

RESHAPING CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

I am very honoured to be the first Professor of Career Development in a UK university. The University of Derby, in creating this chair and the Centre for Guidance Studies to which it is linked, has declared its belief in the growing importance of career guidance in relation to the profound social transformations we are currently living through. I share this belief. In this lecture I want to explore some of the ways in which the field of career guidance needs to be reshaped to respond to these transformations.

The symbolism of the new millennium is particularly portentous for the career guidance profession. The profession is essentially a twentieth-century creation. It was at the turn of this century that the first vocational guidance bureaux began to appear both in the USA and in Europe, and that the first major book in the field – Frank Parsons' posthumous classic, *Choosing a Vocation* (Parsons, 1909) – was published. In historical terms, if one looks at it from a detached viewpoint, career guidance was a classic product of the late industrial era. It was at that point, where the traditional mechanisms of role allocation within social classes ceased to be sufficient to cope with the pace of economic and industrial change, that formal guidance services began to be developed to supplement them. The role of such services was to provide more formal and more flexible role allocation. Their methods reflected this role.

Within the industrial era, the field has been only weakly professionalised. Both here and in other countries, many of its practitioners are members of other professional groups – teachers, psychologists, labour-market administrators. It is only a fairly small residual group who define themselves primarily as careers advisers or career counsellors. They include many worthy and dedicated individuals, but their work on the whole has remained undervalued. This is partly because the shape of people's careers has been largely dictated by selective organisational processes within the education and employment systems. The role of guidance has been to supplement and to lubricate these processes.

Now, however, we are not only at the turn of the century, but at the turn of a millennium, and in the middle of a major historical transformation to a new era. The language used to describe the new era varies: a post-industrial era, a post-modern era, a new information age. Robert Reich has called it "the second great crossing", comparable to the move from the land to the factory. The question this poses is whether the career guidance profession has a role in this new era, and if so, what that role is. Is it a profession whose time is passing, or a profession whose time has come?

The traditional concept of career

The traditional concept of career has been concerned with progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organisation or profession. If you ask most people what they understand by career, this is still the conception they hold. It is an essentially bureaucratic conception: neat and orderly. It is not without virtue. It provides order for individuals, giving them a secure basis for their lives. It provides order for society, because it ties individuals into social structures, rewarding them for their investment in those structures. It is meritocratic, allowing individuals to be promoted according to their abilities and achievements rather than the accidents of birth. It permits

individual choice, particularly in choosing the particular ladder which the individual seeks to climb. It therefore requires careers advisers to help individuals in making these initial choices. Thereafter, however, the system requires little further lubrication from such advisers: it works of its own accord.

Our educational system, we should note, is still based on this model. It is heavily front-loaded. It is expected to select out and process young people, so that they emerge ready to set foot on their appointed ladder. The apparatus of course choices is part of this process. Careers advisers and teachers involved in guidance roles are its technicians. They may not like to think of themselves in this way, but in structural terms that is what they are: technicians, lubricating the system.

But this model is fragmenting – fast. It less and less describes the real world. There are fewer ladders around, and those that survive look less and less secure. The reason is the pace of change. Bureaucracies work well in a relatively static world, but they struggle to cope with change. And change is now endemic: particularly economic change, stemming from the globalisation of markets; and technological change, stemming from the pervasive impact of information and communication technologies. The result is that all organisations have to be prepared to change much more regularly and much more rapidly than ever before. They are therefore seeking more compact, more fluid and more flexible forms. Accordingly, they are less and less prepared to make long-term commitments to individuals. The orderly pathways are disappearing: as Robin Linnecar graphically put it, it's now more like crazy paving, which individuals are having to lay for themselves.

The effect can feel like anarchy, as the familiar landmarks disappear. Rifkin (1995) talks about the end of work; Bridges (1995) talks about the end of jobs. It is easy, too, to find people who talk about the end of career. But I believe they are wrong to adopt such apocalyptic tones, much as millennial musing may tempt them to do so. That is why I have chosen the more transformative metaphor of "careerquake" (Watts, 1996): a shaking of the foundations of traditional conceptions, but with the opportunity to build new and more robust structures in its wake. It is also why Audrey Collin and I have used the alternative Christian metaphor of death and transfiguration (Collin & Watts, 1996). Work has a critical role within all religions, as a way of making sense of our time on earth. But the structures through which it is organised are made by people, and they change. They took very different forms in pre-industrial eras than in the industrial era, and they are clearly going to take very different forms again in the post-industrial era into which we are now moving. These new forms could be much creative, offering much more scope for the realisation of untapped human potential, than the models we have had hitherto. But only if we can find the concepts and the structures which will release this potential. I believe that a re-cast concept of career has a critical role to play in this respect.

