

Please note! This is a self-archived version of the original article.

Huom! Tämä on rinnakkaistalenne.

To cite this Article / Käytä viittauksessa alkuperäistä lähdettä:

Tapani, A. (2022). The Oxford Handbook of Career Development. Ammattikasvatuksen Aikakauskirja, 23(4), 68–72.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54329/akakk.113324>

# The Oxford Handbook of Career Development

Edited by Peter J. Robertson, Tristram Hooley, Phil McCash (2021)

Oxford University Press. 397 pages.

Annikka Tapani, Principal Lecturer, Professional Teacher Education,  
[annukka.tapani@tuni.fi](mailto:annukka.tapani@tuni.fi), Tampere University of Applied Sciences

The starting point for the book is that career development is complex concept while operating in between individuals and social structures. It deals with transitions from learning to work, across organizational boundaries but also concerns about social marginalization are raised. In a preface, the book is recommended to all who recognize how important career development is, who want to enhance one's understanding of it or engage more effectively with it. In the first chapter (Introduction: Rethinking of Career Development) by McCash, Hooley & Robertson, the area of career development is profoundly discussed: This chapter lays a good state-of-the-art ground for future chapters. It also offers a strong background for career development by arguing the historical points of view in a careful way. The term "career development" is chosen as a main concept in this book although some authors are using terms like career counselling, career guidance or career education, and they have special reasons for it.

The handbook is divided in three sectors: contexts, concepts and practice. In *contexts*, the main concern is in economic, sociopolitical and institutional contexts. *Concepts* are dealing with concepts and theories that underpin the career development field. *Practice*, or practices, are dealing with a variety of professional contexts, like organizational development, counselling, education, employment support, and social and youth work. There are 42 contributors in this handbook in total.

My interest for the book is twofold: first, I have worked in the employment and career services in the employment office and in HE and vocational education institute for seven years. After that, the job as a teacher educator (since 2009) seems to be more and more career development because there are more and more adult vocational teacher students who have no experience of teaching and during their studies, they are learning how to teach but also what is the identity of a vocational teacher. Secondly, I have just reviewed a career development book in Finnish with my colleague and I started this review process with a huge curiosity.

## Some remarks of the chapters

### *Contexts*

There are seven articles in this part, concerning the decline of the decent work, career development services seen from economic or human capital theories, linking educators and employers, or authentic education for meaningful work. Two articles are dealing with public policy or development of career development policy.

There are important themes to identify in this part of the book. Many articles share the idea on decent, meaningful work: work brings people status, dignity, and sense of belonging. This is connected with for example good life, search for meaning, societal stability and security. All this could be possible if we share the idea presented in this sector: another world is possible. There remains questions like how work has come to be what it is, seek for new possibilities when stable jobs disappear and need for more research on precarious work. Career development or service as a part of formal education enables to recognize qualifications and add human capital: career development interventions are clearly educational. Concerning the ideas of capital, it is said that human beings invest money in education to accumulate human capital. The career development workers should have abilities to help in doing wise investment choices and by that, they are also significant agents of social change.

Career development is a yoking concept: it connects work, education, learning; ideas of how individuals spend their time across their life course, how they manage their learning and work pathways. The remarks of social justice remain. What about them who are losers in this race? Career development should not create an ideological character of man, either trust on everyone's possibilities of enterprising themselves. Special note I would like to give to the article that combines sustainability development goals with career development.

### *Concepts*

In this section, there are nine articles concerning integrated analysis of career development, organizational, managerial and cultural views to careers and career development. Theories including the Global South, cross-cultural career psychology and questions of social justice are discussed. Narrative turn in career development theories is one special case.

There are some very interesting remarks on these articles and I will introduce some of them in exemplary fashion. I just pick some of them up. The first thing is the purpose of the section: to make sense of the complexity and fragmentation and to describe the development of the career development. This section offers integrated overview of career theories towards the paradigm shift. In the first section, the question was raised: What is the question career development in answer to? In this second section the question is: What problem do I want to solve? One good concept to discuss is what is career? There is little agreement on the meaning of the term: It can be described for example as a work career or entire lifetime. Careers are also seen as means of achieving self-actualization and are connected with intentionality and self-directedness. However, is it just a concept for promoting individualistic and middle-class views? There are notes dealing with the social justice: how these embedded values are intersecting with career development.

Organization as a context for career development is discussed here. There are presented notes that individual and organizational interests are split and in some organizations, career structures are like tournaments: stars and talented people are succeeding in the contests. Organizations could be resources for social change theories and for possible careers. This connects the idea of organizational career development with identity, with possible selves. Self can be seen as an object or a subject, as social and linked to context; career development interplays between oneself and environment: social space, opportunities, other people and their experiences have a significant effect on career development and forming one's self. Metacognitive thinking is needed to help people to monitor and manage their life paths, to face career challenges and to foster self-efficacy, adaptability, resilience, hope and optimism.

