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Understanding How Undergraduate Students Engage with Career Development Education

By
Emma Flynn

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for MA in Training and Education (QQI)

Faculty of Teaching and Learning
Griffith College Dublin

April 2020

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of MA in Training and Education, is my own, based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other learners.

Signed: *Emma Flynn*

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Dated: 23rd April 2020

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to understand how undergraduate students engage with career development. The Smarter World, Smarter Work Campaign, initiated by IBEC in 2018, was used as a framework to underpin the foundation of this research - to what extent do students understand the importance of career development education and how it relates to their own personal career journey? This report highlights the importance of career management throughout the life cycle of a person's career. This study takes the current literature that exists and adds to the conversation using primary research conducted with final year undergraduate students and lecturers delivering career development.

Based on the research questions proposed and the purpose of the study the following three strands were used as the focus for the research:

1. How students engage with career development?
2. At what stage do students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career development?
3. Can student engagement be enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of career development?

A mixed methods approach was used to gather data. A student survey (quantitative) and semi-structured interviews with lecturers (qualitative) were conducted. Surveys were chosen as they can be used to gather data to understand peoples' interests and beliefs (Rea and Parker 2014). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they increase the comprehensiveness of the data collected and allow gaps to be identified and closed (Patton 1980, p. 206).

The author identified a gap where students entered third level with the view to gaining employment post-graduation but did not always engage with career development or see the benefit in engaging with it. Both the literature and the primary research pointed to institutions holding an assumption that the student had already made a decision on their career path before starting their third level journey when many had not.

The study makes a number of recommendations to Higher Education to bridge the gap between the move from second to third level and how best to guide undergraduate students in their career development and give them the tools to manage their career journey throughout its' life cycle.

Keywords: Career Development, Career Management, Career Guidance, Employability, Student Engagement, Teaching Strategies, Facilitator.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 - Introduction

Career guidance is a staple of education in Ireland from second level through to third level. Job opportunities are evolving rapidly and the first job post-graduation no longer determines the career path a graduate will take. An undergraduate qualification does not guarantee entry to a specific career nor do they disqualify someone from a particular career path. An undergraduate qualification is a base of knowledge that opens up career paths. Utilising the skills taught in career development will allow a graduate to navigate those decisions.

This paper will give a full overview of the purpose of the study, literature review, research methodologies approach used, findings and analysis of the data gathered and finally the conclusion and recommendations, as informed by the study. The contributions made to the area will also be noted. This chapter will give an overview of the objectives of the study and the structure of the research.

1.2 - Research Purpose

This study looks to understand how undergraduate students engage with career development. Career development, career advisory and career guidance are delivered in various guises throughout an undergraduate programme, but at what stage do students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career journey? And is student engagement enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of Career Development Education?

This study looks at both sides. How students engage with career development, to give an understanding of why some do not, and how educators can improve this engagement. This study is not focused on the content being delivered but rather the strategies used in its delivery.

1.3 - Research Objectives

Based on the research questions proposed and the purpose of the study the following three strands were used as the focus for the research:

1. How students engage with career development?
2. At what stage do students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career development?

3. Can student engagement be enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of career development?

These questions were used to guide the author on the most relevant literature for inclusion in the study, the line of questioning to be used for the student survey, semi-structured interviews and also informed the recommendations made.

1.4 - Significance of this Study

The author identified the Smarter World, Smarter Work Campaign, initiated by IBEC in 2018, as a framework that underpins the foundation of this research - to what extent do students understand the importance of Career Development Education and how it relates to their own personal career journey? This report highlights the importance of career management throughout the life cycle of a person's career. For undergraduate students, third level is potentially the last time they will have someone guiding them through this process. Once they have left college and are working full-time this support comes with a cost through hiring a professional like a career coach. Engagement with career development at undergraduate level will ensure graduates are equipped to deal with the ever-evolving economy.

A general assumption would be that people choose to go to college to improve their employment prospects post-graduation. This study looked at why some students do not engage with career development when gaining employment is the next step after college for many. The study looked at a number of variables that can affect student engagement and also the impact that the institution can have on the positive enhancement of student engagement, particularly with career development.

1.5 - Structure of the Study

This chapter introduces the research question, the purpose and objectives of the study and discusses the significance of the study and the contribution it can make to the area of career development for undergraduate students in third level.

Chapter two explores the literature that already exists in the area. The research objectives were used as a guide to focus on the literature chosen for review which included career development supports at second level and how they impact course choice at third level, supports available at third level, student engagement at undergraduate level and the variables that can impact engagement, both internal and external to the institution and the positive impact that faculty and the institution can

have on student engagement with career development including teaching strategies and meeting the psychological needs of students in relation to motivation.

Chapter three discusses the research method and approach chosen. For the purpose of this research a mixed methods approach was chosen. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) proposed that a strong mixed methods research question should ask 'what and how' or 'what and why'. A mixed methods approach was deemed to be the most appropriate choice for this study in answering the research questions proposed. A student survey and semi-structured interviews with lecturers were conducted. Surveys were chosen as they can be used to gather data to understand peoples' interests and beliefs (Rea and Parker 2014). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they increase the comprehensiveness of the data collected and allow gaps to be identified and closed (Patton 1980, p. 206).

Chapter four analyses the findings from the primary research conducted. The analysis revisits the gaps in the literature and highlights whether the data gathered has addressed those gaps. The findings and analysis is discussed alongside the related literature.

Chapter five brings the study to a close and presents the conclusion and recommendations that have been informed by the literature and the primary research conducted. Areas of further study that have been prompted by the study are also discussed.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 – Introduction

The following literature review explores the landscape of Career Development Education at Third Level Education in Ireland, specifically in relation to undergraduate students, and also the preceding accommodations made at both primary and second level to better understand the undergraduate students' perspective when they begin their third level journey. The author identified the Smarter World, Smarter Work Campaign, initiated by IBEC in 2018, as a framework that underpins the foundation of this research - to what extent do students understand the importance of Career Development Education and how it relates to their own personal career journey?

The Smarter World, Smarter Work Campaign, initiated by IBEC in 2018 will be referred to in this paper as the IBEC report (2018). The four pillars to this campaign are Skills and Employability, Flexibility at all Life Stages, A Dynamic Labour Market and Smooth Career Transitions. This campaign demonstrates that career development is not just something that should be used in relation to graduates gaining employment after completing their qualification but rather about teaching skills that graduates can use throughout the life cycle of their career.

This literature review specifically looks at undergraduate students and their understanding of the importance of career development as a tool and how they engage with the topic at undergraduate level.

2.2 - Landscape of Career Development Education in Ireland – Pre Third Level

OECD (2004) defines career guidance as:

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (p.10)

The following sections will focus on the career supports provided at primary and second level in Ireland.

2.2.1 – Primary Education

At primary level, in Ireland, there are currently no specific recommendations for career development education. Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou *et al.* (2013) conducted research to consider the need for career

development education at elementary level (primary School). This research showed that while it is necessary for there to be an element of careers included at this level, at this stage of a child's development and understanding it is not about a child making a career choice, but rather preventing the closure of future career options. The focus at Primary level is not about career choice but sowing the seeds of future opportunities.

There is currently no national framework around this at primary level. One organisation who have this information in a child-friendly way is Junior Achievement Ireland. Junior Achievement Ireland, and their business partners, want children to explore the options available to them, regardless of socioeconomic background. These programmes are delivered in a number of schools. The number of schools accepted into the programme is dependent on business support and volunteers meaning that it is not a definitive overview of resources available at Primary Level as not all schools receive these supports.

2.2.2 Second Level Education

Guidance Counselling has been included in second level education in Ireland since 1966. From 1972 the allocation of guidance counselling in schools was delivered on an ex-quota provision. Hayes and Morgan (2011) explain that ex-quota provision means that the Department of Education and Science allocate guidance counselling posts based on student numbers within a school. For example, 0.5 of a guidance post up to 250 students, one full time post in a school with up to 500 students and 1.5 of a post, up to and above 750 students. Hearne *et al.* (2017) looked at the effect of budget cuts made in 2012 and how this changed the way guidance counselling was now being delivered across second level institutions.

Due to cuts to the specific post of guidance counsellors in the 2012 budget, in response to the economic crash of 2008, 'a whole school approach' was now being taken as a way to manage this change in allocation of guidance hours (Hearne *et al.* 2017). The 'whole school approach' looked at all stakeholders playing a part in each student's guidance (Teachers, Principals, Board of Management, Parents and Students) but essentially being led by a guidance counsellor. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, this meant that guidance counselling was being delivered to groups as opposed to one-to-one engagement with students. It is relevant to note here that guidance counselling in second level education in Ireland is not just related to career development but also personal and social issues. Meaning the effect of the reduction in allocation of posts had a profound impact on students.

Hearne *et al.* (2017) used a single case study to identify issues that have arisen from the allocation changes. In their study a number of observations were made:

- All students, upon starting first year, were given initial one-to-one time with the guidance counsellor, in terms of personal support
- Students, from 1st to 3rd year, could request a referral with the guidance counsellor. If this was not availed of, each student was given one-to-one time with the guidance counsellor at the end of the junior cycle to assist with subject choice for the senior cycle
- Senior cycle students were given one-to-one time with the guidance counsellor and a number of class talks on colleges, courses, subject choice and career options

The researchers identified that the career advisory element of the support provided by a guidance counsellor really only came into play during the senior cycle when choosing colleges and courses by incorporating career options as part of the decision-making process. The idea of a 'whole school approach' meant that rather than each stakeholder being involved in the delivery of guidance they simply made referrals to the Guidance Counsellor. Many of whom, as a response to the reduction in allocated hours, had now taken on subject hours alongside guidance hours. This resulted in less one-to-one time with students outside of exam years.

This case study just shows one school setting, but it is important for practitioners at third level to reflect on how much career guidance students receive prior to entry to third level when setting expectations for undergraduate students and their understanding of their own career journey. It's imperative to understand the preceding supports received before making assumptions on the level of engagement that should be expected from undergraduate students in third level. Did they choose a course with a specific career in mind or did they choose their course based on subject interest with the hope that they would be guided towards a career choice that fits them?

2.3 – Career Development Education at Third Level

The IBEC report (2018) explains that:

Ireland needs a new world class model of career guidance with embedded lifelong learning and life-wide career guidance (p. 12)

The IBEC report (2018) explored the concept that career development should be a lifelong process and move away from the idea that institutions are preparing graduates for a specific role and are now providing graduates with tools to manage the life cycle of their career, allowing for economic changes

that can determine career changes and choices. Giving graduates the tools and knowledge to manage this.

2.3.1 – Overview of Career Development Education in Third Level Institutions in Ireland

While career guidance at third level is less focused on personal support/guidance than it is at second level, due to additional supports in this area already existing on campus (welfare, disability and counselling) and it is more concentrated on graduates and the world of work, it is still not as focused as what is recommended in the IBEC report (2018). One of the main recommendations of the report is that Career Guidance should be a 'client centred approach'. According to this paper, third level students still feel that career guidance is too general in its delivery. Students are given one-to-one time, which fits with the 'client centred approach', however those providing the career guidance are not necessarily 'experts' in the specific area. For example, a Careers Advisor providing one-to-one time with students, on any given day, can work with undergraduate students as well as those at Masters Level and in addition can move through a range of faculties from Business to Computing.

Career development can also be faculty led, with employability focused modules included as part of a programme and also as a separate stand-alone support service to which students can self-refer. Career development professionals provide support to 180,000 students across 26 Universities, Institutes of Technology and Higher Education Institutions (IBEC 2018). Careers Advisors, as a stand-alone support, are an on-campus resource available to all students regardless of the programme studied or level of programme. Students across different years will require different support from the service.

While evaluating the role of career development programmes, Chin *et al.* (2018) identified a growing trend of practitioners providing less 'careers' related skills, such as preparing a curriculum vitae (CV) but moving towards providing students with tools for managing their own career, which has parallels with the recommendations from the IBEC report (2018). Research conducted by Chin *et al.* (2018) in the School of Business, University of Wisconsin-Madison asked students where they obtained careers information. The results revealed that information and advice obtained from family and friends ranked higher than the careers service. This fits with Hearne *et al.* (2017) and the idea of the 'whole school approach' which is also applicable to third level, just with a focus entirely on career development.

Career development delivered at third level has a responsibility to equip students with the skills needed to navigate their career journey. When proposing a review of career guidance at post-primary and further education the Department of Education and Skills 2018 press release stated that:

High quality career guidance tools and career guidance information is essential if people are to make informed career choices and plan pathways through the education and training system that will create the best opportunities for them to fulfil their career ambitions

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR18-01-22.html>

This view is comparable with the position laid out in the IBEC report (2018) that career guidance should be viewed as lifelong. In conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills AHECS (The Association of Higher Education Careers Services) is the professional association of careers advisory and placement professionals in higher education. AHECS has members from across 26 Universities, Institutes of Technology and Further Education Institutes. The group has formed a number of steering groups to oversee the continuing development of supports in this area and to ensure that career supports at higher education are providing students with skills to meet the needs of employers.

2.3.2 – The role of the Career Development Educator at Third Level

The IBEC report (2018) continually points towards career development at third level as a programme that prepares students to manage their career journey as they progress through a number of stages in their life. For this reason, educators in this area will sometimes have a different relationship with students as opposed to those teaching a more traditional academic subject such as maths or finance. The pedagogy for delivering career development is most aligned with the theory of constructivism. Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger (2004, p.142) looked at the idea that teaching using theories aligned with constructivism means that you are ‘leading, not dragging’ the learner. Their paper also looked at how the constructivist theory is defined.

Using the aspects of constructivism as outlined in Good and Brophy (1994, cited in Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004, p.142), the main elements which define this theory are; ‘learners construct their own meaning, new learning builds on prior knowledge, learning is enhanced by social interaction and meaningful learning develops through “authentic” tasks.’ When designing an employability class, each of the elements above reflects the process of guiding a student through a personal journey, like designing a CV in a classroom setting.

This aspect aligns with the description of a facilitator by Grasha (1994) who argues that a facilitator:

Guides students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed decisions. Overall goal is to develop in students the capacity for independent action and responsibility (p.143)

The author's research is not looking specifically at how career development is delivered in the classroom or what content is being delivered. However, it is important to reflect on delivery in relation to the educator being a facilitator. Bergmann and Sams (2014) looked at the flipped classroom as a way to encompass student centred learning, which is a key component of being a facilitator within the classroom. The authors took the perspective that teaching is traditionally seen as the teacher at the top of the classroom giving out information but even when that is done well there are often students who are disengaged from the learning process. The teacher becoming a facilitator means the class now becomes about the student. But this is not just a case of the teacher recognising that their role is to be a facilitator, it's the actual delivery of the class and the act of facilitating that will determine if classroom discussion and activities are conducted with this in mind. This leads back to Vygotsky's view of authentic activity, as explained by Pritchard (2009, p.26) 'when learning is made up of authentic tasks, there is a greater probability of engagement with the task and also the information and ideas involved in the task'.