The new concept of career

"Career", in my view, now needs to be redefined. Like many good words in the English language, it is richly ambiguous. It can describe neat progression up a hierarchy; but we also refer to "careering about". We need to redefine it as the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work. Learning embraces all forms of learning: not only formal education, but training, and informal learning too. Work embraces all forms of work: not only employment, but self-employment, and unpaid work within the home and community as well. The challenge is the notion of "progression". Progression can take place laterally as well as vertically: it can incorporate elements of "careering about". But it retains the sense of development, of moving forward: career is more than mere biography. Learning is the key to progression in work. Our task is to help all individuals to interweave the two, on a lifelong basis.

This task is big business: indeed, it lies at the heart of the challenges with which governments are grappling as we approach the new millennium. The public debates are conducted largely in code. The key phrases used are three-fold: the need for labour-market flexibility, for a skills revolution,

and for avoiding social exclusion. We need labour-market flexibility in order to respond to change. We need a skills revolution – a raising of the skills of all our people – in order to be competitive in world markets. And we need to avoid social exclusion – marginalising particular groups of people – both because it is morally wrong and because it is enormously expensive in terms of its impact on drug usage, crime, and violence, which reduce the quality of life for all of us. The trouble is that the three goals tend to drive in different directions. Flexibility easily means increasing gaps between the work-rich and the work-poor: between those who can make it big, and those who are left to fight for survival. This increases social exclusion; it also means that many of those trying to make out on the edge of the labour market have no opportunity to enhance their skills.

In the UK, we have emerged from a long period of "new right" government, which believed that the free flow and flexibility of markets would deliver trickle-down solutions to these problems. This was decisively rejected at our General Election last year. The new Labour Government does not worship unreservedly at the altar of markets. But nor does it believe that we can return to a planned economy, or the rigid bureaucracy of an old-style welfare state. It is seeking a "third way": a way of working with the grain of markets, but filtering them, supporting them, supplementing them, in ways which ensure that we avoid social exclusion and achieve the skills upgrading we need (Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998).

It is my firm belief that the concept of "careers for all", based on the new definition I have offered, is one of the keys to the third way. "Lifelong learning" is now a widely-heard mantra. What the use of the word "career" does is to link lifelong learning to work, to add the element of progression, and to ground both firmly in the individual. But for people to understand the new concept, and to see it as applying to all, requires major changes in their mind-set. Certainly in the UK, many people are locked into the old concept, seeing "career" as describing the past rather than the future, as applying to "them" rather than to "us". Those involved in career guidance need to be at the forefront of efforts to change the mind-set. And that requires, I believe, an active involvement in public policy.

Policy used to be about structures and systems: about setting up government interventions administered by government bureaucracies. Now, increasingly, it is about enabling processes: about working with, and seeking to influence, the enterprise and energies of many other people and organisations. It is about ensuring that public interests are met, as far as possible, through private actions, but influencing these actions to ensure that they collectively meet the long-term interests of all, rather than the short-term interests of the few. That is why words like "partnerships" are nowadays rife in public-policy documents. Career guidance services need to be parts of these partnerships, bringing their distinctive expertise to the table.

One of the powerful elements careers advisers bring with them is their understanding of the importance of so-called "soft" interventions which work *through* people rather than *on* them. All their professional activities are interventions of this kind. Just as employers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of soft process skills alongside hard technical skills, so policy-makers need to become more aware of the power and significance of soft policy interventions. Most policy-makers still find it difficult to get hold of them: they tend to be locked into structural mind-sets, into system-think rather than person-think. The career guidance profession can help them to adapt to the softer ways of thinking. And in doing so, it can help them to understand the importance of its own work as soft policy interventions.

This is critical for the profession, because without policy attention and support, its work looks vulnerable. Viewed from a distance, much of it seems very much like a relic from the late industrial era. In all countries, career guidance systems are still heavily concentrated around the exit point from full-time education into the world of work. Their information systems, whatever they *call* them, still tend to be *occupational* systems rather than *career* systems. They describe a world of work ordered neatly into occupations and organisations, with neatly-defined entry points framed in terms of educational qualifications. We all know that the world of work is much more

complex and dynamic than this – more messy, in fact – but in seeking to tidy it up to make it comprehensible, the profession tends to fall back on the old models.

