Varying understandings of social media and competency for social media in career services

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Introduction

- A growing number of career practitioners and career centers and integrating various social media tools into their professional practice (e.g. Dyson, 2012; Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012)

- Social media is fast becoming as much a necessity as an opportunity and competency to work in this new mode is an area of increasing importance.

- In order to consider the usefulness and potential of existing and emerging technologies, it is essential that career practitioners be appropriately trained in this area (e.g. Bimrose, Hughes, & Barnes, 2011; Osborn, Dikel, & Sampson, 2011; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey 2013)
Introduction

- Considerable research has been conducted on identifying the skills and competencies required for using ICT in career services (e.g. Barnes & Watts, 2009; Bimrose, Barnes, & Atwell, 2010; Cogoi, 2005; Cedefop, 2009; Pyle 2000).

- Additionally and importantly, attention has also been given to ethical principles and guidelines career service delivery and usage (e.g. NBCC, NCDA, IAEVG).
Successful integration of social media in career services is not only dependent on the skills or technical facilities available, but also on practitioners' willingness to accept the changes that new technology may bring to service delivery.

**Gap:** *Due to the relatively recent use of social media in career services, a very limited amount of research has been conducted in this area, especially on the competencies required for effective use of this technology.*
Defining social media

“Social media is a process, where individuals and groups build up a common understanding and meanings with contents, communities and web 2.0 technology.”

Aim of the study

The main aim is to discover and describe the qualitatively different ways in which career practitioners understand competency for social media in career services.

The key research questions are as follows:

1. What are career practitioners’ conceptions competency for social media in career service?
2. What are the critical aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying ways of experiencing the phenomenon?
collected using focus group interview methodology

16 Danish and Finnish career practitioners with experience using social media in career services

- 10 females, 6 males
- age from 30 to 59
- career services experience from 2 to 17 years
- from variety of settings (comprehensive, secondary, higher education, as well as public employment services)

analyzed using phenomenographical data analysis methods
## Career practitioners’ conceptions of competency for social media in career services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to use social media for delivering information</td>
<td>Ability to use social media for delivering career services</td>
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<td>Approach to social media</td>
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<td>Function in career services</td>
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<td>Ethical reflections</td>
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<td>Personal characteristics</td>
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Kettunen, Sampson & Vuorinen 2015.
### Category 1: Ability to use social media for delivering information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to social media</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online skills</td>
<td>information literacy</td>
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<td>Ethical reflections</td>
<td>accuracy, validity</td>
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<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>motivated</td>
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“...and as there are so many social media tools out there, so which would then be just right...”
Category 2: Ability to use social media for delivering career services

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<tbody>
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<td>accuracy, validity</td>
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<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>motivated</td>
<td>patient</td>
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“You don’t feed facts, you ask questions. So actually we should be very good at doing social media.”
Category 3: Ability to utilize social media for collaborative career explorations

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<th>technology focused</th>
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<th>pedagogically focused</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function in career services</td>
<td>means for delivering information</td>
<td>medium for one-to-one communication</td>
<td>interactive working space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online skills</td>
<td>information literacy</td>
<td>online writing</td>
<td>online discourse</td>
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<td>Ethical reflections</td>
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<td>privacy</td>
<td>confidentiality</td>
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<tr>
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<td>patient</td>
<td>confident</td>
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“At its best, the students begin to reflect on their own views and so become producers of information themselves.”
Category 4: Ability to utilize social media for co-careering

### Approach to social media
- Technology focused
- Content focused
- Pedagogically focused
- Systemically focused

### Function in career services
- Means for delivering information
- Medium for one-to-one communication
- Interactive working space
- Impetus for paradigm change and reform

### Online skills
- Information literacy
- Online writing
- Online discourse
- Online presence

### Ethical reflections
- Accuracy, validity
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Trust, professional proficiency

### Personal characteristics
- Motivated
- Patient
- Confident
- Innovative

“When you go into social media you accept that it is social media, and social media works in social ways.”
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Discussion

- The findings showed similarities with earlier studies on competencies required by career practitioners to use ICT in career services but revealed an additional competency, *an ability to utilize social media for co-careering*, which has not been previously discussed.

- The findings further support the observations regarding ethical issues related to the use of technologies in career practice (e.g. Sampson & Makela, 2014)

- And Bimrose et al.’s notion that career practitioners’ ICT skills and competencies, as well as their more generic guidance skills and competencies, need to be regarded as two separate but inter-related domains.
Discussion

- Competency for social media in career services is not only about a particular set of new skills.

- Success in developing competency for social media in career services is a dynamic combination of cognitive, social, emotional and ethical factors that are interwoven.
Discussion

If the career field is to develop career practitioners’ understandings and competency for social media in a more complex direction

- it is important to develop pre-service and in-service training and support for the deepening of career practitioners’ understanding of new technologies using the critical aspects that were identified
- there is an urgent need for training curricula to be updated to include this knowledge
- the hierarchical structure of the findings can serve as a pedagogical tool for trainers
Key questions for consideration

- What are the implications for training, research and policy development?
References


Kiitos, thank you!

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