2.4 – Undergraduate Career Development Education and Student Engagement

From an academic institutions point of view, students attend to receive an education but their career success after they graduate is also a reflection of the education they received. Taking this back a step looks at the importance of choosing the correct course/subject and having a clear plan for how that will manifest into a career in relation to how successful the correlation between graduating and career success will be.

According to Malkowski (2007) there has been an increased link between career advisory and retention. This includes both advice around subject choice and also career choice. Whether exploring career development as a faculty led component or a stand-alone resource, student engagement plays a part in the effectiveness of the support. In the opinion of Blau and Snell (2013) two positive outcomes that can be expected from student engagement and enhanced by considerable engagement in career development, are firstly timely graduation (retention) and secondly attainment of employment related to the academic programme studied. Lipka (2008) reinforces the concept that active participation in career development often strengthens a student's commitment to completing their programme and gaining employment in the relevant area. However, Lipka (2008) and

Nell (2003) also highlight that many graduates never take full advantage of the career resources available to them. Resource allocation has been discussed in relation to various levels of education, primary, second and third level. However, missing from the literature is an understanding of why students do not avail of the resources in place. The author hopes to answer this question through primary research with undergraduate students and lecturers delivering career development content at third level.

Malkowski (2007) put forth the argument gathered through research, that one component that determines student engagement in the area is how an institution deploys its resources. However, statistics gathered by Malkowski (2007) also show that no matter how many resources are made available, it is still up to the undergraduate to make an effort to engage with the resources available. The next two sections will look at the factors that determine student motivation, from both within the individual student and their environment and the impact from the institution and faculty involvement.

2.5 Factors in determining Student Engagement in Career Development

When Blau and Snell (2013) researched models of student engagement they found that although there were models that included elements relating to career development, no one model really evaluated the full scope of student engagement in career development. From the research gathered, the authors devised the following variable sets as a model for student engagement in career development;

- Student Background Variable Set

Student Background variable Set looks at characteristics related to family and diversity. Parental education, family support and socioeconomic status are all linked to each other and also correlate to the 'whole school approach'. Socioeconomic status will be a determinant in the level of education attained by parents/family members and in turn will impact the level of support that parents/family will give. The importance of this support was confirmed by the results of the research conducted by Chin *et al.* (2017) where students ranked the information they got from family and friends higher (in importance) than the information received in college.

Following their research Blau and Snell (2013) came to the conclusion that female students typically have a higher level of student engagement with career development and included it as a factor of the student background variable set

- Pre-College Variable Set

The Pre-College variable set relates to the academic ability of the student before entering third level. When students enter third level they come from a number of different backgrounds including straight from second level through the CAO, after taking a year out after the leaving certificate, from completion of a recognised level 6/7 programme in a college of further education/PLC college and sometimes as a mature student. Townsend & Wilson (2006) conducted research in this area which showed that students entering third level when transferring from a further education setting can sometimes experience 'transfer shock' as they did not get to have a first semester to settle in. By the time they transfer the rest of the class have already settled into third level. This is why first year in third level is so heavily related to retention. Propositions related to this variable include grades attained at second level, academic standing of second level school attended and the stage at which the student entered third level with earlier admission having a positive impact on engagement with career development education.

- College-Related Variable Set

Student engagement at third level can have many factors. Even if it is assumed that a student is enjoying their course and academically able for the course load, there are still a number of external factors that can negatively impact student engagement. Three of the main external factors are time spent on course, distance from the college and whether or not the student has a part time job.

Astin (1993) viewed time spent on course work as a form of student engagement. This was determined by the fact that students who participated in the research, who were part of the disengaged student category, reported that they studied fewer hours a week than those who were actively engaged. There can be a number of reasons why students do not want to spend time on course work including disengagement with the subject/course choice. Again, this relates to retention and also engagement with career development education as a student who feels they have chosen the wrong course, or are finding a subject difficult, will not be interested in improving their career prospects in that field.

When looking at correlations associated with student engagement, Astin (1993) also looked at students who lived on campus versus those who commuted and found that, for students living on campus, retention rates were significantly higher. Kuh *et al.* (2001) raised discussions surrounding this and found that students living on campus scored higher in student engagement and generally had a more enriching college experience.

One of the most significant propositions of this variable relates to students who work part time while attending college full time. As recorded by Riggert *et al.* (2006), 80% of all college students were employed while completing their undergraduate education. The figure of 80% in itself is not the issue being identified in this variable, but rather the type of work that the students are participating in. Sagen *et al.* (2000) found that career related part time work had a positive impact on student engagement and retention as opposed to unrelated part time work, generally undertaken to pay for bills/college.

- Organisation-Related Variable Set

The first three variables relate to each individual student and include factors that cannot always be controlled by the institution. The Organisation-Related variable looks inward to the institution and its offering in this space. Morrow and Ackermann (2012), Bowers *et al.* (2001) and Wessel *et al.* (2003) each looked at a separate support system and the impact that they could have on student engagement with career development. This included faculty involvement, quality of career development education and ease of access to career development. The collective support system identified by the researchers has parallels with the 'whole school approach' as discussed earlier. The quality of career development education can also be connected back to the view that career development is too general in its delivery (IBEC 2018).

- Motivation-Related Variable Set

Blau and Snell (2013) outlined the Motivation Related variable set as a latent construct, similar to the College Related variable set. This variable set includes "undergraduate perceptions, behaviours and attitudes about their educational experience". Notably included as a proposition of this variable set is student satisfaction with their degree programme. This can be linked with the career guidance received by students at second level, as discussed by Hearne *et al.* (2017), which shows the impact that career guidance can have at all stages of education. In relation to the previous variable set, students who actively participate in student life outside of the classroom (clubs and societies, student union) are more engaged with career development education (Foubert and Granger 2001).

The third proposition in this variable, and possibly the one that has the most significant correlation with the IBEC report (2018), is the proposition that identified that realistic job search expectations can have a positive impact on engagement with career development education. The resources delivered should prepare students for managing their career journey and not, according to Nell (2013) the

promise of a job after graduation. Rayman (1993) demonstrated this as providing students with the resources to pursue a comprehensive but realistic job search.

Each of the five variable sets can all impact student engagement. As the first three relate to the student and their lives outside of college it is important that the institution is aware of these propositions and use the last two variable sets to implement positive actions to promote student motivation and in turn student engagement which will be discussed further in the next section.

2.6 – Impact of Motivation on Student Engagement

Following on from the variable sets designed by Blau and Snell (2013), this section will look at motivation in more detail and how it relates to student engagement.

Axelson and Flick (2011) looked at who is responsible for student motivation and found that the answer could lie with students, instructors/educators or culture. Which fits with the variables discussed in the previous chapter. As part of this research, the author looked specifically at how instructors/educators can impact student motivation.

As stated previously, this literature review is not focusing on the content being delivered as part of career development or how it is delivered. However, an element of delivery which has been a reoccurring theme throughout the literature, which is related to student motivation, is formative assessments. Formative assessments embedded within an academic programme allow students to learn how to self-regulate which, according to Mahlberg (2015) is important to both academic success and success in the workplace. If an institution wants to assess that a student is learning effectively, they must assess this throughout the programme so the student can learn from it and improve. This puts students in control of their own learning.

2.6.1 – Psychological Needs associated with Motivation

Goldman and Brann (2016) combined two schools of thought for their research which looked at how communication behaviours of instructors (giving real examples, using humour, encouraging conversation among the class) can fulfil the psychological needs of a student to be motivated. Deci and Ryan (1985) determined that the fulfilment of these psychological needs would equip students with both short term and long term success. Teaching behaviours that can facilitate student's basic psychological needs (which can in turn promote motivation) are autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Autonomy

- Adapting course material based on student feedback – material stays the same but delivery may be changed based on how students prefer to learn
- Encouraging debates and discussion – again, ‘leading not dragging the learner’ (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004, p.142)
- Assessment choices – same material has to be assessed but can students be given an option in how it is assessed; i.e. multiple choice quiz, essay style questions

Dabrowski and Reed (2018) published a paper titled Motivation and Engagement in Student Assignments: The Role of Choice and Relevancy. This paper looked at autonomy specifically in relation to assignments. They stated that when students believe an assignment can be useful to them (now or in the future) they will be more engaged with it. Career development education should, according to the IBEC report (2018), equip students with skills to use throughout their career life cycle so each assignment should intrinsically meet this criteria.

Competence

- Oral and written feedback – that students can use to improve themselves
- Showcasing ability – allowing students to deliver/present their understanding of topics to the class, not just the instructor in an exam/assignment setting
- Praising students for their engagement with a topic
- Ensuring assessments are challenging

The final point above can be related back to Vygotsky’s ideas around the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. Pritchard (2009, p.25) explains ‘to fully understand the concept of scaffolding, we need to first look at an aspect of Vygotsky’s work, which is the notion of a zone of proximal development’.

The zone of proximal development is the level of understanding that is just above where the student currently is. The student can currently complete a task with your assistance. The zone of proximal development is them being able to complete it by themselves. Scaffolding is supporting learners at the level that meets the individual’s needs. This goes back to the idea that those delivering career development are facilitators. Each student that enters a career development class takes with them the knowledge they have gained through previous work experience. Some students will have the basic concept of what a CV is, some will have extensive knowledge of using a CV and some will never have written one before. Instructors must deliver the information needed in the class to ensure each student moves on to their individual zone of proximal development.

Relatedness

- Group Work and Collaboration – preparing students for the work place
- Bringing real word examples into the classroom – talking about your own journey and experience/as previously mentioned ‘communication behaviours’ according to Goldman and Brann (2016)
- Communicating with students outside of scheduled class time/faculty involvement

The Organisation Related variable set discussed in the previous chapter touched briefly on the concept of faculty involvement and the positive impact this can have on student engagement with Career Development Education. Morrow and Ackermann (2012) reviewed the combination of academic advising, career centre staff and faculty and how they collectively impacted student engagement.

The research in this space shows that if an institution can combine the fulfilment of a student’s psychological needs with the academic requirements of the programme, they will not only be positively impacting their college experience but they will also be preparing them for future success (Deci and Ryan 1985).

2.7 – Summary

There are many factors that determine whether or not a student will be engaged and furthermore if that engagement will extend to career development. The IBEC report (2018) highlighted the need for change in this area. They highlighted the need for it to become a resource that can be used throughout the life cycle of the career journey. It is an institutions responsibility to demonstrate to students why this topic has a place within an academic programme. This also means that institutions need to invest in the importance of student engagement and not just academic success. The literature reviewed shows that undergraduate students are central to this and their understanding of its importance can have a positive impact on timely graduation (retention) and attainment of employment related to the academic programme studied (Blau and Snell (2013).

One of the main gaps identified in the review of literature for this study is that there is an expectation from third level institutions that undergraduate students have a career path chosen meaning they will inevitably have a high level of interest in the subject of career development as they will relate it to the end goal of gaining employment in their chosen field. However, what if an undergraduate student has not chosen their career path? What methods can be deployed by the institution to engage students in career development whether they have a chosen career path or not? And how can third level

institutions bridge the gap between career guidance offered at post-primary and engagement with career development at third level?

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

3.1 - Introduction

This chapter focuses on the philosophy behind the research questions proposed, the research methods used for collecting the data and the design of the methods used. The chapter will also look at the ethics associated with the research that was conducted and any limitations that have been identified.

The proposed research question looked at understanding how undergraduate students engage with career development at third level. As a secondary strand to this research it also looked at the primary research question from the point of view of those teaching career development and also how lecturers can impact student engagement with career development. From these research questions the following objectives were identified:

1. How students engage with career development?
2. At what stage do students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career development?
3. Can student engagement be enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of career development?

The data was gathered using a mixed methods approach. From a quantitative perspective a student survey was distributed to final year undergraduate business students. For the qualitative element semi-structured interviews were conducted with teaching staff within this space and from the same institution as the students surveyed.

3.2 – Research Philosophy

Choosing a research approach is underpinned by research paradigms. When considering the use of a mixed methods approach it is crucial to understand both quantitative and qualitative paradigms.

Positivism/postpositivism is the research paradigm largely associated with quantitative research. According to Creswell (2014) positivism/postpositivism is generally known as the scientific method. The research starts out to test a theory and then uses the data gathered to either validate or refute that theory. Cohen *et al.* (2011) touched on the limitations of positivism/postpositivism when the research relates to the study of human behaviours. Analysis of statistical data does not allow for analysis of human behaviour and experiences behind the answers given.

The limitations uncovered in positivism/postpositivism can be counter balanced by using a phenomenological approach (qualitative research). In phenomenological research the researcher identifies the 'essence of human experience' (Creswell 2014, p. 7).

Data gathered using a positivism/postpositivism approach can be easier to analyse as the data has been gathered using a scientific approach and the results are presented in a statistical format. Data gathered using a phenomenological approach can be harder to interpret as human experiences and behaviours will take longer to analyse than statistical data.

The author chose to use a combination of both paradigms to answer the research question proposed.

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involved philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches in many phases of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provide a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 5)

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) addressed the viewpoint of 'the third methodological method', which according to Denzin (2008) implies that there is a new mixed methods paradigm. However, mixed methods is ultimately two pre-existing methods (qualitative and quantitative) which have their own philosophical paradigms. Choosing the most appropriate paradigm to describe a particular mixed methods approach will be dependent on the subject matter of the research question.

Mixed methods, as a research approach, is largely underpinned by pragmatism as a philosophical methodology. Creswell's (2014) interpretation of pragmatism was that it does not count itself a one system of philosophy and reality, which fits with an approach such as mixed methods. Pragmatism draws on positivism and interpretive epistemologies (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Using a pragmatist approach is thought to be the idea of doing 'what works' in order to gather the data required to answer a research question. Suter (2005) suggests this to be the most useful approach which often means that the research conducted is driven by the research question instead of a methodological preference of the researcher (Cohen *et al.* 2011).

3.3 – Research Approach

Creswell (2014) established that methodology is the strategy that links the methods to the outcomes. This impacts the methods chosen as methods are the techniques used to gather data, as guided by the methodology.

“A strong mixed methods study starts with a strong mixed methods research question”

(Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007, p. 207)

For the purpose of this research a mixed methods approach was chosen. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) proposed that a strong mixed methods research question should ask ‘what and how’ or ‘what and why’. A mixed methods approach was deemed to be the most appropriate choice in terms of the research question proposed. The primary objective of this research was to gather data relating to how undergraduate students engage with career development and, as a secondary objective, what impact the lecturer delivering career development can have on student engagement with the topic. This research asks ‘what and how’ and merits the use of a mixed methods approach.

