimes gets the kick-start invitation, 'now pay attention!'.

Career-learning thinking can add to the repertoire. Its framework questions what is being learned...

---
finding out: how do we get hold of enough to go on?
---
sorting out: where are the similarities and differences here?
---
checking out: where are the hotspots, for you and for others?
---
figuring out: how did it get like this and what can anybody do about it?

It is not that everything is scripted in advance - it is the process that has been designed. This is what Lev Vygotsky (1978) calls scaffolding - establishing a supportive framework for a student journey into wider territories, with unexpected vistas, offering new possibilities (Bill Law, 2007b).

community: We've been looking at contrary policy pressures on career-learning - in guidance and in schools and colleges. And that raises questions about what other-than-career-work-professionals can do. These are people who are not based in careers services or in education establishments.

Careers work has always engaged with community sources - many of them organised on an informal and more-or-less voluntary basis. They include experience-of-work programmes, community-based research projects, student voluntary work, campaigning work and enterprise projects. All draw on authentic sources of experience in family and neighbourhood networks. It is a rich mixture of entertainment, enquiry and production, Lots of potential for learning

But it has sometimes been routinised into narrowly-channelled activities, aimed at ready-made targets. Community-linked careers work has failed to realise the potential for learning in these social encounters and real-time experiences. The scope of career

learning thinking exposes how little use we make of finding those places to go, those people to talk to, and those tasks to take on.

This kind of provision belongs to what, in socio-political terms, is called 'civil society' (Michael Edwards. 2004). It is now politicised as 'the big society'. But politicos never get everything their own way. And voluntary work with social enterprise, both part of civil society, may offer careers work some its most hopeful settings for expansion.

The challenge is to how much of face-to-face and curriculum work would be welcomed in such settings. it will need careful mapping of where the possibilities lie, Career learning thinking can help with that.

finding out: what your experiences of discovery can be set up;

sorting out: how to help your people sort what they find into useful order;

checking out: how anybody knows where your people need to get into detail;

figuring out: how to help them to see how things get this way and what they will do about it.

Civil society is not a tidy concept - which is both its biggest problem, and its most advantageous feature. But - as Michael Edwards concludes - it is speaks to the best, and calls to the best, in us.

cultural: There is a specialised area of community-based help - one which has its locations in culture as well as in organisations. And one which calls on an entirely other-than-careers professional.

Career-learning thinking speaks of people doing things in an unfolding narrative sequence. And the thinking has been used to underpin work on careers-work narratives (Bill Law, 2010a).

Reinekke Lengelle and her colleague (2010) have developed these learning links to narrative in a very distinctive way. They start with an understanding of how poetry is a way-of-seeing. And, using case material, they track how SeSiFU features in the use of poetic writing to make sense of working life. The writing speaks its demands, its loss, its replacement and its meaning.

We need more work of this kind, appreciating how cultural beliefs values and expectations are embedded in narratives - and how those narratives can be appreciated.

It is career-learning work in progress.

possibilities

Table three sets out the elements in career-learning thinking - laid out in the argument on page one. This time they are arranged to review the issues and to invite your ideas about how, in your work, they are best addressed:

> **describing how** things are in your work;
> **explaining why** they are this way;
> **suggesting wha**t you will now do about that.

table three
career learning for contemporary working life - possibilities

bases for action	describing the 'how', explaining the 'why', and suggesting the 'what' of your action
thinking meta-analysis sequence of questions different dimension	
processes information overtaken self-propelled control social-and-emotional pressures	
application life-long / life-wide career management career-development / careers-work	
progression layered / one-thing-with-another dynamic - thoughts-and-feelings progressive-journey / basis-for-action	
outcome eyes-open useful / fulfilling / sustainable critical thinking / mindfulness	
issues public-private / impulse-intuition curriculum space / harm to face-to-face work partnership / civil society	

Career-learning thinking can safely be discarded when it fails to offer real hope, or signpost worthwhile direction, or energise useful action.

