

Graduates, careers and career agency:

What we know and what we need to know

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Introduction



- Competitive transition to employment
- Graduate career experiences
- Careers theories and concepts
- A research agenda

Graduation success



- Achievement recognised
- Shaped by university experiences
- New knowledge, skills and attributes
- Ready for work?
- Valuable transferable experiences? (Gedye, Fender & Chalkley, 2004).

Facing an unknown future



Shaping graduate careers



How do graduates

- shape their futures (Barnett, 2012)
- invest in their careers
- make correct career decisions
- maintain control over their career choices
- stand out in the crowd?

It is a competitive transition



- Competitive, fluid times, different markets, new technologies (Castells, 2011)
- Erosion of jobs for life (Arthur, 1994; Baruch, 2002)
- Succession of employers (Tams & Arthur, 2010)

Possibly resulting in very different or fragmented (Holden & Hamblett, 2007) career patterns to previous generations



What are graduate career experiences?

Review what
we need to
know

Review
what we
know

**From graduates
themselves.....**

Why graduates?

- A particular group of employees
- New knowledge and attributes gained within a different curriculum to that of their predecessors
- Accomplished in knowledge skills and other qualities
- Different expectations of work and supervision
- Not inexperienced
- Create a distinct set of interests around career agency
- Expect transitory and multi-organisational futures
- The ability to manage these futures implied

Careers theories

WHAT WE KNOW

- Past - progression up an organisational hierarchy (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth & Larsson, 1996, p.52)
- Boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996)
- Protean career theories (Hall, 1976; Hall & Moss, 1998)

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

Do graduates:

- have a career approach; e.g. a portfolio approach? (Mallon, 1998)
- develop a unique career? (Sullivan & Baruch 2009)
- take charge of their careers? (Hall, 2004)
- have an agentic role? (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006)

Career agency concepts

WHAT WE KNOW

- Work-related social engagement, past experiences and future possibilities, investment in their careers (Hall, 2002)
- Free and independent choices (Tams & Arthur, 2010)
- Emphasize employees' roles in managing careers and mobility (Roper, Ganesh & Inkson, 2010)

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

- How do graduates invest in their careers?
- Do they have free and independent choices?
- Do they have a significant role in managing their careers?

Traditional and alternative careers

- Much critique of fluid, deterministic and static nature of linear approaches to careers
- Protean and boundaryless career scrutinised
 - Ideologically - alternative careers concepts mirror wider neoliberal discourses (Roper et al., 2010)
 - That they focus on managerial careers rather than broader careers (Roper et al., 2010)
 - Over terminology issues with boundaryless career theory and
 - Poor empirical support (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh & Roper, 2012).

Traditional and alternative careers

- This paper does not attempt to resolve such issues, but in developing the argument is mindful of them
- For the purpose of this paper
 - **'traditional careers'** refer to linear careers (where organisations are held to be more 'in charge' of the process)
 - **'alternative careers'** refer to flexible careers in which individuals are in charge

Ask graduate employees



**About their
careers and
career agency**

**About their
transition to
employment**

Graduates' transition to employment

WHAT WE KNOW

- Align undergraduate and employer expectations (Sturges, Guest, Conway & Mackenzie Davey, 2002)
- Employability aspects of degree influence transition (Brooks & Everett, 2009)
- Career support strategies (Kanye & Crous, 2007)
- Career management strategies important (Sturges et al., 2002)

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

- What do graduates expect?
- How do graduates apply their graduate attributes after employability?
- Are support strategies valid for contemporary graduates?
- How are career management strategies facilitated?

Graduates' post-graduation experiences in employment

WHAT WE KNOW

- Cultural capital to human capital (Grayson, 2004)
- Little disillusionment with education despite gaps (Brooks & Everett, 2009)
- Employability interventions added value (McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008)

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

- Are graduates career capital?
- What do they need to fill the gaps?
- Do they need to fill the gaps themselves?
- Graduates were not asked about interventions – what do they think?

