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The Evolving Role of the Careers Practitioner in the use of Information and Communication Technology

Virtual International Conference: Evolving Education & Careers

Hosted by DMH Associates and Sponsored by the Edge Foundation

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  - Dr. Janet Lenz and Prof Debra Osborn
    from Florida State University, USA

  - Dr. Julia Makela
    from the University of Illinois, USA

Current Context

- The Covid-19 pandemic has increased uncertainty about education and employment for young people and adults

- Two consequences of the pandemic have occurred

    1) Increasing need for career services

    2) Increasing provision of distance services using information and communication technology (ICT)

- To make good use of ICT in career services, we need to clarify best practices and understand how to make appropriate use of emerging technology

Purpose of the Presentation

- Examine the role of careers practitioners in delivering career interventions using information and communication technology (ICT)

- Examine how the role of practitioners might evolve in relation to the use of social media in career interventions

Organization of the Presentation

- Potential benefits of ICT use

- Potential limitations of ICT use

- Role of practitioners in effective ICT use

- Social media and practitioner role

- Implications for theory, research, training, and policy

- Questions and answers

Use of Terminology

- In this presentation, the term "practitioner" is used for all professionals delivering career interventions

- Persons receiving an intervention with practitioner support are referred to as "clients"

- Persons receiving a self-help intervention without practitioner assistance are referred to as "individuals"

- "Career interventions" include individual counseling for clients with extensive needs, brief practitioner interventions for clients with moderate needs, to providing self-help resources for individuals where practitioner support is not needed

Potential Benefits of Using ICT

Increased access to career intervention

- Access to career intervention is not restricted to physical facilities
- ICT is a *necessity* for persons in remote geographic areas and persons with a disability having mobility problems
- ICT is a *convenience* for persons seeking resources and services at their home or outside normal working hours

Increased access to assessment

- Existing assessments and new assessments

Increased access to information

- Locating information with powerful search engines
- Increasing use of video-based information
- Social media-based information with content created by users

Potential Benefits of Using ICT

Increased access to practitioners via distance counseling

- Delivered via e-mail, chat, telephone, or videoconferencing

- Anonymity encourages access for reluctant clients

- Loss of verbal and visual cues in asynchronous chat and email lead to perceived safety and disinhibition among some clients

- Opportunity to thoughtfully reflect on practitioner and client texts and e-mails before responding

- Client access to distance practitioners with specialized competencies

Potential Benefits of Using ICT

Increased practitioner access via social media

- Convenient asynchronous and synchronous exchange of text and video

  - Friends and family

  - Practitioners

  - Other individuals making career choices

- Allows individuals and groups to develop common understandings

- Shift in guidance from being supplier-driven bound by time and space to a ubiquitous user-driven experience

- Improved efficiency of career resources and services

- Improved accessibility and anonymity

Potential Benefits of Using ICT

Improved client and staff safety	• Reduced face-to-face interaction lowers risk of Covid-19 transmission, resulting in improved client and staff safety
Specialization	• Staff members can specialize in distance or face-to-face services based on preference and expertise
Cost effectiveness	• Reduced costs of adding office space to accommodate increasing client demand for services
Flexible scheduling	• Staff supervision can be conducted at a distance creating flexibility in scheduling

Potential Limitations of Using ICT

Reduced assessment quality	• Inconsistent evidence of assessment quality • Little to no evidence of test interpretation quality

Reduced information quality	• Quality problems due to poor research or bias
	
	• Poor data presentation make information difficult to use
	
	• Quality of social media-based career information
	
	    • intentional bias
	    • unintentional bias
	    • restricted range of experience
	    • out-of-date information
	    • popularity bias
	    • similarity bias
	    • context deficiency

Potential Limitations of Using ICT

Reduced practitioner support when needed

- Some clients and individuals need practitioner help to benefit from using assessments and information
- Some need help locating and using relevant information
- Some need help in understanding how to use ICT
- Some need help relating ICT applications to needs
- Individuals with low readiness for decision making are more likely overwhelmed with information
- Evidence shows practitioner intervention contributes to ICT career intervention effectiveness
- Practitioner intervention models have common elements of preparing individuals, monitoring use, and processing results