Mixed methods is more than just combining two types of research, it may be seen as a paradigm in itself. There are a number of decisions to be considered when choosing mixed methods. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) looked at mixed methods as a methodological orientation. Not only are two types of research being combined but all phases of the research process including philosophical positions, inferences and interpretations of results. When looking at mixed methods there are a number of things to take into account before you design your research. Is each method of research equal value to the research? Is one method more dominant? Is one method being used to back up the results from another method?

Creswell (2014) looked at the weaknesses associated with each method and how they could be overcome by using mixed methods. Data gathered through quantitative research does not always adequately explain the context in which it has been gathered, or the specific reasons behind why a participant answers a question in a particular way. In qualitative research, there is context and the participant’s voice is heard however the researcher can apply bias and use the information gathered as the opinion of the masses when only a small sample of the population has been interviewed. By combining both methods this weakness is lessened.

Hesse-Biber (2010) discussed the following 5 reasons for choosing mixed methods research:

- Triangulation (Method Triangulation): using multiple methods to enhance the credibility of your research data.
- Complimentary: using both qualitative and quantitative methods give a fuller understanding of the research. For example, designing a quantitative survey to collect data gathered through qualitative methods in a numerical format.
- Development: using information from one form of research to help develop another. Using qualitative data to help develop a quantitative survey. Researchers are not using the survey to gather the qualitative data as in Complimentary. The qualitative data is used to inform the types of questions asked in the survey.
- Initiation: if research raises a question or contradiction, a second method of research can be used to clarify a result.
- Expansion: using multiple research methods can turn up new questions and areas worthy of research.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggested that once mixed methods are chosen by a researcher there are still a number of different designs that can be adopted. The author chose a quasi-mixed design for this research. According to Cohen *et al.* (2011) a quasi-mixed design is when both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered but are not integrated in answering a particular research question. The survey used to gather data from students asked questions relating to how the students relate to career development. The semi-structured interviews with career development lecturers validated some of the questions asked in the survey but looked deeper into the influence that teaching staff can have on student engagement.

3.4 – Methods used for Data Collection

A mixed methods approach was completed using a student survey with final year business students and semi-structured interviews with lecturing staff who deliver career development as part of their programmes. The questions asked in the student survey helped to form the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews and the themes. They focused on gauging the level of understanding of why career development is important. It also poses questions surrounding the levels of engagement of students who have a career path in mind versus those who do not have a career path in mind when they begin a third level academic programme.

While the survey helped to form the semi-structured interview questions each method of collection was separate to each other and not integrated, which corresponds with Development, as per Hesse-Biber (2010), discussed above in chapter 3.2.

3.4.1 – Quantitative Data - Student Survey

Surveys can be used to gather data to understand peoples' interests and beliefs (Rea and Parker 2014). The queries that arose from the literature review in relation to students understanding of career development and their level of engagement with the subject led to the decision to use a student survey to gather data to help answer those queries. Blair *et al.* (2013) described a survey as a collection of information from a sample from a defined population. Career development is not included as an element of all programmes in Griffith College. It is, however, included at all stages of programmes delivered by the Business Faculty and so the decision was made to seek to gather this data from final year students in the Business Faculty.

The author contacted the Year Head for final year students. A copy of the survey plus the participant information sheet and consent form was sent with a request to attend a class and hand out the survey in person. Permission was granted and it was decided that the survey would be handed out in February 2020 when students returned for semester 2.

In advance of this a pilot survey was conducted with a small group of students. "Everything about the questionnaire should be piloted, nothing should be excluded, not even the type face or the quality of the paper" (Oppenheim 1992, p. 48). These students were aware that the reason for the pilot was to test the survey as an instrument. This allowed the author to ensure all questions could be understood and generated the correct response.

In February 2020 the author attended a class which included a core group of final year students. Each of these students had Career Planning included as a mandatory module on their timetable. According to Kennet (2006) and Fowler (2009) when people are interested in the subject matter of the survey or at least familiar with the subject response rates will increase. The interest in the subject would be determined by the data gathered from the survey but the sample chosen were definitely familiar with the subject.

The research was explained to the sample group and they were invited to participate. All 52 students in the class on that day agreed to participate in the study. Each participant was given a consent form (Appendix 2), a participant information sheet (Appendix 3) and the survey (Appendix 4). The students

were assured that all data would be gathered anonymously and recorded using a coding system, which would then be stored on an encrypted USB key.

The survey avoided open ended questions (with only one included at the end which was an optional question) in order to avoid people skipping the question or writing very little (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p. 264). The main themes of the survey covered experience pre third level, experience at third level and future choices based on these experiences. The results of the survey were recorded in excel using a coding system; SP1, SP2...,

3.4.2 – Qualitative Data – Semi-Structured Interviews

The main components of semi-structured interviews are in line with the Interview Guide Approach as outlined in Patton (1980). While the topics are outlined in advance the interviewer can choose the sequence of questions in the course of the interview. The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data collected and allows gaps to be identified and closed with the interview remaining conversational however some topics may be omitted due to the interviewers' flexibility with the sequence which can make it difficult to compare responses' (Patton 1980, p. 206).

Semi-structured interviews were held with three Career Development practitioners on campus. The three lecturers that were asked to participate all work with students at various stage of their studies (first year, second year, penultimate year and final year). The participants were chosen based on the authors' experience of their knowledge in this area (Zohrabi 2013).

The semi-structured interviews took place in February 2020. Each participant was sent an outline of the interview questions in advance with a copy of the participant information sheet and the consent form. The interviews were arranged on campus at a suitable time. Each interview averaged 30 minutes long. The interviews were recorded using the researcher's mobile phone and the data was then transcribed, with each participant given a coding (Lecturer A, Lecturer B, Lecturer C).

The interview questions were separated into three sections; understanding of student experiences pre third level, student engagement with career development as a subject and how engagement can be improved.

The author chose to record the interviews using a mobile phone which is password protected. Cohen *et al.* (2011) reflected on the transcription of interviews and the potential to lose the social interaction of an interview and for it to become a data collection exercise. Recording the interview allowed the author to note down visual and non-verbal aspects of the interview (Mishler 1986). The interviews

were transcribed afterwards. Transcribing the interview took a great deal of time however this ensured that the participants' answers were recorded accurately.

The questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were informed by the questions asked in the student surveys. In some cases, the responses from the interviews backed up the student responses and, in some cases, gave way to new perception of the responses given by the students.

3.5 – Data Analysis

This section gives an overview of the qualitative and quantitative data.

3.5.1 - Qualitative Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data requires 'noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities' (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p. 537). Each of the three interviews were transcribed using Voice Typing in Google Docs. Each interview took around three hours to transcribe but was a worthwhile task as the responses recorded were accurate and allowed the author to note concurrent themes to focus on across all three interviews.

Kerlinger (1970) noted that coding is the translation of question responses and respondents' information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis. Coding is essentially the 'process of breaking down segments of text data into smaller units' (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p. 561). The information, once coded, can be presented in a number of ways, for example tabular form. This allows the researcher to identify common themes /opinions across the responses given.

The analysed qualitative data was presented using a narrative approach. Bruner (1986) described the narrative approach as one that 'could catch the vividness of the human experience' (p.14). Adding biographical data to the narrative adds humanity and authenticity to the story being told. Each theme was discussed using a narrative approach, combining responses from all the participants.

3.5.2 - Quantitative Analysis

The student survey was designed with the type of responses required for analysis in mind. The responses from the surveys were shown as descriptive statistics, 'used to describe and present data'(Cohen *et al.* 2011, p. 606). According to Cohen *et al.* (2011), 'statistics make no inferences or predictions, they simply report what has been found (p. 606).

The quantitative data was analysed using excel and displayed using a variety of graphs alongside the narrative of the findings.

3.6 – Validity and Reliability

‘Validity is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless’ (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.179). The author incorporated the following guidelines from Zohrabi (2013), derived from the works of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam and Merriam (1998):

- The Investigators Position – the researcher can increase the reliability of the research by explaining each of the different processes and phases of the inquiry. Ensuring participants are fully aware of the nature of the study, why they are being asked to participate and how their data will be used.
- Triangulation – using multiple methods to gather data. It is also important to obtain data from different sources i.e. students, faculty staff etc as collecting varied types of information through different sources can enhance the reliability of the data and the results.
- Audit Trial – similar to the investigators position, the researcher should describe in detail how the data is collected, analysed and results obtained. Detailed information can help the research be replicated and contribute to its reliability.

In relation to the specific methods used for data collection and their reliability and validity, the following was incorporated in the data collection for this research:

Student Survey:

When designing a survey, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that it is “valid, reliable and unambiguous” (Zohrabi 2013). Closed-ended questions were used in the student survey. The answers gave quantitative data as opposed to qualitative data from open-ended questions. The decision to use close-ended questions arose from the fact that not all of the students who were asked to participate have English as a first language. The surveys were administered to a group at the one time, in the same room with the researcher present. The surveys were anonymous. The researcher explained the premise of the study to the group and took questions and was available if there was ambiguity with any of the questions being asked of them in the survey.

Semi-Structured Interviews:

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were undertaken with lecturers delivering career development to undergraduate students. (Zohrabi 2013) described the collection of data from this method as systematic and conversational. The first set of questions were designed around the questions asked in the student survey but asking for the lecturer's opinion (triangulation). The same set of questions were asked in each interview however as it was semi-structured some of the answers given by participants allowed the interviewer to probe for information with another question not listed. To ensure all data was collected accurately the interviewer, with the permission of the participants, recorded the interview which allowed them to engage in conversation rather than having to take notes throughout.

3.7 – Limitations of Study

The research was limited to one Irish third level institution and gathered data from students in the Business faculty specifically. The research gathered data on student engagement with career development at undergraduate level in third level institutions. The findings may not translate across different faculties/institutions.

Also, the final year students who participated in the study included exchange students who have not completed their full third level education in Ireland and may not have had the same experience of career development throughout second and third level up to this point.

3.8 – Ethical Considerations

“The awareness of ethical concerns in research is reflected in the growth of relevant literature” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, P. 75). Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Griffith College Ethics Committee (Appendix 1). Data was gathered from students and lecturers within Griffith College.

Observing ethical practices when conducting research and recognising informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical behaviour (Howe and Moses 1999). Self Determination means that a participant has the right to choose to take part in the research, a right to refuse to take part and also the right to withdraw once the research has begun (Cohen *et al.* 2011).

Each participant received a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6) and a Consent Form (Appendix 7). The Participant Information Sheet outlined the research being undertaken and how the results of

the survey would be included in the overall findings. The information sheet also outlined confidentiality in relation to the information gathered.

For confidentiality all data gathered was recorded using excel and each participant was assigned a number and this was used when collating the data. This excel sheet was then saved onto a hard drive that is password protected. They were also made aware that the data would be stored securely on the researcher's password protected laptop and a backup on an encrypted USB memory stick.

As per the guidelines on informed consent, the participants were notified that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time up to the analysis of findings, at which stage the data will be anonymous. Up to this point they were free to withdraw their data, without giving a reason for withdrawing, and without withdrawal having any adverse effect for them (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992).

Chapter 4 – Findings and Analysis

4.1 – Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of both the quantitative data (student survey) and the qualitative data (semi-structured interviews) and analyse the results against the information identified in the literature review.

The literature showed that there can be a gap between career guidance received before entering third level and the expectation from third level institutions regarding student's decision-making regarding career choices. The purpose of the student survey was to gain insight into career guidance supports received pre third level, the decision-making process when choosing a third level course (subject choice versus career choice) and plans for after graduation. The semi-structured interviews with lecturers sought to gain further insight into these areas from a faculty point of view and how institutions can best engage students in career development. All findings are discussed in relation to the information gathered in the literature review.

4.2 – Student Survey Findings and Analysis (Quantitative Data)

The author made the decision to focus on final year students from the Business Faculty. The Business Faculty includes a number of employability modules as a core part of their programmes. Permission was granted to attend a class and seek participants for the survey. The faculty suggested attendance at the final year Strategic Management class. This is a core module that includes all final year business students.

There were 52 students in attendance on the day and all 52 students agreed to participate in the survey.

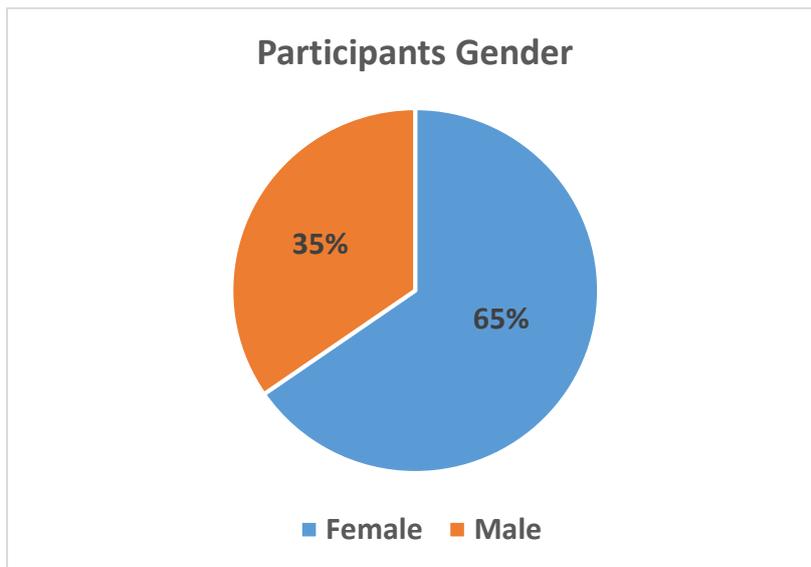
4.2.1 – Demographic Information

The participants were asked about gender, nationality and age to show the demographic of the sample.

4.2.1.1 – Gender

Of the 52 participants 65% were male and 35% were female. Participants were also given the option to choose other and prefer not to answer but all chose either male or female.