references

American Management Association (2010). *AMA Critical Skills Survey: Workers Need Higher Level Skills to Succeed in the 21st Century.* Website: www.amanet.org/training/articles/Critical-Skills-Survey-Workers-Need-Higher-Level-Skills-to-Succeed-in-the-21st-Century.aspx

Antonio **Battro** (2010). ' The teaching brain'. *Mind, Brain and Education*, 4 (10) pp 28-00

Tim **Birkhead** (2010). 'Be different, be squids.' *Times Higher Education*, 12th August: Website: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=412949

Antonio **Damasio** (1999). *The Feeling of What Happens – Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. London, Heinemann.

Michael **Edwards** (2004). *Civil Society*. London; Polity Press

Leon **Feinstein** (2000). '*The Relative Economic Importance of Academic, Psychological and Behavioural Attributes Developed in Childhood.* Brighton: University of Sussex, 2000 & www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/economics/dp/Feinstein2.pdf.

Leon **Feinstein**, Kathryn Duckworth and Ricardo Sabates (2004). *A Model of the Inter-generational Transmission of Educational Success.* London: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning

Robert **Fisher** (2005) (2nd ed). *Teaching Children to Think*, Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes

Usha **Goswami** (1998). *Cognition in Children.* London: The Psychology Press.

Lizzi **Holman** (2009). *Future Fit - Preparing Graduates for the World Of Work* London: Confederation for British Industry

Tristram **Hooley**, Jo Hutchinson and A.G. Watts (2010). *Careering Through the Web*. Derby International Centre for Guidance Studies

Christine **Howe** and Neil Mercer (2007). *Children's Social Development, Peer Interaction and Classroom Learning*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge

Sharona **Jacobs** and David Blustein (2008). 'Mindfulness as a coping mechanism for employment uncertainty'. *Career Development Quarterly*, December. Website: www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/191181769.html

David **Kolb**, I M Rubin & J Osland (1991.) *Organisational Behaviour - An Experiential Approach*. Englewood Cliffs; Prentice -Hall

Bill **Law** (1996, 2010). *A Career Learning Theory*. in A G Watts, Bill Law, John Killeen, Jennifer M Kidd and Ruth Hawthorn *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance - Theory, Policy and Practice.* London: Routledge. Website: www.hihohiho.com/newthinking/crlmoriginal.pdf

Bill **Law** (2005). *Why We Now Need a New Model*. Website: www.hihohiho.com/underpinning/CPIpdfs/cafcpiz.pdf

Bill **Law** (2006). *LiRRiC - Life-role relevance in Curriculum*. Website: www.hihohiho.com/moving on/cafqca.pdf - pp. 20-31

Bill **Law** (2007a). ''The future of careers in seven-and-a-half chapters'. Website www.hihohiho.com/magazine/features/cafreview.html

Bill **Law** (2007b). *Planning for Progression*. Website: www.hihohiho.com/magazine/mkngtwork/cafprgrssn.pdf

Bill **Law** (2009). *Community Interaction and its Importance for Contemporary Careers Work*. Website: www.hihohiho.com/memory/cafcit.pdf

Bill **Law** (2010a). *Narratives for Learning and Research.* Website. www.hihohiho.com/storyboarding/sbstockroom.html

Bill **Law** (2010b). *Career Learning on the Internet - Colonise or Inhabit.* Website. www.hihohiho.com/newthinking/crlrninternet.pdf

Bill **Law** and Barbara McGowan (undated). *Opening Doors - A Framework for Developing Career-related Learning in Primary and Middle Schools.* Cambridge; The Careers Research and Advisory Centre.

Bill **Law** and Eddy Knasel (1999). *Careers Work - Key Concepts. London; Department for Education and Employment*

Stephen **Law** (2006)*. The War for Children's Minds.* London Routledge.

