

Book Review of “Mapping the Future of Undergraduate Career Education”

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Abstract

This review evaluates the book *Mapping the Future of Undergraduate Career Education: Equitable Career Learning, Development, and Preparation in the New World of Work*, edited by Melanie Buford, Michael Sharp, and Michael Stebleton. It provides an informative overview of the current practice of and key theoretical understandings of career education in postsecondary. In this incredible book, 20 authors come together across 17 chapters presenting a wide range of concepts exploring the changes in and impacting Career Education. It includes the realms of work transformations and generational cohorts, sheds light on the crucial role of career education in promoting equity diversity and inclusion, introduces the latest innovative practices employed across the field, and delves into experiential learning integrations with career education. This review provides a comprehensive summary of the text’s key points and strongly recommends that it be used not only as a textbook for graduate studies, but also as a valuable resource for professionals involved in guiding and supporting students’ career education.

Mapping the Future of Undergraduate Career Education: Equitable Career Learning, Development, and Preparation in the New World of Work. Buford, Sharp, & Stebleton (2023)

With the ever-evolving field of career development and education, it is crucial to have a source that offers fresh perspectives to align this field with current research and practices. Brown and Lent’s *Career Development and Counseling* has served as such a valuable resource for many years. However, while it is an invaluable resource for those who work in career counseling it has limitations when it comes to its applicability in the broader field of career education. In the field of career education, there is a strong emphasis on work-integrated learning and experiential learning, which are closely tied to career counselling, coaching, advising, and both formal and informal teaching opportunities. These can range from classroom-based career education for academic credit to workshops, seminars, and an array of career-focused events designed to benefit students. Career education at the postsecondary level goes beyond

career counseling. It encompasses a diverse and interdisciplinary realm that combines counseling, psychology, education, and business. (Young, 2023).

Being an interdisciplinary field with so many components, it can be difficult to find unifying theories in career education. Most programs that connect with career education tend to be aligned with theories based in career counselling, postsecondary student supports and education, or human resources and industrial relations. With the emergence of a new generation entering the workforce and a significant number of individuals leaving it, alongside the rapid advancement of technology to enhance work conditions and productivity, and the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, now is an opportune moment to provide a text that truly empowers career education advocates from diverse backgrounds. This text will help them navigate the complex and interconnected realm of postsecondary career education, which encompasses a multitude of disciplines.

The book *Mapping the Future of Undergraduate Career Education: Equitable Career Learning, Development, and Preparation in the New World of Work*, edited by Melanie

Buford, Michael Sharp, and Michael Stebleton is a valuable resource for career counseling and development, as well as for anyone interested in the history and future of Career Education in higher education. More than twenty prominent and emerging researchers in Career Development, Education, and Counseling have contributed to this compelling work. The book consists of seventeen chapters, which are categorized into four distinct parts. These sections explore the future of work and postsecondary career education, emphasize the importance of equity and inclusion in career education, discuss the significant changes occurring in career education delivery and context, and highlight the ongoing integration of experiential learning and career education. This book is essential because it recognizes the evolving approach to career education and career development support in Canada. It highlights the shift from primarily relying on Counselling Therapists to embracing a broader and more interdisciplinary group of career development professionals (Dietsche & Lees, 2017) providing career education.

The work of career development professionals has always been based in the foundations of Parsons and Dewey at the beginning of the last century and been adapted and molded by the theorists that came after such as Holland, Super, and Kolb. Most career education work of the last thirty years, this

text included, is firmly situated in the modern theorists starting with Savickas and Krumboltz, changing the narrative of the work into constructivist and towards a critical understanding of individuals and their contexts. This text contributes to the field by wholeheartedly embracing the Psychology of Working Theory, as advocated by Blustein, Autin, and Duffy. This shift is of great significance because, just like career education, PWT is an interdisciplinary approach that draws connections not only with career counseling theorists, but also with education theorists like Freire, and organizational behavior or economics theorists such as Crant or Bertrand.