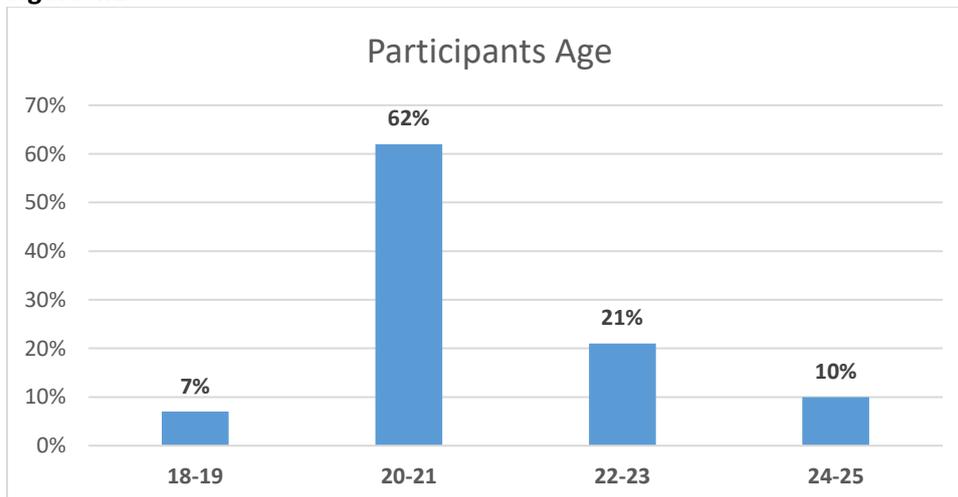
Figure 4.1



4.2.1.2 – Age

65% of respondents were in the 20-21 age range with 7% aged 18-19, 21% aged 22-23 and 10% aged 24-25. Varying ages can be accounted for by international learners who finished second level at an early age, students who studied in a further education centre before joining third level and mature students.

Figure 4.2

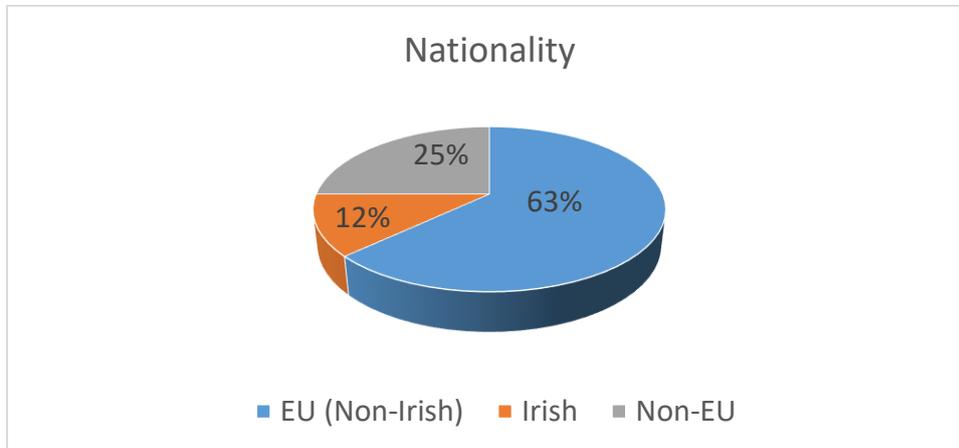


4.2.1.3 – Nationality

Nationality was included in the demographic questions as career supports at third level are generally influenced in their design by the Department of Education and Skills with the preceding allocations at second level in mind. However, it's important to note that a high proportion of students studying at

third level in Ireland did not come through second level within the context of an Irish educational setting. Among the participants in this final year class, 12% accounted for Irish students while 63% were EU nationals (non-Irish) and 25% Non-EU nationals.

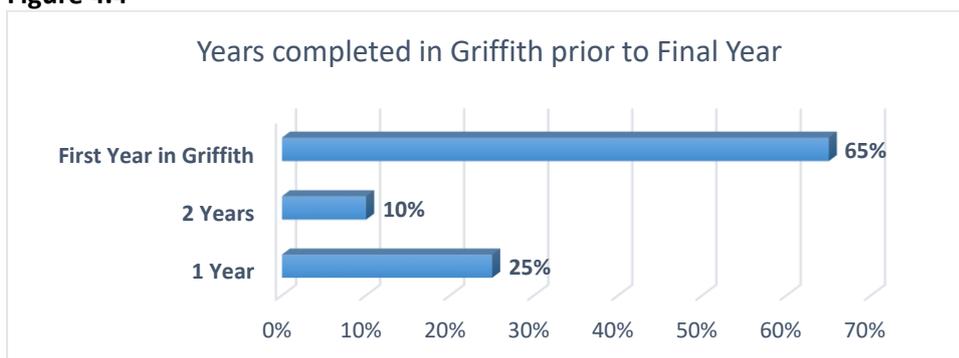
Figure 4.3



4.2.1.4 – Number of years spent studying in the Institution

The students were also asked how many years prior to their final year had they been students in the college. Again to show that not all final year students are made up of students who have spent more than 1 year in the Irish education system. Only 10% of the class had spent their full third level education in Griffith College. While for 65% of respondents final year was the first year they had spent in the college (exchange students from partner universities).

Figure 4.4



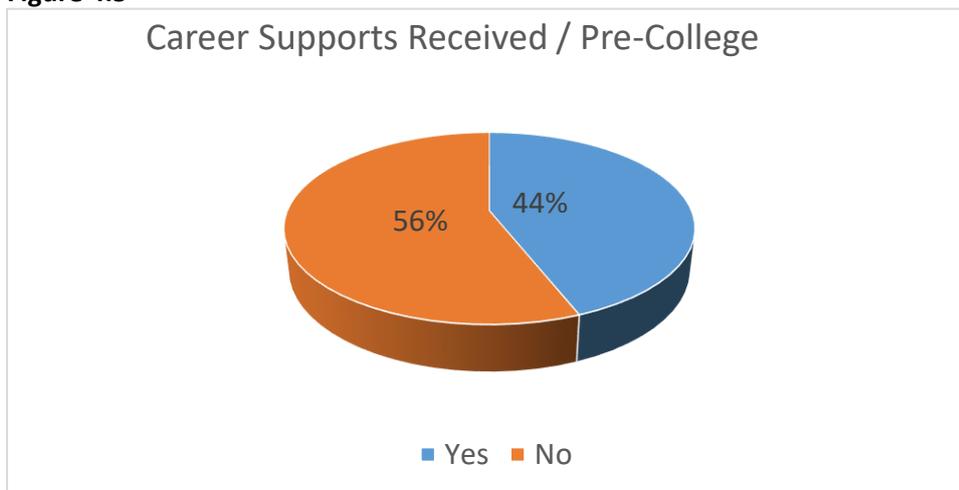
4.2.2 – Career Guidance Supports at Second Level and the influence it has on Third Level choices

The next section of the student survey focused on the career supports received before the students joined third level. In particular the correlation between supports that focused on subject choice versus career choice when choosing a third level course.

4.2.2.1 – Career Guidance Supports received at Second Level

A 2018 press release from the Department of Education and Skills highlighted the importance of career guidance to ensure students make informed decisions about their career paths. This recommendation followed on from research conducted by Hearne *et al.* (2017) which highlighted the limited resources available at second level. This is endorsed by the primary research from the student survey which revealed that of the 52 participants 44% received career guidance support at second level while 56% did not.

Figure 4.5

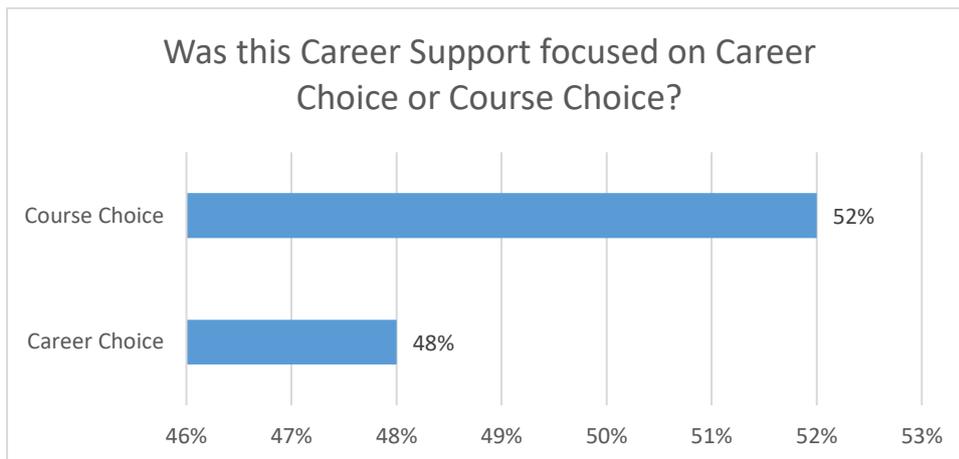


4.2.2.2 – Main Focus of Career Guidance Supports at Second Level

23 students accounted for the 44% who indicated that they had received careers supports at second level. Those who answered yes to the previous question were asked what the focus of the support was. For 52% of students the supports focused on course choice for third level while 48% focused on career choice and in doing so their course choice was based on career choice.

Blau and Snell (2013) included Pre-College as one of the variable sets in measuring student engagement with career development. This is parallel to Malkowski's (2007) view that there is an increased link between careers advisory and retention. If students choose the right college course they have a greater chance of succeeding academically. Likewise, Lipka (2008) reinforces the concept that active participation in career development often strengthens a student's commitment to completing their programme and gaining employment in the relevant area. Each of these assumptions all rely on the student choosing the right course in the first place.

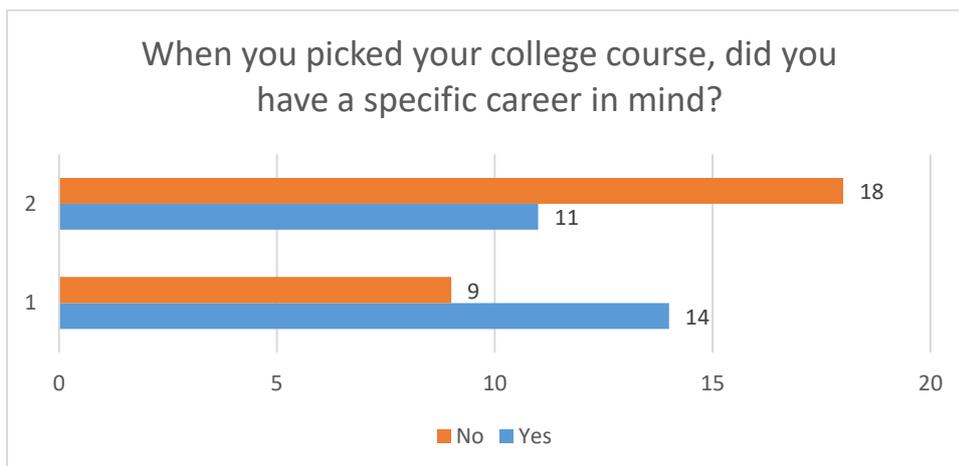
Figure 4.6



4.2.2.3 – Making the Choice for Third Level – Career Path or Subject Choice?

To look at this in further detail, participants were asked if they had a specific career path in mind when they chose their third level course. 48% had a career path in mind while 52% did not. The sample was then divided into two groups, those who received career guidance supports at second level and those who did not. 61% of those who received supports at second level had a career path in mind while only 38% of those who did not receive support chose their course with a specific career in mind. Again, this highlights on the importance of career supports pre third level as per the research carried out by Hearne et al (2017).

Figure 4.7



Bar 1 = Students who did not receive career supports at second level, Bar 2 = Students who did receive career supports at second level

4.2.3 – Third Level Engagement

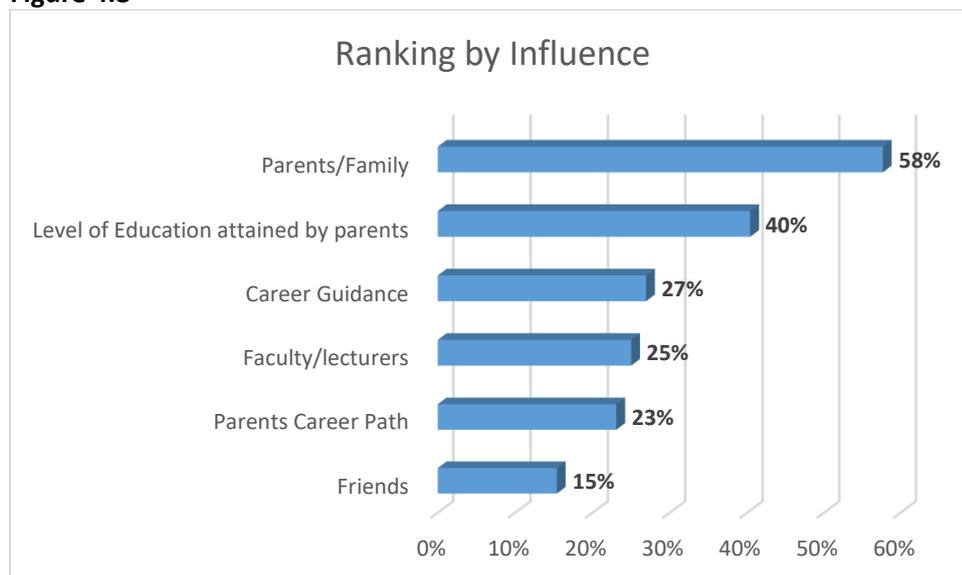
This section will cover the questions participants were asked about their engagement with career development as an undergraduate student.

4.2.3.1 – Influences on Undergraduate Students Decision Making

The literature noted the importance of the ‘whole school approach’ at second level set out by Hearne *et al* (2017) and considered the significance of this continuing on to third level using research conducted by Chin *et al* (2018) which revealed that information and advice obtained from family ranked higher than the careers service.

The participants were asked how would you rate the following influences in your career development/decision making; Faculty/Lecturers, Friends, Parents/Family, Level of Education Attained by Parents, Parents Career Path and Career Guidance. Both parents/family and level of education attained by parents were ranked higher than career guidance and faculty/lecturers showing the influence of the ‘whole school approach’, even at third level.

Figure 4.8



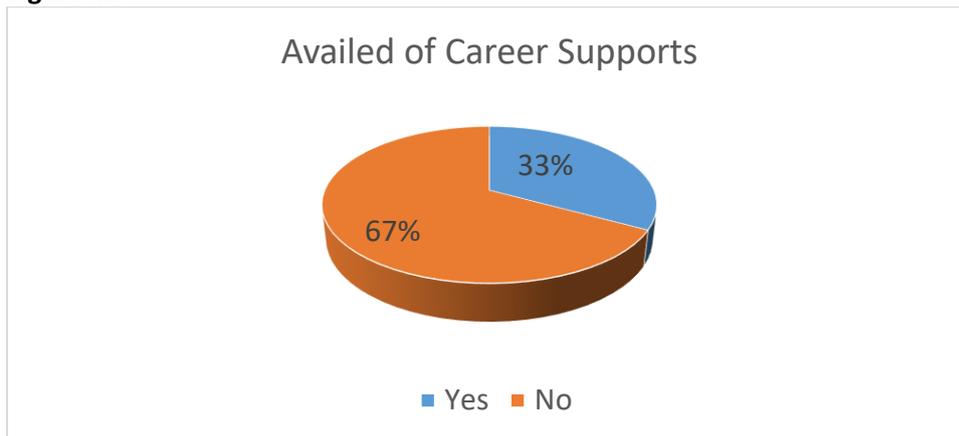
4.2.3.2 - Availing of Career Supports

There was a large amount of discussion in the literature referring to how institutions can improve student engagement with career development. This will be discussed further in the next section when reviewing the findings from the semi-structured interviews with lecturers. On reflection of the numerous ways that an institution can encourage students to engage with career development, both

Lipka (2008) and Nell (2003) highlighted that many graduates never take full advantage of the career resources available to them.

