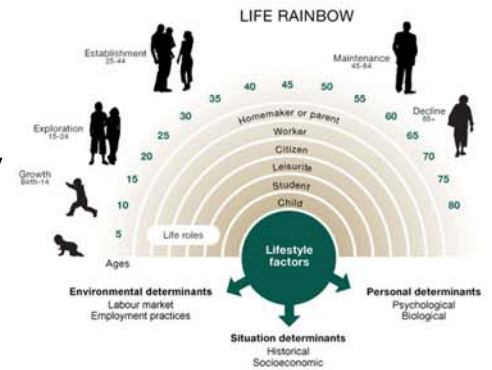


A phenomenological exploration of student perceptions of 'career'

Context:

- Contemporary economic and political policy drivers for Higher Education have resulted in an increasing emphasis on the value of Higher Education for both society and the individual.
- As a result Universities are having to respond to increasing 'measures' of success in relation to 'employability' and student outcomes.
- Concepts of 'return on investment' have driven Universities to try and implement what some commentators call 'blanket employability' – which seeks to bridge academic integrity and the skills requirements of employers and the labour market.
- This research focuses on the students' perceptions of 'career', and what influences their perspective. It will seek to test students' resonance with the implicit policy assumptions, in support of a greater understanding of a need for differentiated careers education.



The 'assumptions' of Policy:

- Students arrive at University having made rational 'career' based decisions
- Students adopt a traditional interpretation of the phenomenon of 'career'
- Students adopt an 'objective' and societal interpretation of career 'progression' and 'success' - motivated by concepts of salary and status.

Research Questions:

- How do students define 'career' and 'career success' - to what extent does this resonate with policy?
- How much is 'career' a motivating factor in the students' transition into HE and their subject discipline?
- How do students define the purpose of Higher Education?
- What influences student perceptions of 'career' and 'career success'?
- Are there common discipline trends which define a student's interpretation?

Theoretical integration:

- Career Development Theory – Subjective and Objective 'Career Success', 'Boundaryless' Careers
- Occupational Choice Theory – Community Interaction, Career 'Life Span'
- Relational Theory and the influence of 'Chance'

Legacy:

- It is intended that this research will support the development of the Careers & Employability service at the University by:
- Informing a differentiated approach to careers education
 - Supporting a detailed understanding of students motivations and influences
 - Providing a foundation on which to build a methodology to support greater student insight into 'career'