The risk is that what it is left with is a fading role within a fading structure. Schools, in particular, look more and more like industrial-era remnants. We still herd pupils into schools, just as we used to herd workers into factories. Attendance is mandatory: no "hot desks" here. Information is transmitted by teacher to pupil, rather than building systems around the power of information technology. Motivation is based extrinsically on gaining access to pieces of paper which provide passports to enter the world of work. Careers advisers are gatekeepers, checking the visas.

I exaggerate, of course, but I do worry that what the career guidance profession is left with is shoring up an outdated school structure, plus a marginal role in labour-market management, and a few services in the private sector to which only a small minority of adults have access. If this is all it is, it could get stripped out quite quickly – particularly as non-professional services which seem to offer what it can offer are more and more freely available on the Internet.

The profession needs therefore to get serious about promoting what it can offer, and to ensure that it is based on a cutting-edge understanding of the transformations that are taking place in the world of work. In my view, it has a critical role to play in helping both individuals and organisations to adapt to the transformations. In this sense, it is an agent of change – not in a naively radical 1960s sense but in dancing with the rhythms of historical change. In schools, for example, it should be at the forefront of helping schools to think through the implications of the new world of work for their structures and their curriculum (see Bayliss, 1998). It also needs to ensure that young people when they emerge from schools are equipped with the career management skills which will enable them to construct their careers. This is a far more demanding role than just slotting them into university or college courses. It needs to start in primary school, not at the end of secondary school. It is essentially about learning, and learning accordingly now needs to be at the heart of career development theories.

Implications for career theory

My NICEC colleague Bill Law (1996) has recently developed a career learning theory in which he suggests that career-development learning can be built in cycles, which develop progressively through four stages: the *sensing* stage, in which a person is able to sense career-related information and impressions; a *sifting* stage, in which they are able to sift this material into recognisable patterns that become the basis of action; a *focusing* stage, in which they are able to focus the material more tightly; and an *understanding* stage, in which they are able to identify causes and effects in specific scenarios. Increasingly, people need the more advanced capacities in order to manage their careers effectively. But these more advanced capacities cannot be developed unless the more basic capacities have been built to support them.

There are links between Bill Law's work and John Krumboltz's social learning theory. John Krumboltz, too, focuses on career counsellors as facilitators of continuous learning: learning new skills, challenging self-defeating beliefs. These need to be adapted to the new concept of career. Krumboltz has suggested, for example, that instead of emphasising decision-making, we should be emphasising the wisdom of open-mindedness. He has also suggested that unplanned events should be seen not just as an *inevitable* but also as a *desirable* aspect of everyone's career. I agree, but I want to have it both ways. That is why I like oxymorons. H.B. Gelatt (1989) has talked about "positive uncertainty": a phrase to conjure with. Krumboltz and his colleagues (Mitchell *et al.*, in press) are working with the concept of "planned happenstance". I favour "planful serendipity". "Serendipity" is one of the joyous words in the English language: the Oxford dictionary describes it as "the faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident". We need it. But if that is all we have, the risk is that we are simply being reactive, waiting for something to turn up. We also need a sense of direction: a flexible plan which we are ready to

adapt when unexpected events occur, and which will probably help us to spot and make sense of these events.

There is a link here with constructivist theories, which also have much to offer for the new millennium. Constructivist approaches focus on helping individuals to be authors of their career narratives: to tell the story so far; to shape the themes and tensions in the story line; and to start drafting the next chapter (Savickas, 1993). Such narratives need to incorporate playful serendipity. I like the technique adopted in one research study (Bateson, 1994) of asking people to interpret their own life history twice: first on the basis of smooth continuity ("Everything I have ever done has been heading me for where I am today"), and then on the basis of serendipitous discontinuity ("I've only arrived here as a result of series of accidents and interruptions"). We could all, I suspect, write both stories, using the same material.