Participants were asked if they had availed of career supports outside of their careers related modules (appointment with the careers office, chat with lecturer/faculty member or a mentor). 67% of students had not availed of any of the supports, 33% availed of 1 or more of the supports mentioned.

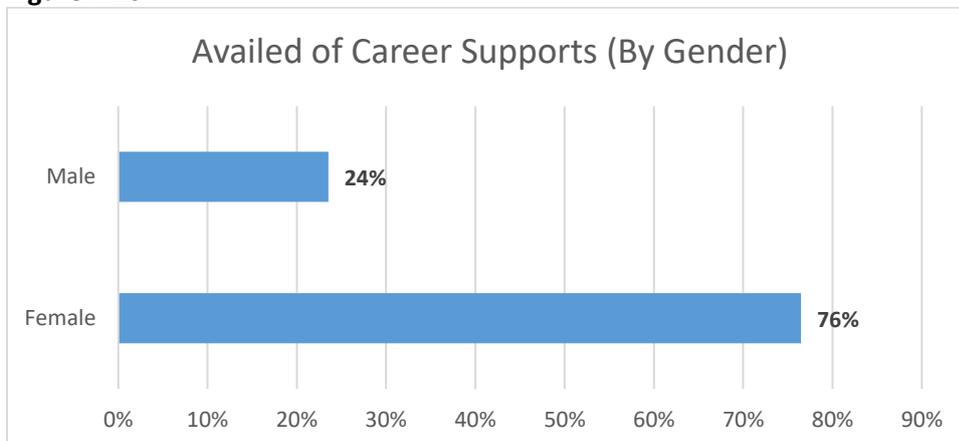
Figure 4.9



Of the 67% (35 participants), 63% accounted for the participants who did not have a career path in mind when they began their third level programme. This is an interesting finding as it indicates that if career supports are developed at third level with the assumption that undergraduate students have a career path in mind this may be part of the reason for non –engagement, if students feel that the supports are not for them at that point in time.

Further insight into the 17 students who account for the 33% of students who did avail of career supports reveals that 76% were female.

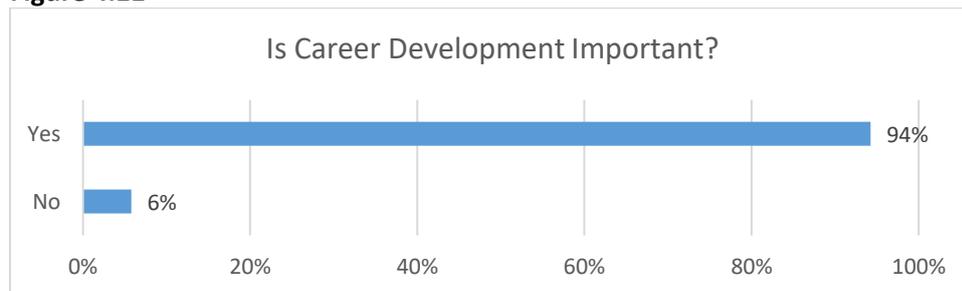
Figure 4.10



4.2.3.3 - Should Career Development be part of an Undergraduate Programme?

Contrary to the results above which show 67% of participants did not avail of career supports outside of their mandatory modules, when asked if they thought it was important to have career development as part of an undergraduate programme 94% answered yes. Malkowski (2007) argued that one component that could determine student engagement is dependent on how the institution deploys its resources. Of the five student engagement variables set out by Blau and Snell (2013) the idea of 'fit for purpose' was included in the Organisation variable. This relates to not only the content being delivered but how it's delivered. Malkowski (2007) believed that no matter what resources are deployed by the institution it is the responsibility of the student to engage but the literature has highlighted the risk of institutions assuming students are more career focused than they might actually be. This is where institutions can impact student engagement using various methods that meet the psychological needs of the students.

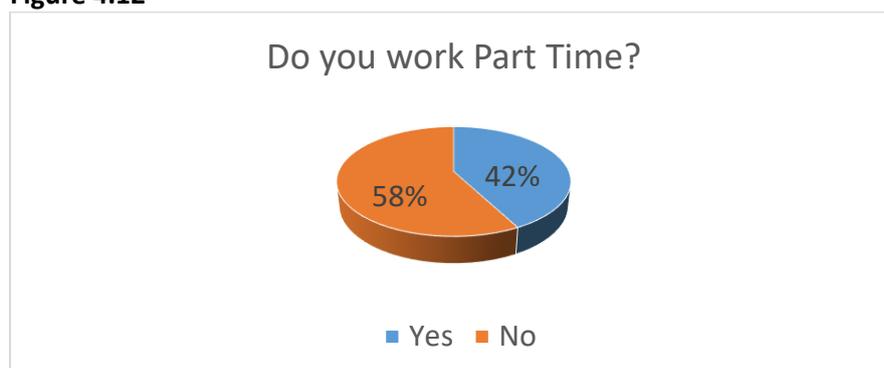
Figure 4.11



4.2.4 – Part Time Work/Internships

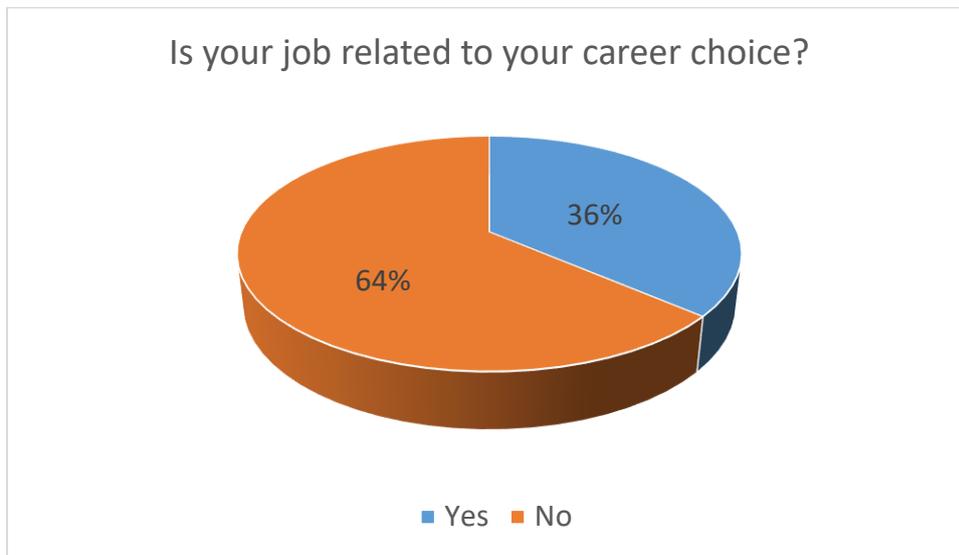
Part time work was included by Blau and Snell (2013) in the college related variable set. Employment can have a positive impact on student engagement and retention but only when it is specifically related to their career choice (Sagen *et al.* 2000). 58% of respondents are currently working part time alongside their studies.

Figure 4.12



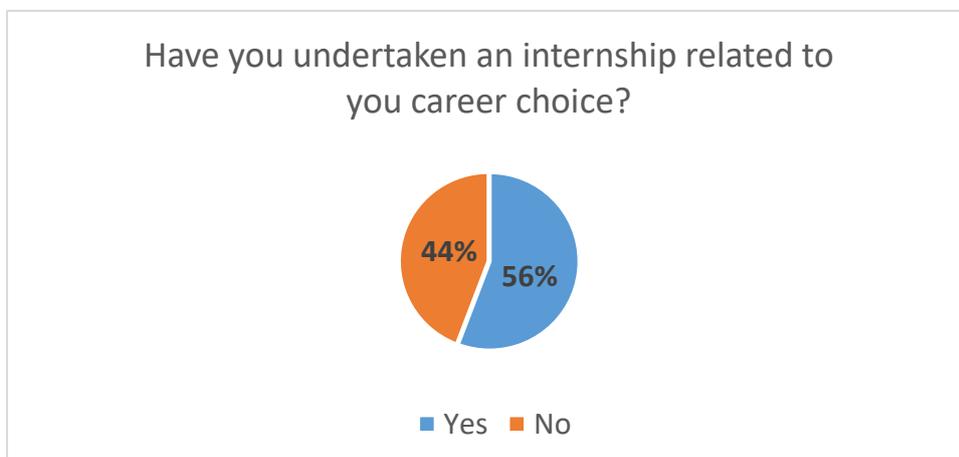
36% of those who are working part time agree that their job is related to their career choice.

Figure 4.13



Participants were then asked if they have undertaken an internship during their undergraduate programme and the response was extremely positive with 56% of students indicating that they have undertaken an internship relating to their career choice.

Figure 4.14



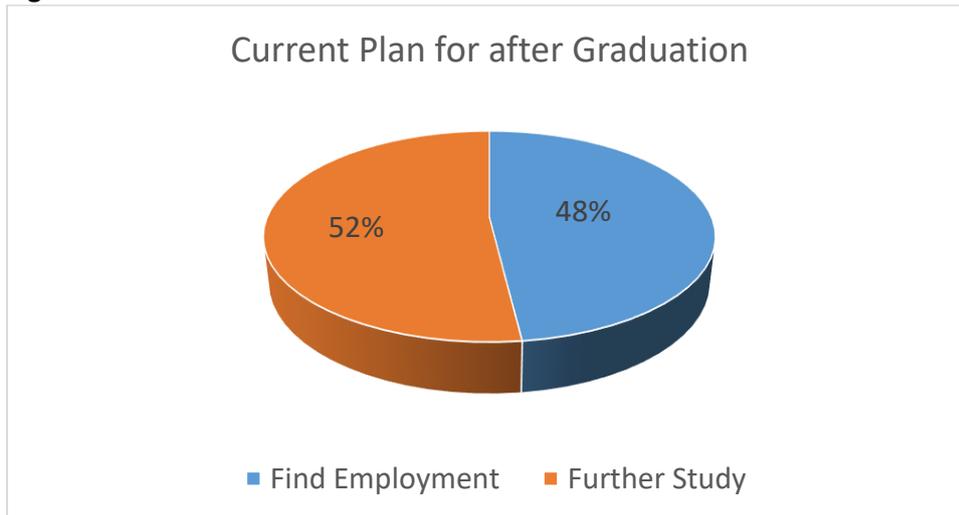
4.2.5 – Post Graduation

The final section of the survey focused on what the participants were planning for after they graduate. Their plans for after graduation may be relevant to whether or not they engage with career development.

4.2.5.1 – Current Plan for after Graduation

Participants were asked what their current plan for after graduation would be; to find employment or go on to further study. The split was very close to being equal, 52% plan to find employment while 48% plan to go on to further study.

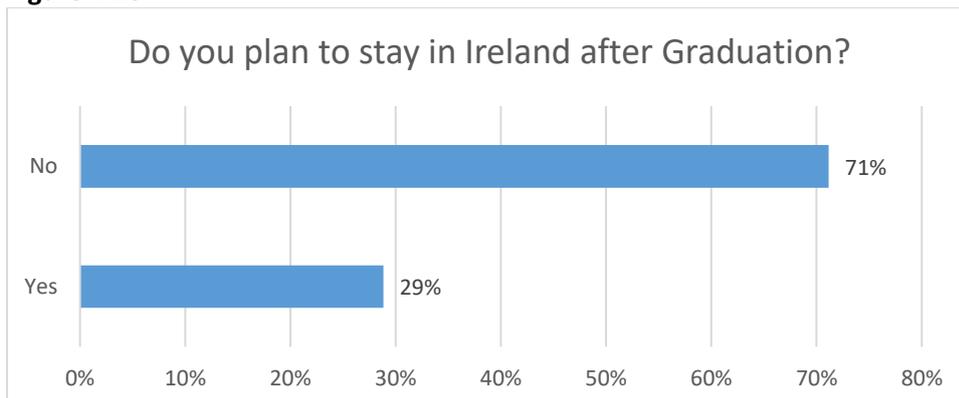
Figure 4.15



4.2.5.2 – Do you plan to stay in Ireland

The final question asked was do you plan to stay in Ireland after graduation. Only 29% of the participants are planning to stay in Ireland after graduation.

Figure 4.16



The final two questions were asked to demonstrate that not all undergraduates plan to find employment after graduation and whatever they decide as their next step may not be in Ireland. These are two very important considerations that should be taken into account when designing career

development programmes in order to engage all undergraduates. In education one size does not fit all and career development is no different.

4.2.6 - Summary of Findings from Student Survey

The IBEC report (2018) outlined the need for career guidance to be lifelong. This removes the assumption that undergraduates go to college to get a specific job after graduation. The Department of Education and Skills Press Release (2018) highlighted the need for 'high quality career guidance' so students can make informed career decisions. Relevant points to note from the survey include the lack of career supports at second level in relation to those who chose their undergraduate degree with a career path in mind. Is this why students chose a course without thinking about the career they would like to pursue?

When students begin their third level journey there is a huge transition from second level to third level. Students go from being surrounded by an interlinked support system, the 'whole school approach' (Hearne *et al.* 2017) to being responsible for their own support system. The supports exist but now it is up to them to seek them out. This is evident by the fact that 94% of participants agree that career development is an important part of an undergraduate programme but only 33% had availed of career supports outside of their mandatory careers related modules. Given that parents/family and level of education attained by parents rank higher as an influence than career guidance and faculty/lecturers, involving those who are a part of an undergraduate students support system in their undergraduate journey may be worth some consideration. As a limitation of this research these statistics specifically relate to students in the business faculty as they have career development included as a mandatory module so they may not feel that they need additional supports outside of this. Research undertaken with students from faculties that do not have career development included as part of their programme may have a different response to this question.

Having looked at supports pre third level and during the undergraduate programme, the final section looks at post-graduation. Developing supports based on students with a career path in mind, and with the intention to undertake their career in Ireland, will disregard those students who do not know what career path they want to follow or those who may know but are not ready to follow it yet and choose to continue on in further education or taking a year out. Perhaps there is an argument for a tailored career development programme dependent on post-graduation choices.