Potential Limitations of Using ICT

Problems with distance counseling

- Clients not providing informed consent

- Practitioners not showing evidence of compliance with established professional standards

- Clients not having adequate writing and computer skills

- Practitioners may have limited awareness of local conditions, events, and cultural issues that impact clients

Reduced peer & practitioner support via social media

- Digital exclusion due to access problems
- Confidentiality, security, and privacy of information
- Quality of social media-based career information
- Limited critical mass of competent practitioners

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Potential Limitations of Using ICT

Reduced confidentiality and security of client records	• Client case notes and assessment data • Inconsistent use of data encryption to promote security of client data
Reduced equality of access	• Limited financial resources as a barrier to access • Digital divide - Not having the digital literacy to know how to access and use information resources • Equality of access is a social justice issue

Potential Limitations of Using ICT

Problems with practitioner competencies and credentials	• Inadequate practitioner competencies • Considerable variation in the credentials of practitioners providing distance counseling

Problems with implementation of ICT in organizations	• Implementation problems
	    • Poor planning
	    • Lack of practitioner participation in decision making
	    • Poor integration of new technologies within services
	    • Inadequate staff training
	    • Poor evaluation
	    • Staff anxiety and resistance

Practitioner Role Checklist

❑**Recommend only valid assessments and information** to clients and individuals that meet standards and relate to specific needs

❑**Have a valid basis for determining which clients and individuals are likely to need support** to benefit from an ICT-based career intervention

❑**Use an explicit counseling model** for providing a type and amount of assistance that is appropriate for clients' characteristics and needs

❑**Make clients aware of the benefits and limitations** of distance counseling and the factors that contribute to successful outcomes

Key Aspects of Practitioner Role

❑**Have adequate supervision** from a supervisor experienced in ICT-based career interventions

❑**Make clients and individuals aware of privacy issues** with social media and how to use social media tools to manage their privacy

❑**Make recommendations on how to identify and use information** that fits individuals' needs

❑**Monitor and challenge posts and links on social media** that present inaccurate information

❑**Maintain the confidentiality and security of client records** and ensure that clients are aware of these protections and provide informed consent

Key Aspects of Practitioner Role

❑ **Provide information** to clients and individuals who may have limited finances or digital literacy as to where they can obtain support to access the Internet

❑ **Practitioners fully describe their competencies** and **credentials** on the Internet

❑ **Limit referrals** to only practitioners who fully describe competencies and credentials that relate to specific client needs

❑ **Actively participate in the implementation of ICT-based career interventions** to avoid preventable problems

Key Aspects of Practitioner Role

❑ **Actively participate in the periodic evaluation** of ICT-based career interventions and contribute to future design recommendations

❑ **Practitioners periodically contribute to public policy** on the design and use of ICT-based career interventions

❑ **Follow appropriate standards for ICT use**

❑ **Periodically work to educate clients and individuals** to recognize quality ICT-based career interventions

Social Media and Practitioner Role

- Range of perceptions regarding the role of the practitioner

Using social media to provide expert information

Using social media in a reflexive one-to-one dialogue, such as distance counseling

Using social media to facilitate interaction among groups of individuals

Using social media in actively engaging communities of individuals around career issues *

* This can be described as co-careering, which involves "the shared expertise and meaningful co-construction of career issues among community members" using social media (Kettunen, Vuorinen, & Sampson, 2013).

Social Media and Practitioner Role

- Success in this role requires active participation in social media by

    - Acquiring the requisite skills

    - Establishing a visible and trusted social media presence

    - Using this social media presence in the delivery of career interventions

    - Monitoring individuals' use of social media

- The question is, how can this be accomplished when practitioners are already busy with numerous tasks?

