

Going global – does career development need to think bigger to support the most disadvantaged?

VIVIENNE BROWN



VIVIENNE BROWN is currently Vice-President of the United Kingdom (UK) Institute of Career Guidance and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. She also chairs the Scottish Guidance Network as Head of Policy and Strategy, and as member of the Senior Management Team, she is responsible for developing and "positioning" Careers Scotland's strategies through engaging in policy discussions with Scottish Government and relationship building with prominent national stakeholders.

Abstract

During this keynote presentation, I will describe the effects of globalisation and consider these, in turn, in the context of implications for career development services and practitioners. It will also include a look ahead to the changing needs of workers and the workplace in the 21st century as a result of "going global". The presentation will also make connections with the changing policy landscape for education, social inclusion and economic development in the United Kingdom (UK) and Scotland in particular, as a means of examining new demands on our practice as career practitioners. Through this approach, high level concepts will be dealt with, and finally drill down to their meaning in practice through strategic interpretation of world order change and the increasing role career development can play in helping us all make sense of such colossal change and pace of change.

Keywords: Globalisation; participation; progression; skills; aspirations; horizons; tensions; goal ambiguities; policies; practice

Background

Globalisation, or going global, is a term we hear much about. Often it is connected with the effects on the environment or is associated with terrorism. However this paper will consider globalisation in the context of career development, and how an understanding and analysis of globalisation is reflected in the work we do at all levels and in all places around the globe when we deliver career development services, especially when considering those clients who need our support most. We are not restricted in terms of our geography, our ethics or our politics. We are part of a global community, and career development, like other professions, needs to review its "take" on globalisation to re-affirm our work in light of such transformation and pace of change which globalisation brings for us and for our clients, their employers and the policy environments within which we all operate.

Introduction

So what do we mean by globalisation. It's worth taking some time to reflect upon the term and consider it before moving forward. Do we mean unseen forces which are transforming our lives and over which we have little control? Does that imply that these transformational forces are

destructive in nature and thereby unfair to us, something which is beyond our control unless massive planetary actions are undertaken, such as through the G8 Summit discussions or the critical mass of recycling our own waste?

Or is globalisation more about a source of hope and a better future, that getting our collective act together is intrinsically for the "good" and that humanity will be "the better" for it, as we say in Scotland. Is going global inevitable, indeed better and worse simultaneously; and may, therefore, be unfair to some individuals, sections of society or to countries in particular? Is change on a global scale confusing irrespective of where any of us are in the world and, if so, how can we make more sense of it?

Defining globalisation and a sense of "place"

A clearer definition may be that it is a market-based economy which is sweeping the world, driven by a spread of "western" values and provides us with a process to send products and experiences worldwide. These are certainly the views of some, namely that this spread is affecting developing and developed countries alike and that competition between countries for talent management and improved productivity is driving up the need for effective career development services to ensure that all individuals can engage in up-skilling, learning and qualifications as a key means to improve engagement with and progression in the workforce. For those countries with a buoyant jobs market and declining demographics and lowering birth rates, there is a serious issue – to mobilise even those most distant from the workforce. Often this is termed a "tight" labour market. In the case of countries with mobile workforces, career development is sought after to ensure "best fit" in jobs for those with skills; and to engage others with pre-vocational training to ensure a ready supply of new fit for purpose labour to meet demands. Both ways however, tend to reflect a supply-led model of career development services in this definition – that our role is to prepare individuals for the workforce opportunities and that employers choose their staff from a ready pool. In Scotland we seek a more demand-led approach, thereby equipping individuals to make their own demands on learning with a view to selecting and choosing their career paths and routes to career development. With these most disaffected clients this is an aspirational approach.

Communications and networks – a more global experience

But, as we all personally experience, our personal world is becoming a more integrated *and* independent place, affecting all our lives economically, socially, culturally and environmentally. The multiplication of networks and improved interdisciplinary communications means we can all stretch our relationships and activities much wider than ever before, on our own and with and through others. This really can lead to an intensification of human contact through the compression of time and space. Toronto to anywhere is the same as Glasgow to anywhere.