To engage students they must see the need for it in their own lives. The next section will look at these concerns from the faculty/lecturers point of view.

4.3 – Semi-Structured Interview and Analysis (Qualitative Data)

The author invited three lecturers to participate in the study. Each lecturer was chosen as the author is familiar with their experience and knowledge in this area. Between the 3 participants they work with students across all stages of an undergraduate programme. In this study the participants will be referred to as Lecturer A, Lecturer B and lecturer C.

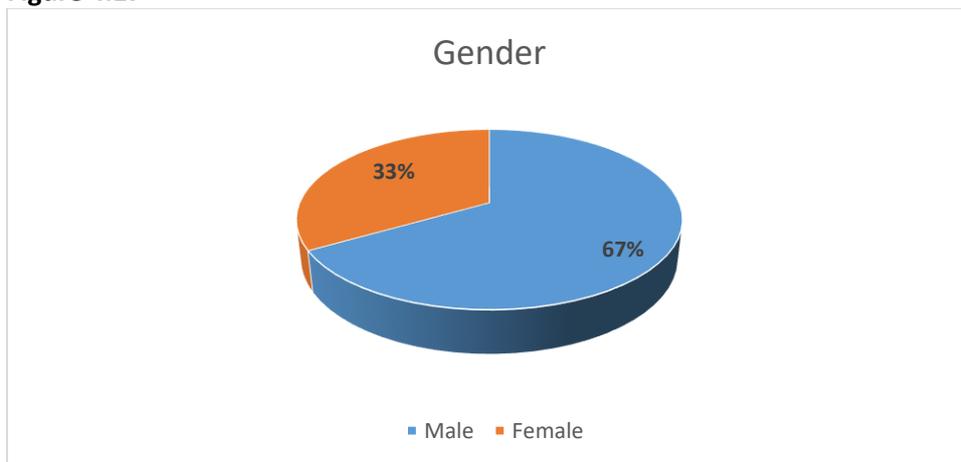
4.3.1 – Demographic Information

Before each interview began the participants were asked to fill in a short questionnaire to obtain some demographic information (Appendix 8). This information was gathered to show the range of experience across the participants.

4.3.1.1 – Gender

The participants were made up of 2 male and 1 female lecturer.

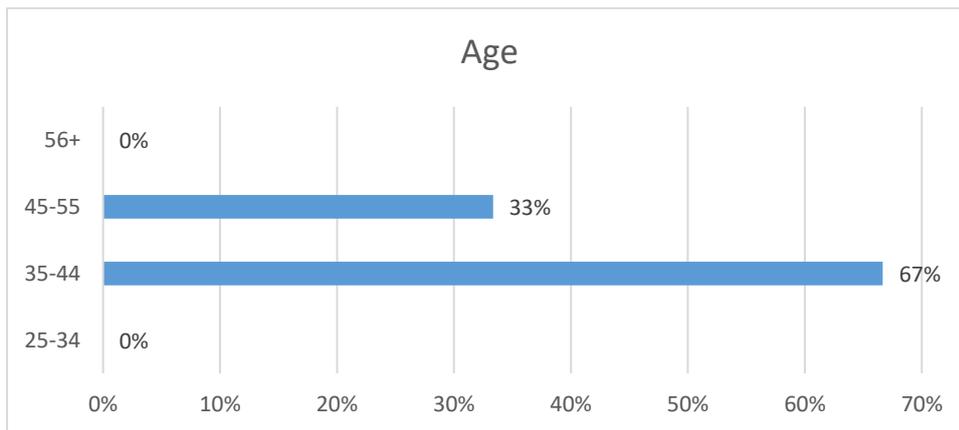
Figure 4.17



4.3.1.2 – Age

Two of the participants are in the 35-44 age bracket and one is in the 45-54 age bracket. Goldman and Brann (2016) highlighted the importance of ‘communication behaviours’ and lecturers being able to talk about their own journey and experience in terms of relatedness when meeting the psychological needs of students. This question relating to age and the next question asking number of years’ experience in both teaching and industry were asked to ensure the participants had the depth of knowledge to add to the study.

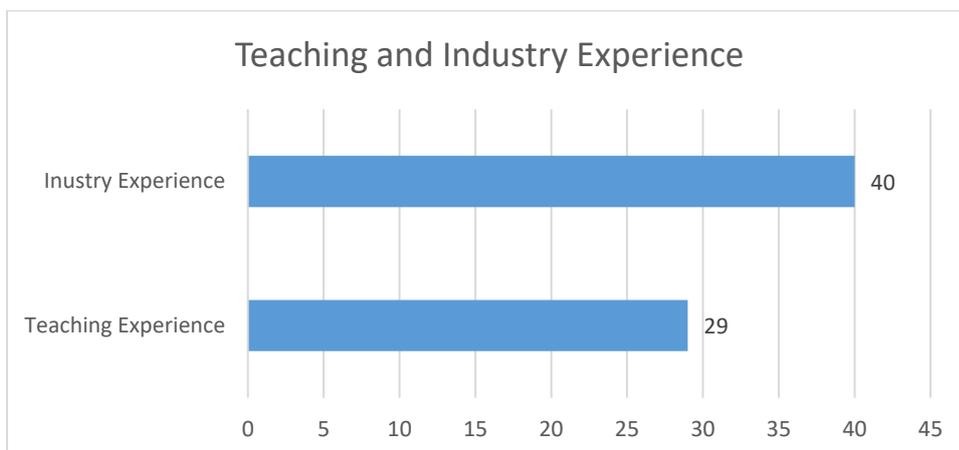
Figure 4.18



4.3.1.3 – Teaching and Industry Experience

The participants have a combined teaching experience of 29 years and combined industry experience of 40 years.

Figure 4.19



4.3.1.4 – Teaching Qualification

Each of the lecturers have gained qualifications in their specific areas of knowledge. They were asked specifically about qualifications received in the area of education. Lecturer A has completed both the Special Purpose Level 9 Certificate in Training and Education and the Postgraduate Diploma in Training and Education. Lecturer B has completed the Special Purpose Level 9 Certificate in Training and Education and Lecturer C has completed the Special Purpose Level 9 Certificate in Training and Education, the Postgraduate Diploma in Training and Education and is currently completing the Masters in Training and Education.

Table 4.1

| | Certificate | Postgraduate Diploma | Masters |
|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Lecturer A | X | X | |
| Lecturer B | X | | |
| Lecturer C | X | X | X |

4.3.1.5 – What years of an Undergraduate Programme do you teach?

This group of lecturers were chosen because between them they have experience teaching at each level of an undergraduate programme. Lecturer A teaches on first and second year modules, Lecturer B teaches final years and Lecturer C teaches second years.

Table 4.2

| | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 3rd Year |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Lecturer A | X | X | |
| Lecturer B | | | X |
| Lecturer C | | X | |

4.3.2 – Student Profile

The first half of the questions asked related to student choices and were asked as a second viewpoint to the responses of the students who participated in the student survey.

4.3.2.1 – Career Path

The lecturers were asked, in their experience, do students enter college with a career path in mind. Lecturer B and Lecturer C felt that within most classes there will be some students who have entered college with a career path in mind while some will not. This is on par with the response from the student survey which showed that 52% of students did not have a career path in mind while 48% did. Lecturer C noted that:

Some students choose programmes with clearly defined career paths attached and likewise some students choose more general programmes because they do not have a defined career path attached.

Lecturer A felt that students generally do not have a career path in mind and that they choose a programme based on an interest in a subject and a vague understanding of what the career path attached might look like. This reiterates the concerns raised by Hearne *et al.* (2017) around the amount of time given to career guidance at second level. The education around course choice and career paths must start at second level and this is backed up by the response from the Department of Education and Skills (2018) regarding the importance of high quality career guidance in making informed career choices.

4.3.2.2 – Link between Career Development and Retention

The next question focused on the link between career development and retention. Malkowski (2007) took the view that if students choose the right college course they have a greater chance of succeeding academically. Lecturer B held a similar view that students who are driven will succeed academically, whether or not they have a career path in mind and engage with career development. Lecturer A and B both felt that if a student enjoys their course they will begin to think about their career prospects at an earlier stage and this will have a positive effect on retention. Lecturer A also pointed out that careers should be central to the conversation from day one of an undergraduate programme, especially for the students entering with no career path in mind. Malkowski (2007) and Lipka (2008) agreed that retention inevitably came down to course choice.

4.3.2.3 – Influence on Undergraduate Students Decision Making

The initial research gathered in the literature review highlighted who has the most influence on undergraduate students and their decision making when it comes to career choices. The research showed that family and level of education attained by family ranked higher than information from career advisors and faculty (Chin *et al.* 2018). These statistics were in line with the responses from the students surveyed which matched the statistics from the study conducted by Chin *et al.* (2018). All three lecturers agreed with this. Some of the opinions given for why this might be the case included parents advising on areas of study with good job prospects, parents wanting students to work in the family business, siblings who've previously studied in a certain area and family paying for the cost of college (the student feeling an obligation to their family).

Again, we are brought back to the idea of the 'whole school approach' (Hearne *et al.* 2017). Lecturer A commented that:

When students begin their third level journey they have jumped off a cliff, whether they have wings or not.

Parents often attend open evenings with prospective students so possibly there might be ways to include parents in the third level experience. Lecturer A agreed that parent teacher meetings would not be feasible or appropriate but a message board highlighting areas being covered to encourage discussions at home may work.

4.3.2.4 – When do students connect the dots

One of the more difficult questions asked as part of the interviews was at what stage of an undergraduate programme students begin to see the benefit of career development. This question in particular opened up a number of avenues that could all lead on to further research. Lecturer B felt from second year on as in first year they are still finding their feet. Lecturer A observed that:

For a lot of students, it's a lack of emotional intelligence. Career Development Programmes are designed by people who have already come through that process and have the experience behind them. They are not always developed with students in mind who have yet had that experience.

Which links in with Lecturer C who felt that students really only begin to see the benefit when they are actively applying for jobs or even until they are in the real world putting the skills they've learned into practice which is why relevant work experience, either integrated work placements or encouraging students to find relevant work experience in the summer or alongside their studies is so important, as opposed to just any part time job, which is not always possible if the student has bills to pay. This is reflected in Sagen *et al.* (2000) who found that career related part time work had a positive impact on student engagement and retention as opposed to unrelated part time work, generally undertaken to pay for bills/college etc.

4.3.3 – Delivery of Career Development

The second half of the interview focused on the delivery of career development and how lecturers delivering this topic can be an integral part of encouraging student engagement with the topic. The literature review highlighted the importance of faculty involvement on student engagement through Blau and Snell (2013) and their reference to faculty impact on student engagement under the Organisation Variable Set and also when looking at meeting the psychological needs of students in relation to motivation.

4.3.3.1 – Engaging Elements of Career Development

Each of the participants were unanimous in their answers to this question. The elements of career development that students engaged with the most are the practical elements where they were putting together something tangible that could be used by them such as a CV, Cover Letter, and LinkedIn profiles. Research conducted by Chin *et al.* (2018) identified a move away from preparing for a job (the practical elements mentioned above) and moving towards providing students with tools for managing their own career. This is also the foundation of the IBEC report (2018) however a point made by Lecturer A in response to a previous question also has some merit in this space. Has this concept been designed by those who have been through this experience and process already? The practical elements will always be needed, some students may have never worked before or had an interview of any kind. If the practical elements remain is it the way they are taught that needs to change?

4.3.3.2 – Lifelong Career Management or Post-Graduation Employment

The author used the IBEC report (2018) as the foundation for the primary research objective of understanding how undergraduate students' engage with career development. The report highlighted the need for career guidance to be considered as lifelong learning rather than for gaining employment post-graduation. The participants were asked if they felt career development currently teaches lifelong career management skills or is it focused on students gaining employment post-graduation. Each of the respondents were in agreement that in practical terms students are being prepared for the world of work and that is generally in the context of gaining their first professional employment post-graduation. Lecturer C offered some further insight:

Because it heavily focuses on the practical elements of getting a job, CV's and interviews, which is needed it's probably more focused on getting a job rather than managing a career but if it had more skills based assessment and the idea of being able to identify the skills need as different opportunities come along than it would be closer to teaching students career management.

4.3.3.3 – What's missing from Career Development

Following on from the previous question, the participants were asked if they felt there was currently anything missing from career development. Lecturer A discussed the inclusion of career direction as part of career planning:

Not everyone is thinking long term in terms of having the exact same career so possibly more in terms of what they want out of a career, what interests what skills are needed. Setting career goals, modelling themselves on people that they see on LinkedIn who have the types of career that they would like to have a future.

This essentially would give them tools for managing their career going forward, in line with the IBEC report (2018).

Lecturer B felt that students need more experience with assessment centres. Not just physically completing the test but also understanding the environment they take place in.

4.3.3.4 – Teaching Strategies

The importance of faculty involvement has been highlighted a number of times throughout the literature review for this study. The consensus across the three participants was that delivering career development differed from delivering on a traditional module for the following reasons:

- In a career development class students are guided in best practice and how to put that together for themselves as a person's success professionally is also driven by their personality
- Students gain the most from listening to the experiences of the lecturer and fellow classmates
- Coaching techniques work well as career development is an area where students are expected to try come up with their own thinking
- Career development is 50/50 traditional teaching, imparting knowledge on the group, and also holding the role of a facilitator

Lecturer A described their own teaching strategy in this area as coaching:

Something that I have used and I continue to use is coaching and I feel it definitely works well in an area where a student has to come up with their own thinking behind something. Traditional teaching can be one sided if your trying to get knowledge into the students' head. Whereas Career Development is 50/50. Moving to a more facilitator role.

The responses above all fit with the proposition that the delivery of career development is most appropriately aligned with constructivism and the theories associated with it meaning that you are 'leading, not dragging' the learner (Cooperstein and Kocavar-Weidinger 2004, p.142).

Another relevant point to take from the responses is the importance of communication, how in a career development class hearing other people's experiences builds your own knowledge. The literature showed this to be a significant factor in meeting the psychological needs of students associate with motivation according to Goldman and Brann (2016). Lecturer C identified this in particular as relevant to taking on the role of a facilitator:

During career development students gain the most from hearing about the experiences of the lecturer and their fellow classmates and it is the lecturer's role to facilitate this process.

4.3.4 – Summary of Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

The relevance of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews is twofold. The responses backed up the data gathered from the student surveys and literature review but it also gave the lecturers viewpoint on the reasons behind those findings.

The first point that was reiterated a number of times throughout this section, and the full research study as a whole, is the importance of good career guidance at second level as course choice can affect the third level experience immensely. Following on from this, many students do not have a career path in mind when they begin their undergraduate degree. Institutions are trying to prepare them for employment post-graduation but because they do not know what they want that career to be those resources can seem irrelevant to them at that point.