Operationalizing an Online Presence

1   **Practitioners establish foundational skills for successful social media participation**

Contributing to the design and implementation of the social media strategy for their organization is an important first step

2   **Practitioners establish their own social media presence utilizing current social media tools**

Operationalizing an Online Presence

3   **Practitioners monitor social media posts within their organization**

- Respond to requests for information or services

- Recommend resources and services that fit individual characteristics and needs, and then follow-up

- Take advantage of opportunities for co-careering among the community members that their organization serves

- Participate in external social media sites where the clients and individuals they serve are likely to frequent

  - Answering questions or requests

  - Recommending resources and services

  - Marketing their organization and other sources of assistance

Operationalizing an Online Presence

- Very important to monitor clients' and individuals' statements when they

  - Indicate possible harm to themselves or others

  - Indicate potential abuse of vulnerable persons, and statements indicating stereotypes or discrimination that limit persons' opportunities

Operationalizing an Online Presence

4 **Practitioners use data analytics** to understand the reach, impact, and utilization of their social media presence

5 **Practitioners engage in evaluation** to enhance the social media strategy of the organization

6 **Practitioners take advantage of supervision** to improve their social media practice

Social Media Content Monitoring

- An important barrier to implementing these recommendations is managing the substantial volume of social media posts

- How do practitioners prioritize which social media posts deserve prompt attention and which posts can be responded to later, or not at all?

- Practitioners do not have enough time to read all posts, let alone respond

Social Media Content Monitoring

- Social media sites already have the capacity to monitor posts

- What they lack are algorithms based on theory, empirical data, and expert professional judgment that can prioritize posts for practitioner attention

- A crisis text line (https://www.crisistextline.org/) already prioritizes texts for practitioner response on the basis of individuals' danger to themselves or others

- The algorithm prioritizes texts for practitioner response based on readily available empirical data

Social Media Content Monitoring

- **Resources that can be used for content monitoring**
  - Existing theory on readiness and mental health
  - Empirical data on the characteristics of individuals who are most at risk of career disengagement or harm from self or others
  - Expert professional judgment on setting priorities for care
- **Social media sites can help practitioners prioritize** their time to serve clients and individuals with the greatest need
- **Social media content monitoring using simple artificial intelligence** can assist practitioners in creating a social media presence that is achievable

Implications for Theory and Research

- What are the benefits and limitations of distance career service delivery and how are these similar and different from face-to-face career service delivery?

- How do synchronous and asynchronous service delivery modalities interact with client characteristics and problems?

- How does readiness for career decision making influence outcomes in distance career services?

- How are clients and practitioners using social media in career services?

- What impact does social media content monitoring have on clients and career services?
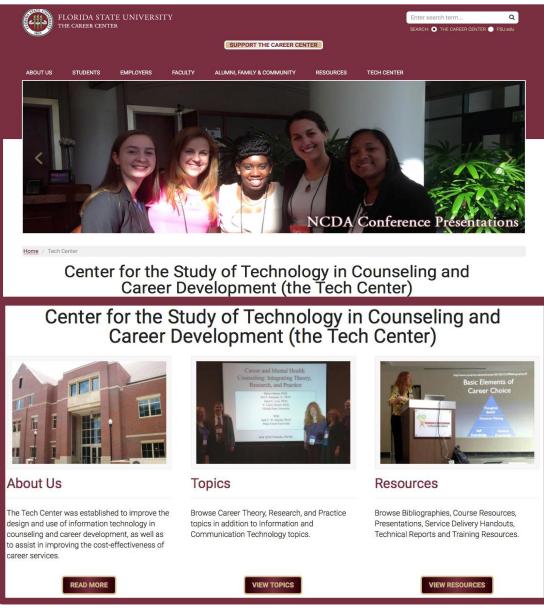
Implications for Training

Specific social media training competencies include

- Proficiency to locate, evaluate, and use online content

- Being a versatile and thoughtful writer

- Capacity to generate and maintain engaging and constructive online discussions

- Creating a visible and trusted online presence

- Fostering collaborative processes in career learning among peer group members

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