I also contend, however, that our theories need to have a stronger sociological frame than they tend to do. The power of "career" derives from its capacity to link the private work of the individual to the social and economic structure. There is a danger that if we over-psychologise the concept of "career", we allow it to become, in a literal sense, privatised. That means that we lose sight of all the inequalities in opportunity structures and cultural capital which for many people constrain not only the narratives they can construct, but the lives they can lead. If we want to support "careers for all", we cannot afford to base our work on psychologised naivety.

Implications for policy and practice

So much for theory. What about policy and practice? The key issue is how we can reconstruct our career guidance provision so that it is accessible to individuals not just at the start of their working lives but throughout their working and learning lives. Careers can no longer be foretold: they are forged through a series of decisions we all make throughout our life-span. Guidance needs to be available at all these decision points. What is more, it needs to be available to help us to review regularly whether and when we *need* to make new decisions: to invest in new skills, to scan new possibilities. In the USA, Jane Goodman (1992) has suggested the analogy of dental check-ups: going not only when we are in pain, as if to have a tooth pulled, but for regular checks to maintain our career health. How do we do this? How do we ensure this kind of access?

This is a policy question as well as a question of practice. Career guidance is not only a *private* good: it is a *public* good too. It reduces drop-outs from education and training, and mismatches in the labour market. It offers benefits to education and training providers, increasing the effectiveness of their provision by linking learners to programmes which meet their needs. It offers benefits to employers, by helping employees to come forward whose talents and motivations meet the employer's requirements. And it offers benefits to governments, in two ways: by fostering efficiency in the allocation and use of human resources, and by fostering social equity in access to educational and vocational opportunities – the balance between these will depend on the political hue of the government in question. It is a soft policy instrument, but – as I argued earlier – soft instruments are likely to be more effective in the new millennium than the more macho instruments of the past.

So how, in the public interest, are we to ensure access for all to career guidance throughout their lives? Is this an impossible dream? Or could we make the dream come true? I want to suggest five alternative models of delivery.

The first is to see the formal *education system* as the natural home for lifelong access to career guidance. This is on the basis that people will increasingly be returning to formal education at various stages throughout their lives, when they want to reorientate themselves or to develop new skills. Tom Bentley (1998) has recently suggested that schools and colleges should become neighbourhood learning centres, welcoming learners of all ages, and becoming the focus for

career as well as social and health services alongside their educational programmes. Since the education system is the base for most career guidance at present, this would allow organic development of current provision. But it assumes that the education system is the sole and exclusive base for learning: a proposition which is becoming less and less tenable, particularly now that some work organisations are conceiving themselves as learning organisations.

This leads to the second model, which is to see career guidance as being provided by the *primary work and/or learning base* where individuals are located, which in most cases will be either an educational institution or an employer. The merit of this model is to validate employers as deliverers of career counselling. A growing number of organisations are introducing systems to support career self-management: career planning workshops, assessment centres, career resource centres, mentoring systems, and the like. More and more organisations, too, are setting up systems of regular development reviews, sometimes as part of appraisal systems but sometimes separate from them. The growth of such systems has been strongly encouraged by the voluntary Investors in People programme, in which employers can be kitemarked if they meet certain specifications – including opportunities for development reviews. These strongly parallel the systems of recording achievement and action planning which are now becoming established within educational institutions. Together, they provide much the structure for the kind of regular check-ups which Jane Goodman is advocating. Their limitation, however, is that they miss out significant groups of people who are not engaged in formal education or employment. They also tend to be more knowledgeable about, and sometimes strongly biased towards, opportunities within the organisation as opposed to those outside. And they are much more evident in large than in the small and medium-sized organisations where employment is increasingly concentrated.

The concern about impartiality leads towards a third model, which is to base career guidance in *intermediary structures* between individuals and employers – trade unions and professional associations, for example. NICEC has recently done some work with the Trades Union Congress, looking at the extent to which trade unions can act not only as *advocates* of such guidance in the workplace, within their collective bargaining role, but also as *deliverers* of such guidance (Ford & Watts, 1998). We found some fascinating examples of practice, as we have with professional associations. They are however limited at present, and at a fairly modest level of professional skill. And, of course, many people are not members of such an organisation. There are also other kinds of intermediary structures – deployers like Manpower, brokerage organisations, networks of various kinds – which offer potential as bases for career guidance. But at present they are uneven in density and in the extent to which guidance gets subsumed beneath other agendas.