If we now inhabit a world no longer bound by territory, we may be able to say that spheres of life are emerging over and above geographies, as we leap international borders and new codes of behaviour. This more integrated world is creating the spheres which transcend the world itself – indeed "a world above the world". Given this view, can we begin to consider globalisation as an opportunity to become a more demand-led service (as described earlier), whereby we can encourage individuals to articulate their career development needs more clearly and "press" us about their learning, training or work opportunity as they move between career openings, demonstrating the more agile career self-manager in practice. Our role then, is less about helping persons to present themselves for an opportunity at a time but more about career coaching and a counsellor who encourages the individual to be more in control, with higher skill levels to attain and take career decisions three- rather than two-dimensionally. By that I mean

entering, sustaining and progressing in opportunities seamlessly and over time, rather than seeking our career development support every time things change or go wrong.

Globalisation in practice – managing the complexity

If we think more concretely about globalisation, there is a wider acceptance of different national cultures. Although in the "world below" people are still rooted here, our experiences of going global will all differ – from the designer labels we seek and buy, to the multi-ethnic football teams' fans support all over the world. As career development challenges emerge, we can still be rooted in the real world as we ponder how these may work in the world above – the challenges we all face around the world in unemployment, employability, skill levels, attainment rates, learning discontinuation rates, economic and societal changes ... these are prevalent to different extents whether we are in Toronto or Tokyo.

In accepting globalisation's complexity can we reduce it to a single overarching idea or framework using a career development perspective? What is our story so far? What are the drivers which mould the future of career development and how can we answer the "so what" question in terms of "what-else-do-we-need-to-think-about-and-why when we think about the most hard to reach clients?" Can we raise our collective, professional game to think bigger and globally when addressing many of our shared challenges, especially when responding to issues of career transition management and disadvantage? To do this we may need to think about the future of career development in a global context – physically, through work migrations, capital flows, supply chains; culturally, through the use of "global English", political, organisational and religious values and virtually through "second lives" virtual economies and lifestyles. All these are part of the career development context we need to address if we are to move forward from operating within the perceived confines of our localities to providing our services life-wide and lifelong without boundaries. Only then can we begin to address the challenges which affect all of our countries in a collective lack of talent management.

Critical tensions

In viewing globalisation critically as career professionals, does our embracing of it bring forth another conundrum? Does the economic "push" of globalisation disenfranchise the poor even more and thereby "damage" the economy in a different way by working against the very individuals we seek to engage and develop? On the one hand, if we raise living standards for all through globalisation, spreading human rights and all that they entail, is this at the cost of the few to support the many; and where does that leave our role, contribution and client focus? This perceived tension in globalisation poses a fundamental question of career development to policy-makers and professionals. Although poverty is reducing in real terms, it is simultaneously leading to widening of the inequality gap, especially for young disenfranchised adults, those often at the base of the economic pile, with low confidence and self-esteem, increasing powerlessness and frustration – often the very challenges we seek to address and with the client groups who are our main priority. Can these inequalities keep getting wider before something snaps? Are we being asked simultaneously to foster economic policies which are driven globally whilst focusing on the very individuals these policies leave behind?

To reduce poverty, do we need to consider a form of economic growth which decreases inequalities? Are there ways economic growth can cut absolute poverty without widening the gap between the rich and the poor, as is happening globally today. Is there therefore a clear role for career development and employability services in managing career transitions through recognition of the tensions in globalisation and the effects on life chances?

A further tension in globalisation for us to consider is in terms of economic growth and human wellbeing. Whilst economic growth has a focus on meeting the demand for jobs, many

environmental and other constraints slow down the process of such growth causing unemployment to rise? The need for "soft" or employability skills and the skills to cope with change and self-manage one's career becomes even more critical, often with stress, an intensified work/life balance and emotional poverty all cited as growing issues as the demands of the workplace grow. Here too then there is a role for career development professionals to grow our own work to accommodate these changes at real-life level, indeed – an opportunity to develop our role through the tensions of better balancing workplace demands and work/life balance.