To use narratives is a working technique in career counselling: it gives possibilities to narrate our lives, search for meaning and constructed reality, collaborate between the counsellor and the client and to foster agency.

Attention should be paid to cultural contexts and cultural learning: all learning is cultural but also unconscious absorption. It is not bounded by country's borders. Counsellors are encouraged to take contextual approaches, research conventions, routines and find the important things to people; there is a need to speak on their own terms. In career development, cultural assessment methods should be recognized. While talking on the identity, there is a connection to cultural learning: personal myths integrates human experience, unites the personal and social and cannot be reduced to either polarity. To summarize the theory section, personal identity and fostering it plays a big role in social contexts that should be recognized and used as a source for career development.

### *Practice*

In practice section there are eight articles dealing with essential and current topics: digitalization, assessment, effectiveness, professionalism but also transformations, labor market information and giving ideas of clinical review and evidence-based practice for career development.

Professionalization and professionalism of career development practice is discussed in this section, later also professions. Professionalism deals with the ideas like formal status, accredited qualifications and via them, feeling of belonging. Overlapping professions exist in the area of career development. The role of society is crucial for professionalization: what are the benefits for the state and members of the profession. Professions can be seen in some cases self-serving, pursuing their own agenda. In different countries, there are different forms of career development professions. It is difficult to define about the extent that career services are professionalized. Career development professionals are needed for example when using labor market information in career services: sometimes clients just do not understand or believe it. Then practical hints are useful and they must be given by avoiding jargon, repeating and being specific.

There is a risk of youngsters to accept the status quo. That is why transformative and experimental career learning is needed. Career education concerns curriculum design and offers three different ways to integrate career education. It makes us happy that examples of Finland and Scandinavia are exhibited. Career education gives learner a "voice", it equips him/her with hope, optimism, self-belief and motivation. Narrative approach is used for self-development: it is a lifelong capacity to understand oneself and relationship to others. Promoting self-development can help youngsters to become more self-aware. Coaching and mentoring capacity by an adult is important and can be used also in career exploration. Career exploration means "looking outwards" and it includes discussions especially how to use and understand bias and marketing hype when using social media and websites.

There are very optimistic possibilities of using digitalization in career development although this digital revolution is called as forth industrial revolution. In this section, three approaches to link technology to pedagogy are presented: instrumental, connectivist and critical pedagogy. Six affordances offered by digital technology are described. There are questions if digitalization leads to superficiality and fake news or empowering citizens, democratizing society and leading to change political economy. Anyway, it can be useful in provision of

information, to tailor automated interactions, sharing experiences and facilitating communication.

Career guidance and its new forms needs assessment. How and why –questions are useful in evaluation. Assessment is needed among the professionals: for example, how are the values of counsellor affecting processes. Client- or person centeredness processes seem something to aim to but are not so easy to make true. Sometimes there is still a need for opportunity-centered process. Putting the client, or a student, is a focus, increases his/her self-efficacy and forces counsellor to take the mentoring or coaching attitude: in this kind of case, there is an urgent need to recognize that the client is the expert of his/her life and help him/her in self-actualization. Career stories or narrative approaches are good for that.

When assessing career development, it was noticed that it is effective in assisting with job searching or in choosing career. These new ideas of transformation, digitalization, and career professionals like coaches offer many possibilities to effect on client's lives. The best result of career development processes could be that the client becomes an agent of his/her life and is ready to steer his/her life towards special goal fitted with values and capacity.

### **Concluding remarks: What did I learn from career development?**

This handbook is made with a huge enthusiasm and expertise of the career development. There are plenty of references used and all chapters are written well and interestingly. The social justice theme is something that hits the eye: it is mentioned several times and in several contexts. As mentioned in the text, there is career development and career guidance in Finnish schools but it is not mentioned as a way for social justice.

The texts are also well aware of each other: interestingly, the authors refer to other texts. This makes a feeling of working together and sharing ideas from different points of views. While the authors are so competent, it would have nice to read more of their "opinions"; what do they really think about the theoretical findings that they present in their articles. The conclusions are quite short and still, they would have been the most interesting parts. One question remains of the references: self-determination theory with autonomy, relatedness and competency is mentioned (for example, p. 28) but there are no names like Deci and Ryan mentioned. I just wonder, why is that. In addition, ideas of the Self remind us as social psychologists of the I, Me and Self in the theory of G. H. Mead. That would have been good to add in the discussions of the identity.

All in all, very good theoretical background for career guidance. The whole area is taken into account. There are some great examples for taste how to use different kinds of creative techniques or methods and this makes us want more and more. Maybe the next part of this handbook could be Practical Handbook of Career Development. This book and the experience of authors gives a lot of possibilities for that so I am eagerly waiting for that version.