The concern for greater universality of independent provision leads to a fourth model, which is to view lifelong career guidance as a separate *public service*. The problem here is the cost. So far, no country has committed itself to providing such a service at a scale commensurate with the need. Where services exist, they are often little more than tokenistic: hidden away within government buildings, with minimal marketing, to ensure that demand can be met with minimal supply. Or they are limited mainly to information and placement services. Often, too, these services are part of employment services which also have the role of policing access to unemployment benefits: this can limit and distort their guidance potential. It thus leaves open the question of where a wider range of career guidance services is to be found, and who is to pay for them.

This leads to the fifth model, which is to view career guidance as a *stand-alone profession*. Perhaps in the future, just as many of us have our doctor, our dentist, our solicitor, our accountant, so we will also have our careers adviser, to whom we will go when we have a problem, but also when we want a check-up. Is this a viable model? Are we likely to be willing to pay for such a service? Or perhaps are we more likely to do so if the professional base is wider? In the USA, for example, the career guidance profession has traditionally been part of the counselling profession, though with periodic inclinations to separate development. The

counselling links sustain a strong holistic view of the individual, which embraces the spiritual dimension in which there is growing interest (Handy, 1997). They are also helpful in supporting two sets of links which are likely to become increasingly important in the new millennium: with relationship counselling, because careers increasingly have to be negotiated between partners and within family systems; and stress counselling, because of the stress likely to be caused by more discontinuous career patterns. The links with counselling tend however to devalue the informational base which is such an important part of career guidance. Other models may be worth exploring.

For example, I am constantly struck at present by the links between career guidance and financial guidance. Individuals are having to take more and more responsibility for their pensions and social insurance, just as they are having to take more responsibility for their careers. Financial planning is as important as career planning. Indeed, the two are increasingly intertwined. Might the two come closer together, perhaps through distinct professionals working together in partnership, or perhaps through a stronger process of symbiosis – or even cross-breeding? I am currently doing some work with Brian Stevens of Finance and Education Services (FEoS) exploring these possibilities.

Cross-cutting all of these issues is the impact of information and communication technologies. Their key effect is to remove the constraints of time and place from both learning and work – and from career guidance. The extent to which we will seek in future to meet each other face-to-face in physical locations to conduct these activities, or to have more sustained interactions using the growing array of communication systems now becoming available to us, is likely to have a significant impact on the nature of, and the balance between, the five models I have outlined. We are still all working out our own rules about when it is best to use the telephone, the fax, the e-mail, snail mail, or face-to-face meetings. The key take-off point is likely to be when the currently separate hardware of the computer, the telephone and the television become integrated in the home and elsewhere. At that point – not far away now – our rules may undergo a more radical shift. Will in future people want instant videoconferencing access to a career counsellor when they are working on the Internet at home, rather like telephone banking? How will we respond to the flexible access this will require? Will we form consortia, so that calls can be referred on to someone who is prepared to work on the nightshift? Or will people want to build a continuous relationship with a particular counsellor? And will people still want to come to the careers service or consulting room, partly because of the direct personal interaction but also perhaps because of the more intense focus which a change of territory provides?

My own view is that we need to look at all these issues much more closely and more strategically than we do at present. At their core is the question of whether a market is likely to develop which will expand provision, or whether it is difficult – and undesirable – to commodify career guidance in the way this would require. As a recent market-research project carried out by Marketry and NICEC for the Guidance Council (Wilson & Jackson, 1998) has indicated, marketing guidance is problematic, for a number of reasons: it is a process not a product, a means not an end; at its heart is not meeting people's immediate wants, but helping them to clarify their longer-term needs. On the other hand, the development of the market in career guidance could be one of the ways of meeting the public interest without making strong demands on the public purse. It is interesting that even in Germany, where the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit formerly had a state monopoly in the provision of career guidance and placement services, the monopoly has now been broken.

What is happening in the United States is of interest in this respect. I tried to persuade our last Government to fund a study of the development of a career guidance industry there, on the grounds that if it was possible to develop such an industry, the States – and particularly perhaps California – is the place where it was most likely to have happened. The Government was voted out of office before it was able to commission the study, but my initial explorations suggested five propositions. First, it seems that the only area where a significant market has developed for

career guidance services is outplacement counselling, where the employer pays, is prepared to pay real money, has an interest in a positive outcome, but has no interest in what that outcome should be; outpatient firms seeking to diversify tend to move into areas like career coaching where, again, the employer pays. Second, there are a fair number of career counsellors who offer a private practice where the user pays, but many do so as a sideline to other forms of other professional practice: there are, as yet, few signs of this provision developing as a real market. This is linked to the third point, which is that whilst some individuals seem prepared to pay for career counselling, they only in general appear willing to do so at levels which cover marginal costs rather than full costs. Fourth, again linked to this, there has been significant growth of non-profit "third-sector" organisations where the user may be charged a fee but this is subsidised and (often) means-tested in some way. And fifth, while some fee-paying counselling and psychotherapy services are covered to some extent by insurance policies, this is in general not true of career counselling, except in the very limited number of cases where it can be linked to mental health disorders of some kind.