Graduates' post-graduation experiences in employment

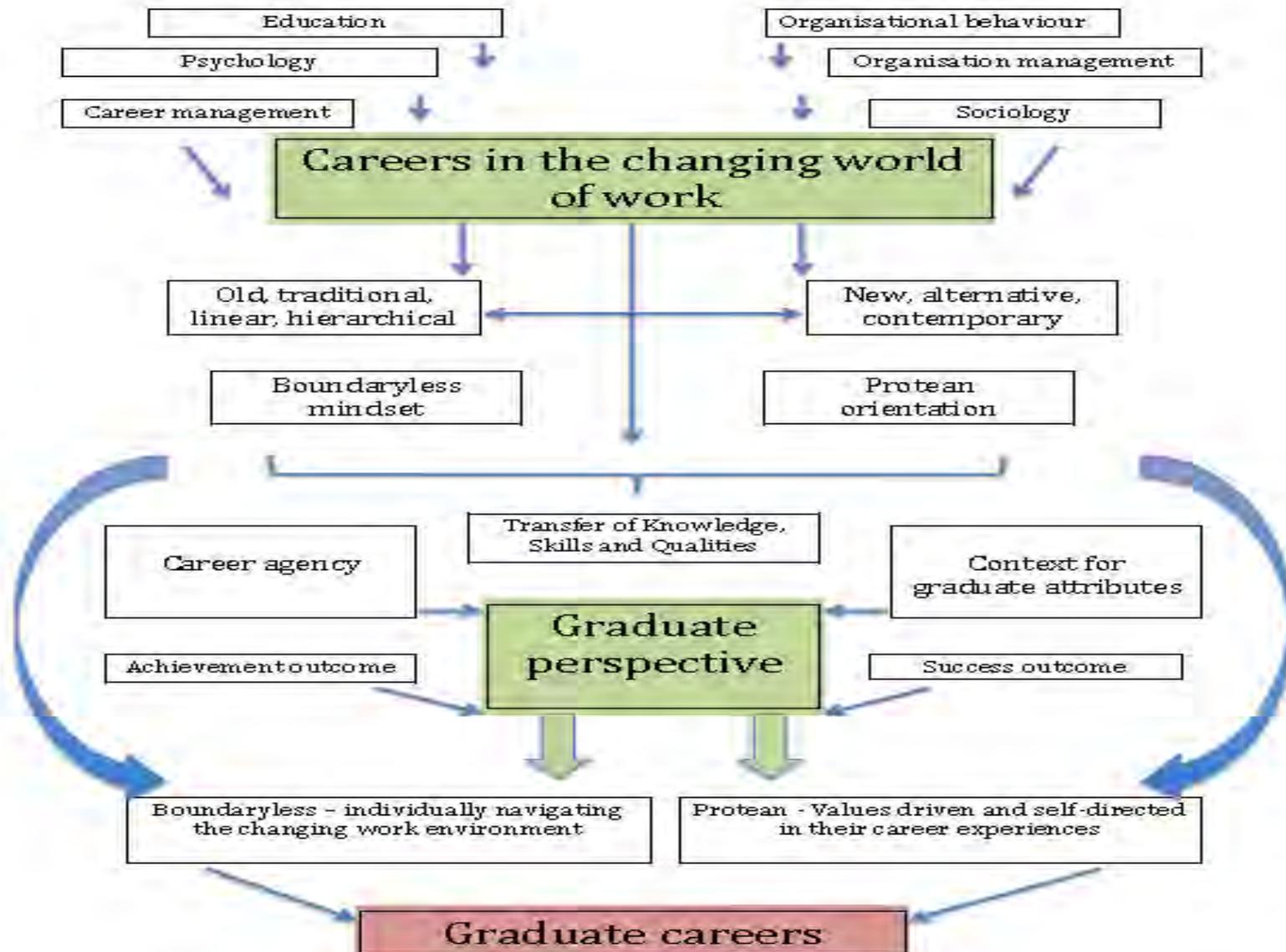
WHAT WE KNOW

- Problem solving between mentors and protégés assisted transition (Saarnivaara & Sarja, 2007)
- Other inputs are needed for success (Kwok, Adams & Feng, 2012)

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

- What type of projects and problems?
- Who decides on the inputs?

Conclusions - the complex context



Conclusions – a research agenda

- Organisations, economic communities, nation states perspectives (Roper et al., 2010)
- Graduates' perspectives on careers and transition needed
- Graduates' preparedness for role(s) in career agency explored
- A nuanced understanding of graduates' career agency important for stakeholders

Such research could develop and thus opening up a new research agenda

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THANK YOU – ANY QUESTIONS?