And a third tension for us to consider in going global is that of the global/local tension itself – that whilst global and national policies are intertwined, there are often other results from those initially intended, especially with the scale of migrant workers for example, through the expansion of EU boundaries. Here too many resources need to be used to support unforeseen migration and challenges to help establish new workers in the local workforce; and to progress in that workforce through up-skilling and new learning.

As if that's not enough ...

Is there anything else we need to think about? Well yes. Although the world economy is going through a relatively "purple patch", we are not experiencing the stellar growth of the '60s. Globally there is a significant increase in the supply of cheap labour, often leading to the fragmentation of production processes and locating to all corners of the globe to strongest competitive advantage. As a result, job opportunities are changing, expertise and learning needs to be very current and the "hourglass" figure often quoted in the UK, means the abundant supply of high and low skill level jobs, and those in the middle skill levels are squeezed to either up-skill or downsize, reduce status and income. Our role is increasingly to support these workers to retain and sustain their progression in the workplace, or face the consequences of a "revolving door" between work and government benefits and a more "chequered" working life, often for those least expecting it and perhaps facing middle age. A further question for us is how do we keep pace with the pace of such change itself and ensure that our own skills and expertise remain sufficiently meaningful for these workers at such critical times. With the likely increase in the demand for knowledge, workers and a growing low-paid, low skill "pool", full-time jobs, often with long-term careers with a single employer, are likely to continue to dominate with only a small rise in temporary and part-time jobs forecast. As economies move up the value chain, workplaces will continue to transform and this "hourglass" effect will come increasingly to the fore. The term "tight" labour market will become more well-known as more bullish labour markets will keep demand for labour robust, raising these issues of age profile, skills levels and lower numbers of young entrants – in the UK at least. With these changes, we can anticipate that career development services will swing more to those furthest away from the labour market, or be in jeopardy of falling out of it. We will simultaneously see changes to how people work, more than how they are employed, with the anticipated home working revolution more like an on-the-move-working, where we all use any space, our travel time and different locations as the working "office."

A different approach to management

To manage all of this, new and different management will be needed to manage workers in a more devolved autonomous team-led way, with senior managers motivating at a distance and higher individual accountabilities for performance. This too means greater employability skills are needed to survive in a more devolved workplace and progress into more expert or supervisory/managerial roles. That having been said, should employability be more in-built to our learning and training systems, especially those skills in interpersonal, life and emotional literacy. As career development professionals how can we influence these policy decisions to ensure that

this essential work enables all individuals to gain the skills and confidence, the positive self-image and self-esteem to optimise their working life in this changing management scenario.

Policy development in the UK and Scotland

The very policies in the UK and Scotland in particular which seek to address many of the challenges raised today will subsequently be dealt with.

There is expansion in our capacities in further and higher education, in vocational learning and new Diplomas in England in school and in stronger partnerships between schools and colleges and universities, offering school pupils opportunities to study at college from age 14. As yet, much of this is under trial but early indications show a growing demand and support from parents. A role for career development practitioners is to ensure that appropriate vocational learning choices can be made which add to the pupils' experience and attainment whilst broadening career horizons. This can be complicated by early stereotyped career choices at this stage, especially if the parents view the vocational learning as a lead into a given occupational area rather than an opportunity for an alternative learning style.

The curriculum in schools is becoming much more flexible, with the development of key capacities in pupils:

- Successful learners
- Responsible citizens
- Confident individuals
- Effective contributors

Changes in the Qualifications Frameworks lend themselves to including work-based learning as well as community-based learning and formal qualifications. There are also financial incentives that support lifelong learning, especially for the low paid and unwaged learner. Enterprise and a "can do" attitude continue to flourish in the UK, linked increasingly with knowledge and experience of the labour market and particular sectors to ensure wider and more detailed understanding.

Further changes in the school-leaving age are taking place in England only – up to 18 by 2013, with the focus in the rest of the UK to provide a stimulating curriculum which will encourage longer participation and a Youth Guarantee to remind all of us involved, of the need to get our collective act together to ensure things happen for individuals to keep them progressing well in the "system". These higher levels of accountabilities in measuring outputs and outcomes of positive destinations for school-leavers will keep us focused on the youth end of our work. Shared accountabilities with Local Authorities will keep the focus on the most disadvantaged.