The most engaging elements appear to be the practical elements. If these are combined with what appears to be missing, for example teaching career direction, could this bring career development closer to what the IBEC report (2018) has recommended it should be?

For students to engage with career development the institution must not assume that everyone has a chosen career path in mind. If career development is delivered in this way it will be more aligned with the recommendations of the IBEC report (2018). Teaching strategies can have a huge impact on student engagement, even if students do not particularly like a topic, 'a good lecturer can turn that around' (Lecturer A). There was agreement across all three lecturers that delivering career development requires the lecturer to use more coaching strategies than would generally be required in traditional subjects. This led to lecturers identifying themselves as facilitators when delivering this topic. It was noted by Lecturer C that during career development students gain the most from hearing

about the experiences of the lecturer and their fellow classmates and it is the lecturers' role to facilitate this process.

The semi-structured interviews were a fantastic insight from those working with students on a daily basis and gave rise to a number of recommendations which will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 – Introduction

This study began with the intent to understand how undergraduate students engage with career development education. The author identified a gap where students entered third level with the view to gaining employment post-graduation but did not always engage with career development or see the benefit in engaging with it. The research question was further divided into three strands:

1. How students engage with career development
2. At what stage do students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career development
3. Can student engagement be enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of career development

To gain further knowledge into the questions above research was conducted with final year undergraduate students and lecturers delivering career development at undergraduate level. The data gathered, alongside the literature in this area, gave further insight into the strands being considered. This chapter will provide a summary conclusion on the research in this space and will offer a number of recommendations based on the information gathered. This chapter will also address areas of further study.

5.2 - Objective One – Conclusion and Recommendations

The first strand of the research asked how students engage with career development. This section will look at the literature in this space and the findings from the primary research conducted and the recommendations that follow.

5.2.1 - Objective One Conclusion

The IBEC report (2018) underpinned the foundation of this research. This report outlined the need for career development to become a resource that teaches students how to manage their career journey. This relates to all stages of career development. Before focusing on how undergraduates engage with career development the research looked at the preceding accommodations made at second level. According to the literature there is a disparity across second level institutions when it comes to the level of career guidance that students receive.

Hearne *et al.* (2017) discussed the lack of resources in career guidance at second level. The Department of Education and Skills press release (2018) reinforced this when they highlighted the importance of career supports to ensure that students can make informed decisions on their career paths. Of the 52 students who participated in the student survey 44% received career guidance support at second level while 56% did not. 48% of participants had a career path in mind while 52% did not. The sample was then divided into two groups, those who received career guidance supports at second level and those who did not. 61% of those who received supports at second level had a career path in mind while only 38% of those who did not receive support chose their course with a specific career in mind. This finding demonstrates that those with previous experience of career development education at second level are more likely to engage at third level as they have a career path in mind

A gap identified in this section of the research is why students choose a course without thinking about the career they would like to pursue and the effect this can have on their engagement with career development at third level.

The lecturers interviewed agreed with the findings from the literature and also the student surveys regarding the ratio of students who have a career path in mind. The lecturers felt that for those who do not have a career path in mind students can disengage from tasks where they are being asked to combine their academics with a career focus. For a lot of students their course choice was made based on subject choice and only a vague understanding of what is actually covered in the programme and the career paths available.

5.2.2 - Objective One Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings above.

5.2.2.1 - Recommendation One - Career Guidance at Second Level

Assuming that many second level student will not make a decision on their career path before starting third level, it would be a good start to ensure that they are making an informed decision on course choice. Data gathered from the interviews with the lecturer's points towards the need for students to be guided on the full prospectus of an undergraduate programme and not just the overall subject matter.

5.2.2.2 - Recommendation Two – Early Career Discussion

The assumption from recommendation one, that not all students will start third level with a career path in mind, leads on to recommendation two. Career choices should be part of the discussion from day one of an undergraduate programme instead of assuming a student has made a career choice and career development focusing on that choice.

5.3 - Objective Two – Conclusion and Recommendation

This section will focus on the second strand of the research question which asks at what stage students begin to connect the classroom learning with their own career development.

5.3.1 - Objective Two Conclusion

This strand was explored with the lecturers during the semi-structured interviews. The overall consensus was that students see the most benefit in what they learn in career development when they are actively using the knowledge. Sagen *et al.* (2000) drew a link between career related work experience and the positive effect it can have on student engagement and retention.

Another concurrent theme that ran throughout the literature reviewed was the importance of those who influence the decision making of undergraduate students. As discussed previously the literature noted the importance of the ‘whole school approach’ at second level set out by Hearne *et al.* (2017) and considered the significance of this continuing on to third level using research conducted by Chin *et al.* (2018) which revealed that information and advice obtained from family ranked higher than the careers service. When students begin their third level journey there is a huge transition from second level to third level. Students go from being surrounded by an interlinked support system, the ‘whole school approach’ (Hearne *et al.* 2017) to being responsible for their own support system.

5.3.2 - Objective Two Recommendations

The following recommendations have been informed by both the literature reviewed and the guidance from the lecturers who participated in the semi-structured interviews.

5.3.2.1 - Recommendation One - Application of Employability Skills

As informed by both literature and the semi-structured interviews, ensuring that students engage in relevant, meaningful career related work experience will allow them to actively apply the learning

from career development in the real world and have a positive effect on their engagement with career development.

5.3.2.2 - Recommendation Two – Whole School Approach

Involving parents/family in the undergraduate experience will improve the transition from second level and will allow students to keep the support of the 'whole school approach'. This would have to be done in a way that students are comfortable with as they are adults but as the research and the statistics show they still value the guidance of parents/family highly.

5.4 - Objective Three – Conclusion and Recommendations

The final strand asked can student engagement be enhanced with the use of specific learning theories in the delivery of career development. This section explores the research from the literature reviewed and the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with the lecturers.

5.4.1 - Objective Three Conclusion

It was noted during the interviews that students need to have a certain level of emotional intelligence to be able to see the benefit of career development however the respondents also felt that career development is designed by those who have 'already gone through the process and can see the light' whereas the students have not had the experience yet. The most engaging elements of career development, according to the lecturers interviewed, appear to be the practical elements. Delivering the practical elements without assuming that all students have a career path in mind will bring the overall delivery of career development in line with the recommendations of the IBEC report (2018). This would move career development from a resource to gain employment post-graduation to a lifelong career management tool for students.

In terms of teaching strategies, the importance of faculty involvement was highlighted a number of times throughout the literature review for this study. It became apparent that lecturers delivering career development do so as facilitators in the classroom using coaching strategies. It was agreed that the delivery of career development is most appropriately aligned with constructivism and the theories associated with it meaning that you are 'leading, not dragging' the learner (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger 2004, p.142). Likewise, the lecturers who participated in the semi-structured interviews felt that delivering career development differed from delivering traditional subjects and for that reason required a different teaching approach. It was noted by Lecturer C that during career

development students gain the most from hearing about the experiences of the lecturer and their fellow classmates and it is the lecturers' role to facilitate this process.

Communication behaviour plays a big role in the delivery of career development. Goldman and Brann (2016) highlighted this to be a significant factor in meeting the psychological needs that students associate with motivation. This fits with facilitation being used in the classroom. When the teacher becoming a facilitator means the class now becomes about the student. But this is not just a case of the teacher recognising that their role is to be a facilitator, it's the actual delivery of the class and the act of facilitating that will determine if classroom discussion and activities are conducted with this in mind (Bergmann and Sams 2014).

5.4.2 - Objective Three Recommendations

The following objectives have been informed by the literature review and research conducted by the author.

5.4.2.1- Recommendation One – Developing Lifelong Career Management Tools

This comes in line with the IBEC report (2018) which states that career development at third level must include career direction and career management as part of its offering. The practical elements are still essential but should be taught in a way that students can put them into practice and redesign them based on whatever stage of their career they are in.

5.4.2.2 - Recommendation Two – Teaching Strategies

Use of facilitation and coaching methods should be adopted when delivering career development and utilising the lecturers experience to build an environment where students learn from lecturer's experience, their classmate's experiences and are guided in completing tasks to development their own skills to manage their career going forward.

5.5 - Areas of Further Research

While this study identified a number of areas where further study could be undertaken, there are two areas in particular where further study would be beneficial to the recommendations made by the author

5.5.1 - Transition from Second Level Career Guidance to Third Level

There is a huge gap between the career guidance received at second level and third level. Further study in how to bridge the gap between the two so that the conversation around career choice and course choice continues on from day one of third level to ensure students have made the right choices.

5.5.2 - Delivery of Career Development

Further study into the delivery of career development and in particular the use of the flipped classroom in delivering using facilitation and coaching methods to improve student engagement with career development.

5.6 - Contribution to the study

With the employment landscape evolving rapidly it is imperative that graduates are equipped to manage their career journey throughout its life cycle. Career development has evolved to become a central part of third level education. This study has added to the existing literature by looking specifically at third level education in Ireland. The contribution of the study has been enriched through;

- Conducting primary research that validates the literature that currently exists and adds to the subject matter
- Inclusion of thoughts, opinions and real-world examples from undergraduate students and lectures
- Issuing recommendations that can positively impact student engagement with career development
- Highlighting relevant areas for further study that could further impact this area

The author has taken a number of positive insights from the study and hopes that it can contribute to institutions across the higher education sector.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Ethical Approval



ETHICS COMMITTEE Approval - 10th December 2019

Student Name: Emma Flynn

Student Number: 2867370

Supervisor: Angela Harvey

On review of your amended ethics submission The Master of Arts in Training and Education (MATE)
*Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC) has approved this proposed study you may proceed.

Peter Gillis
Dissertation Module Lead

APPENDIX 2

Participant Consent Form – Student Survey

Please tick each statement below:

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • I have read the information sheet for this study | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand what the study is about and I was given a chance to ask questions before agreeing to participate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand why I have been asked to participate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand that all data gathered will be handled confidentially and will be stored securely | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand I have the right to withdraw up until the survey is submitted to the researcher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand that the data gathered from me may be used for additional research projects and will be anonymous | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I agree to take part in this study | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Signed (Participant) _____ Date _____

Name in Block Letter _____

Signed by Researcher _____ Date _____

This project is supervised by Angela Harvey, Griffith College Dublin

Researchers Contact Details:

Emma Flynn
01 4150436
Emma.flynn@griffith.ie

APPENDIX 3

Participant Information Sheet – Student Survey

Researcher Contact Information

Emma Flynn
01 4150436
Emma.flynn@griffith.ie

Research Information

I am currently undertaking research on **Understanding Undergraduate Student Engagement with Career Development Education** as part of the MA in Training and Education in Griffith College Dublin. This research is looking at how students engage with Career Development at third level. The data gathered from this survey will be used as part of this research.

Description of study

Participants will be asked to complete a survey that relates to their attitudes towards Career Development in first year, second year and third year of an undergraduate degree.

Benefits of study

It is hoped that the findings from this study will assist in the future development of Career related modules in Griffith College.

Inclusion of findings

The findings from this survey will be collated and included in the final research paper. The findings will be delivered as a commentary. Also visually using graphs. Participants are welcome to request a copy of this research after completion.

Confidentiality

All data gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The data from this survey will be recorded using excel. Each participant survey will be assigned a number and this will be used when collating the data. This excel sheet will be saved onto a hard drive that is password protected. Data will be stored securely on the researcher's password protected laptop and a backup on an encrypted USB memory stick. I give my assurance that all information gathered as part of this research will be destroyed after graduation or in 24 months, whichever is sooner.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to the analysis of findings, at which stage the data will be anonymous. Up to this point you are free to withdraw your data, without giving a reason for withdrawing, and without your withdrawal having any adverse effect for you.

APPENDIX 4

Student Survey

1. Are you:

Male Female Other Prefer not to answer

2. What age are:

18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25 25+

3. What nationality are you?

Irish EU (non-Irish) Non-EU

4. How many years, prior to this year, did you complete in Griffith College?

First Year
Second Year

5. Did you receive Career Supports at second level (pre-college)?

Yes
No

6. Was this career support focused on career choice or course choice?

Career Choice
Course Choice

7. When you picked your college course, did you have a specific career choice in mind?

Yes

No

8. Have you availed of career supports on campus outside of mandatory modules?

First Year Yes No

Second Year Yes No

Third Year Yes No

10 (B) If yes to any of the above, please tick all that apply:

Meeting with Careers Advisor Yes No

Informal Chat with Lecturer Yes No

Mentoring from a graduate Yes No

9. Do you currently work Part Time?

Yes

No

10. Is your job related to your career choice?

Yes

No

11. Have you undertaken an internship related to your career choice?

Yes

No

12. What is your current plan after graduation?

Find Employment

Further Study

13. How would you rate the following influences in your career development/decision making:

| | No Influence | | | | High Influence |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Parents/Family | <input type="radio"/> |
| Parents Career Path | <input type="radio"/> |
| Level of Education attained by parents | <input type="radio"/> |
| Friends | <input type="radio"/> |
| Faculty/Lecturers | <input type="radio"/> |
| Career Guidance | <input type="radio"/> |

14. Do you think it is important to have Career Development as part of an Undergraduate programme?

Yes

No

15. Do you plan to stay in Ireland after Graduation?

Yes

No

16. Is there anything that wasn't included in your Career development modules that you feel should be included?

APPENDIX 5

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Profile of student:

1. What year(s) of an undergraduate programme do you deliver career development to (first, second, third etc)?
2. In your experience, do students enter college with a specific career path in mind?
3. In your experience, do outside influences have an effect on undergraduate students (parents career/level of education) and to what extent? Is there a way to include parents to keep a 'whole school approach'?
4. At what stage of an undergraduate programme do students begin to take career development seriously?
5. In your experience, is there a correlation between engagement in career development and retention?

Delivery of Career Development:

6. Are there certain elements of Career Development that students engage with, more than others?
7. Is there anything you feel should be included in Career Development Education that is currently missing?
8. Is your experience that Career Development taught with the idea of lifelong career management in mind or for the specific task of student gaining employment after graduation?
9. Have you used specific teaching strategies that work better in the delivery of Career Development?

APPENDIX 6

Participant Information Sheet –Semi-Structured Interview

Researcher Contact Information

Emma Flynn
01 4150436
Emma.flynn@griffith.ie

Research Information

I am currently undertaking research on **Understanding Undergraduate Student Engagement with Career Development Education** as part of the MA in Training and Education in Griffith College Dublin. This research is looking at how students engage with Career Development at third level. The data gathered from this survey will be used as part of this research.

Description of study

Lecturers who have career development/professional practice content as part of their modules have been invited to participate in an interview where questions regarding student attitudes to career development will be asked. There will also be questions to open up a discussion on how this content is delivered.