These findings confirm what seems to be happening in the UK too. What then can we conclude about the extent to which the market can deliver the public interest in ensuring lifelong access to career guidance? The evidence available to date suggests that the market is likely to have a significant role to play, but that it will not of itself deliver what is needed. There is still an important role for government: partly to ensure that there are appropriate regulatory and quality-assurance procedures in place to protect the interests of the individual customer or client; and partly to provide for market failure, especially in the case of those who are unlikely to be able to afford, or willing to pay for, the guidance services they need.

On the first of these, the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance – which brings together all the relevant professional bodies and stakeholders in the career guidance field – has developed, with government support, quality standards for all sectors of career guidance provision. The Government has now approved in principle the Council's proposals for an accreditation body to implement these standards in the adult guidance sector, and ways are being sought of achieving coherence with standards in other sectors.

On market failure, a possible solution could be the concept of Individual Learning Accounts. The Government's current commitment to ILAs is fairly modest, limited to pump-priming a million accounts. ILAs could however be one of the "big ideas" which the Government will need if it is to achieve a second term. The key is whether significant elements of current public funding for further and higher education are rechannelled through such accounts. If so, ILAs will become the main means through which post-compulsory education training will be funded in the new millennium. The key principles are two-fold: that individuals are best placed to choose what and how they want to learn; but that responsibility for investing in learning needs to be shared between the state, employers and the individual. It is a way of breaking out of the current impasse where each of these three parties has an interest in lifelong learning, but expects the others to pay. Career guidance would seem essential as the means of reconciling the two principles: reassuring the state and employers that while decisions about the use of their contributions will be made by individuals, these decisions will be well-informed and well-thought-through. But potentially, too, Individual Learning Accounts could be a way of breaking out of the marginal-costs barrier to the expansion of guidance provision itself, enabling the guidance to be paid for on a full-cost basis by getting employers and the state to supplement what individuals are prepared to pay. It is also compatible with the state paying most or all costs in the case of particularly disadvantaged groups.

Implications for practice

I am conscious that I have said less about practice than about theory and policy. I think it is important, however, to review the extent to which career guidance practices relates to the world of the present and the future, or of the past. NICEC has recently reviewed the constructs of work

used in career guidance, in the light of the move towards more flexible organisational structures and more flexible labour markets (Hirsh, Kidd & Watts, 1998). One of the intriguing questions is whether occupation, which is still one of our dominant constructs, is likely to become more or less significant in this new world. On the one hand, it could be argued that the decline of organisational careers means that occupation is likely to grow in importance as a way of mapping careers that span movement across different organisations and different forms of work contract. This is the view taken, for example, in Arthur & Rousseau's book *The Boundaryless Career* (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). On the other hand, it could be argued that the key in future, reflecting the shift of focus from employment to employability, is not "what I do" (i.e. current occupation) but "what I can do" (in terms of capabilities and competencies) – which will require a new language. This is the kind of issue which we need to address and resolve if we are to be ready for the new millennium.

Conclusion

I fervently believe that the career guidance profession has a future. Not only that: I believe it is a better future. It ceases to be technicians of systems: it becomes what it has always wanted to be – facilitators of the individuals who will make the systems work. Indeed, I believe it has a critical role to play if the new post-industrial era is to offer more fulfilling lives for more people than the industrial era has. The old model has served some of us well. But for many it has limited the extent of the opportunities they have had for fulfilling their potential. We all have more possibilities within us than we ever realise. If people can move not only flexibly but also progressively within the world of learning and of work, they are more likely to lead rich and fulfilling lives. The help of the career guidance profession is crucial in this respect. But only if we can develop the theories, the policies and the practices that we need for a new era. That is the challenge – and it is one that should inspire and empower us.

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