In terms of social inclusion, there is a focus on early intervention and co-ordinated partnership working through "case management" and data sharing on clients amongst partner agencies. An intensive Key Worker service can support targeted individuals for up to two years before and after they leave school, ensuring their career transition is in fact managed with and through the individual and any other organisations which may be involved, for example Social Work or Health Services.

The New Deal is an adult training programme which has had several iterations throughout its 10 years+ in the UK, now focusing more on early entry and those on Incapacity Benefits, with that benefit itself now changing to become Employment Support Benefit. A key challenge will be the introduction of Career or Skills Health Checks, aimed at those with basic or literacy skill needs in the context of career decision-making. These may well be delivered as face to face career development interviews and in Scotland we estimate over 35 000 per annum for all new JobSeeker Allowance claimants.

The "tight" labour market has been mentioned before in this paper and in London and SE England this is very much the case, prompting the Westminster Government to launch a new

Adult Career and Advancement Service, with a focus on career development and progression for those in low paid work as part of workforce development interventions.

On the economic front, developments include a new Skills Development Scotland Ltd, bringing several bodies together to form a single skills body, with £200M budget and 1 800 staff. This will include the public career development service, placing individual career development needs at the heart of the new organisation, supported by the procurement of training provision to meet their needs and access to these opportunities through IT and a call centre. It is intended to create a more demand-led model to the development of human capital and is in keeping with our needs and aspirations in Scotland.

Having a focus on key growth sectors will encourage new entrants to these growing businesses and our role is to showcase these opportunities in the context of career decision-making and widening career horizons and options. Given the points on equalities and access these are key policies to position our career development work to make maximum impact.

In summary, balancing all these tensions, conundrums, perceived inequalities, employer demands etc. is not an easy balance to make. In Careers Scotland, the delivery organisation, we try to balance our demands from policies driven by globalisation and country-wide needs through strategies which seek:

- Earlier intervention whilst retaining an all-age focus.
- Provision of free universal career development services but have a targeted approach for individuals most in need and through prioritising our adult groups.
- Building expertise and capacity in others – individuals themselves, peers, employers, parents and teachers.
- Providing a leadership role with partners when designing and actioning a career path for an individual in transition.
- Undertaking pilots and analysing our results before mainstreaming decisions.
- Managing our caseloads through resources management to ensure we neither over-nor underprovide.
- Measuring and understanding our impact to ensure our resources are optimised.
- Creating and undertaking our environmental scanning locally and globally – understanding what our clients need and how we can best serve them is half the battle.
- Changing career practitioner practices in response to changing client needs to incorporate career coaching skills, career development skills in our clients and improving our own articulation and influencing role on the policies which we need; and which we need to respond to.
- Improving the personalisation of services we provide, to add value to the client's sense of control and their decisions on our level of participation in their career decision making, taking account of the "world above the world" where expectations of service are changing.
- Working interchangeably and seamlessly across all client groups, ages and abilities.
- Reaching out to those furthest away from the labour markets, given the inequalities and widening poverty gaps, optimising career transitions, especially from school to the world of work.
- Improving our staff's LMI for onward progression and interpretation in career options.
- Marketing individuals to employers and improving our access to the "hidden" jobs market as well as the "visible" market.
- Changing our approach to management with more devolved teams and higher levels of accountabilities.

- Raising our own game in terms of interpersonal, negotiation and influencing skills.

In short, "funnelling down" from our understanding and analysis of globalisation, through the tensions placed on policy-making decisions and focus, through our influencing and interpretation of policy into strategy; and then implementing our actions on the ground in Scotland through our career development professionals.

A wide start to a sharp focus – globalisation will continue to affect us. We just need to be clear about our role and to work globally to articulate it. Perhaps going global gives us that opportunity to maximise our own networks beyond countries, to set standards and codes of practice which set the pace, to think and act bigger on a global level for the benefit of our clients.