This book is laid out in four sections. Part one provides an overview of the changes to work, generational cohorts in the workplace, and career education from just before and since the pandemic. Part two focuses on how career education can be a force for change in equity and inclusion in society and the workplace. Part three identifies several new and innovative directions in career education both in theory and in practice. While the concluding section explains how tightly experiential learning is integrated in the current understanding of career education.

Part one's focus on the changes to employment, career education offerings, and generational cohorts provides a solid foundation for the rest of the text. Some key concepts are around new innovations in

career education. Most visible are the expansion of various technologies as a way of serving a larger number of people as well as supporting traditionally underserved students. It also explores the new alignment of career education in universities, formalizing the connection with experiential learning, moving it from student affairs areas to academic affairs areas, and in some surprising changes having them report directly to the president. Sadly, some parts of this section are already appearing outdated. The anticipated outcome of the emergency changes during the pandemic failed to materialize, as innovation collided with institutional resistance and budget constraints.

The discussion of generational change and work experiences is especially important for anyone hoping to use this as a course textbook. The changes described in the generation shift seem to result from watching older generations like Gen X and Elder Millennials only achieve success through flexibility. The current generation entering university is experiencing a dramatic shift in career paths. Gone are the days of following a single profession or working for a single employer, even breaking away from the influence of their own parents. Instead, these stories have become relics of the past, passed down from their grandparents. The section closes out with a critical examination of the depressing spiral that would occur if we allowed the future of work to be

written by those who only wish for wealth extraction. The thrust of the final chapter is that because the envisioned future is harmful to the individual, Career Development should not accept it but should instead work to help individuals envision a new and successful future and be able to work toward it.

Part two focuses on understanding the traditionally underserved and under examined students in postsecondary. This builds upon the foundation laid in part one, urging career education providers to see their work as being emancipatory. Career education plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between privileged wealthy white students and those who lack the same advantages. It not only equips individuals with the necessary skills and abilities for successful employment, but also cultivates a deep understanding of discriminatory hiring practices. By instilling this critical awareness, career education prepares future leaders to oversee fair and inclusive hiring systems. The importance of understanding work and workplaces extends to teaching intentional adaptability and other essential tools for thriving in today's unpredictable and demanding work environment. Much of the section is focused around making the teaching of the hidden curriculum of career explicit.

Not all of this section translates to the field outside the United States of America. Perhaps, ironically, the chapter

on internationalization includes a substantial amount of US specific advice and recommendations that don't transfer into the Canadian context due to national legislation and policy. In addition, many of the section's assumptions about what the lasting changes from the pandemic would be did not end up coming to pass, at least outside of the US.

Part three examines and expands on the innovations mentioned in the first two parts. The chapters in this section provide a more theoretical understanding that supports future career development research such as examining career education from ontological, pedagogical, and instructional points of view. Though starting with a comparatively weak chapter explaining the Stanford Life Design Lab model, the remainder of the section examines key modern theories and innovations. It includes wonderful expansions on career construction and life design theories as well as Krumboltz's work on Happenstance Learning Theory, ensuring that the most impactful theories of the past decades continue to be relevant. More importantly, this section contains a substantial discussion of narrative or story-based career development practice. Narrative approaches are especially useful for those of us working with individuals who have not been well served by traditional approaches.

Completing the book in part four is a deep dive into the merging of experiential learning

and career education into one department, which has become common in modern universities and colleges. This section focuses heavily on practical applications for individuals who may be leading transitions into a unified department or who are hoping to champion such a transition within their own institution. By providing four different pathways to linking experiential learning with career education departments, this section points the way forward for many who work in or support undergraduate career education.

Though not every chapter of this book lives up to expectations, as a whole the book offers an extraordinary exploration of the recent past, present, and promising future for postsecondary career education. It will increase the understanding for those who will be providing and supporting career education, career counseling, and career development supports to students. It provides a strong basis in modern career development, experiential learning, and psychology of working theory. It also provides practical and actionable changes that can be implemented in most postsecondary institutions that will lead to improving the educational experience of undergraduate students. Although originally aimed at graduate students seeking to enhance their understanding of career education in postsecondary institutions, this text is equally valuable for anyone involved in postsecondary career education, including administrators,

service providers, and recruiters collaborating with postsecondary institutions.

References

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