Jen **Lexmond** & Richard Reeves (2009). *Building Character - Parents are the Principal Architects of a Fairer Society.* London: Demos

Frans **Meijers** and Reinekke Lengelle (2010). *Narratives at Work - A Model of Writing as a Transformative Learning Tool in Careers Development.* Website www.hihohiho.com/underpinning/cafwriting.pdf

Phil **Mignot** and Bill Gothard: (1999). 'Career counselling for the 21st Century -- integrating theory and practice'. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* 21 (2) pp. 53-167

Phil **Mignot**, Bill Gothard, Marcus Offer, Melvin Ruff (2001). *Careers Guidance in Context.* London Sage Publications pp. 10-38

Steven **Pinker** (2006). *The Blank Slate - the Modern Denial of Human Nature.* London: Penguin.

Theresa **Rose**, Del Loewenthal and Dennis Greenwood (2005). 'Counselling and psychotherapy as a form of learning - some implications for pratice'. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 33 (4).

Lev **Vygotsky** (1978). *Mind in Society - the Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Howard **Williamson** (2004). *The Milltown Boys Revisited.* Oxford: Berg

David **Winter** (2010a). *Careers - in Theory.* Website: careersintheory.wordpress.com

David **Winter** (2010b). *Questions People Don't Ask Often Enough.* Website: www.twitter.com/davidawinter - August

each of these four pages sets out probing questions
organised on an SeSiFU basis

in the right-hand boxes: which do you find: useful ✓ and/or surprising ! and/or challenging ∗
in the spaces: what further question would you add?

finding out - gathering information and experience
core question: have I got enough to go on?

✓ ! ∗

am I missing something?	
am I looking in the wrong place?	
what aspects of myself have I yet to discover?	
whose story am I trying to live?	
who am I trying to satisfy?	
am I the problem?	
could I surprise myself?	

in the right-hand boxes: which do you find: useful ✓ and/or surprising ! and/or challenging ✳

in the spaces what further question would you add?

sorting out - making comparisons and finding patterns
core question: have I got this into any kind of useful order

✓ ! ✳

am I living my values?	
what do I owe to the world?	
are my mental labels sufficient for the ideas I have to deal with?	
how would it look from your perspective?	
what evidence is that opinion based on?	
how much fun am I going to have today?	
is there a pattern?	

in the right-hand boxes: which do you find: useful ✓ and/or surprising ! and/or challenging ∗

in the spaces what further question would you add?

checking out - focus and probing
core question: what should I especially be looking into?

✓ ! ∗

	✓ ! ∗
am I asking the wrong question?	
am I being a bit too vague?	
how could I make this simpler?	
is the answer that I want too simplistic?	
will this always be as important as it seems to be now	
do I really want this?	
why don't I like the answer I've already got?	
am I trying to justify a decision I've already made?	
what am I running away from?	
who do I need to be in the future?	
who am I trying to satisfy?	
rather than trying to change my situation, do I need to change myself	
what impact do I want to have?	
why am I doing this...again	
Is that just how I would like things to be?	
do I still want this?	
do I still want what I thought I did?	
what do I owe myself to attempt?	

in the right-hand boxes: which do you find: useful ✓ and/or surprising ! and/or challenging ∗
in the spaces what further question would you add?

figuring out - how one things leads to another
core question: how did it get this way and what can I do about it?

✓ ! ∗

what is really stopping me?	
is there an alternative explanation?	
Is that just the palatable explanation?	
why have I put these restrictions on myself?	
do I have a constructive suggestion to go with my complaint?	
what am I responsible for?	
why don't I just forgive myself for making a mistake and move on?	
how would that show itself in reality?	
will today's easy option become tomorrow's dead end?	
how can I improve what I have right here, right now?	
how could I be more useful?	
where's the guarantee that says I can have everything I want?	
what could I lose if I don't take the gamble?	
what if I'm wrong?	
how can I make this moment one I look back on with delight?	
what can I give to the world?	
how would I like to be remembered?	
then what?	

based on
David Winter (2010). *Questions People Don't Ask Often Enough*
Website: www.twitter.com/davidawinter - August