Benefits of study

It is hoped that the findings from this study will assist in the future development of Career related modules in Griffith College.

Inclusion of findings

The findings from this survey will be collated and included in the final research paper. The findings will be delivered as a commentary. Participants are welcome to request a copy of this research after completion.

Confidentiality

All data gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The interview will be voice recorded on the researcher's phone which is password protected. The interview will be transcribed, and the data will be recorded using excel. Each participant survey will be assigned a number and this will be used when collating the data. This excel sheet will be saved onto a hard drive that is password protected. Data will be stored securely on the researcher's password protected laptop and a backup on an encrypted USB memory stick. I give my assurance that all information gathered as part of this research will be destroyed after graduation or in 24 months, whichever is sooner.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to the analysis of findings, at which stage the data will be anonymous. Up to this point you are free to withdraw your data, without giving a reason for withdrawing, and without your withdrawal having any adverse effect for you.

APPENDIX 7

Participant Consent Form – Semi-Structured Interview

Please tick each statement below:

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • I have read the information sheet for this study | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand what the study is about and I was given a chance to ask questions before agreeing to participate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand why I have been asked to participate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand that all data gathered will be handled confidentially and will be stored securely | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand I have the right to withdraw up until the interview is completed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I understand that the data gathered from me may be used for additional research projects and will be anonymous | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I agree to take part in this study | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Signed (Participant) _____

Date _____

Name in Block Letter _____

Signed by Researcher _____

Date _____

This project is supervised by Angela Harvey, Griffith College Dublin

Researchers Contact Details:

Emma Flynn
01 4150436
Emma.flynn@griffith.ie

APPENDIX 8

Semi-Structure Interviews - Demographic Information Questionnaire

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age

25-34

35-44

45-55

56+

3. How many years teaching experience do you have?

4. How many years industry experience do you have?

5. What level teaching qualification do you hold? Please tick all that apply or equivalent.

Level 9 Special Purpose Certificate in Training and Education

Postgraduate Diploma in Training and Education

Masters in Training and Education

6. What years of undergraduate programmes do you teach on? Please tick all that apply.

1st Year

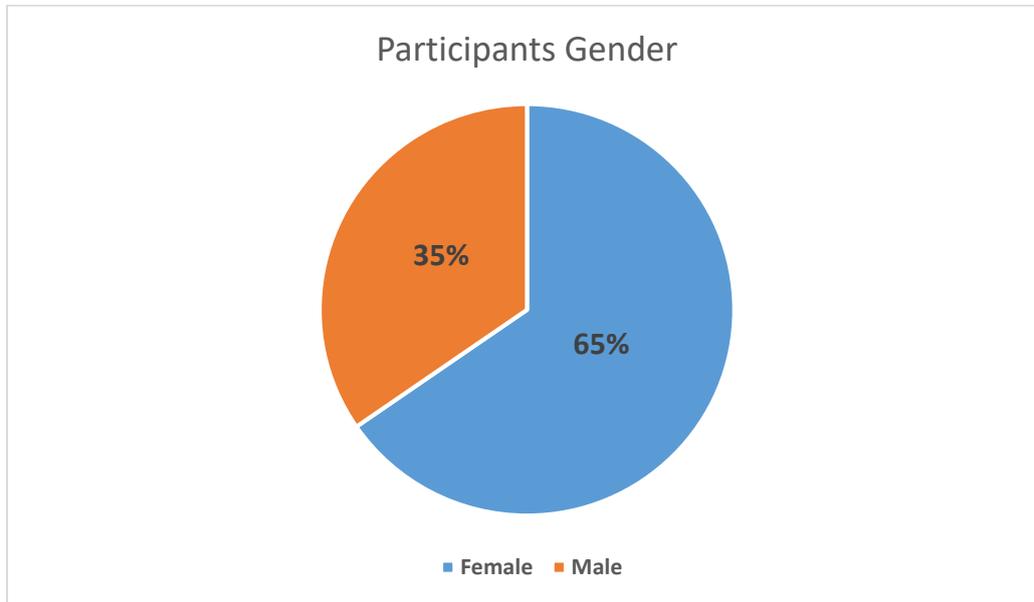
2nd Year

3rd Year

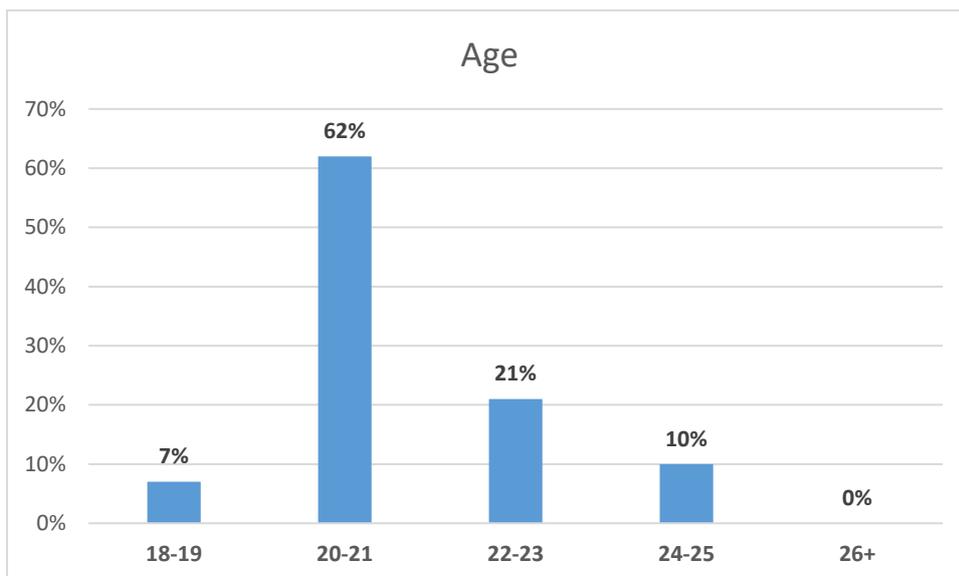
APPENDIX 9

Student Survey Results

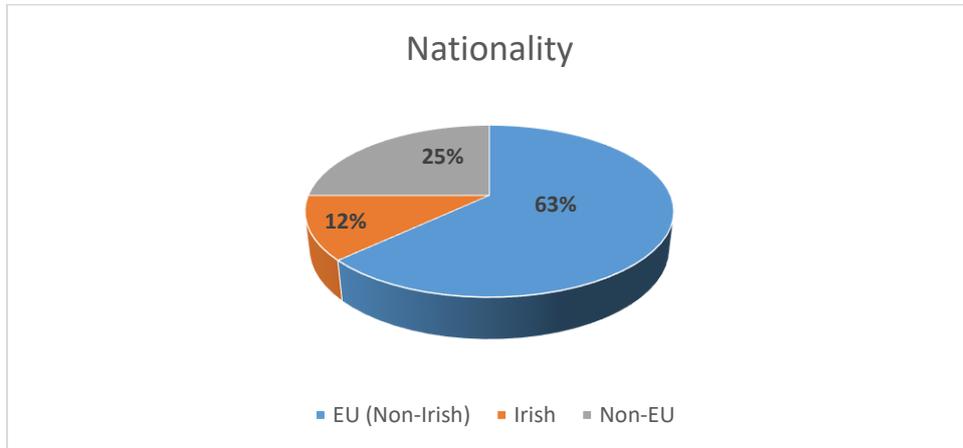
Question 1 - Gender



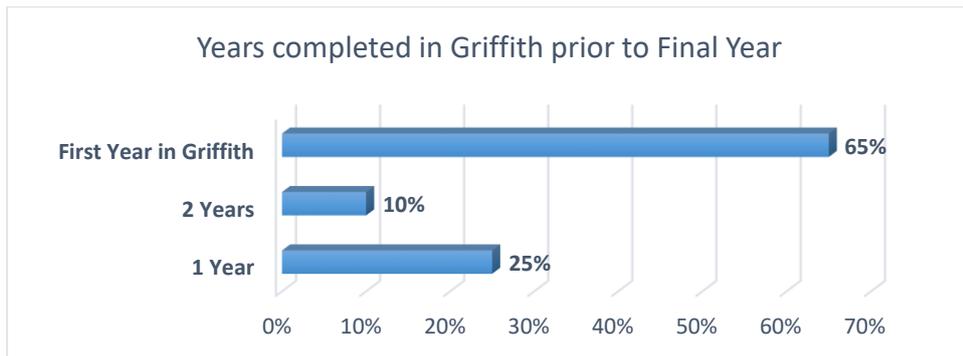
Question 2 – Age



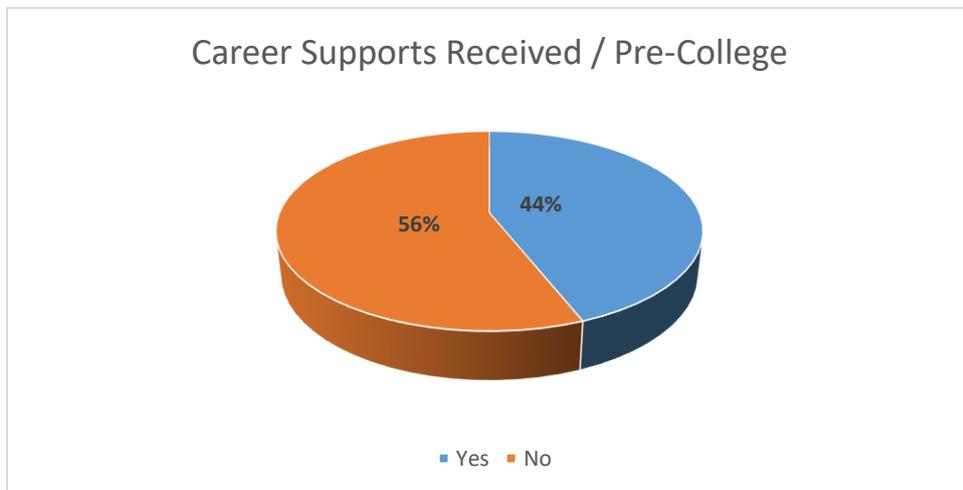
Question 3 – Nationality



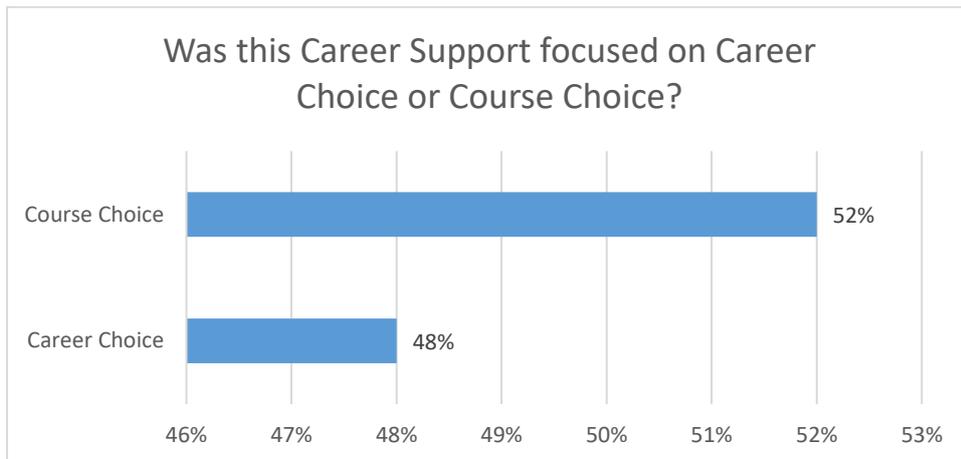
Question 4 - Number of years spent studying in the Institution



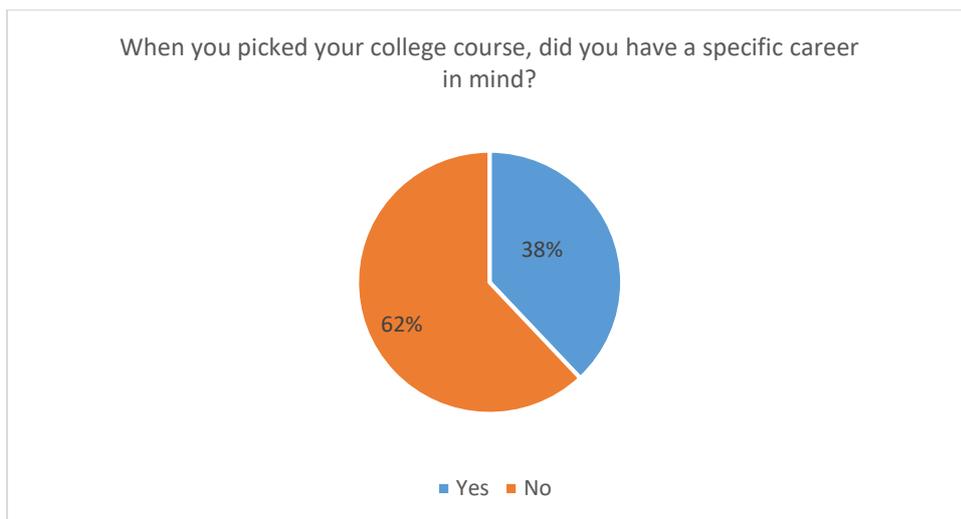
Question 5 - Did you receive career guidance supports received at second level?



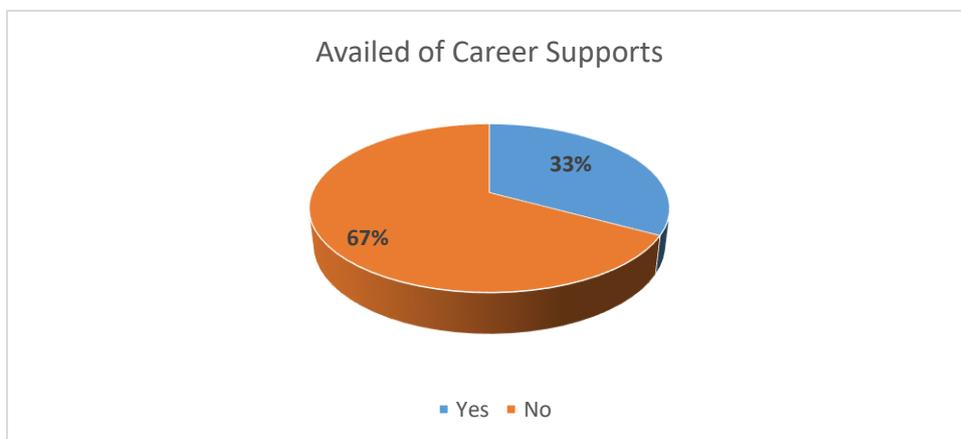
Question 6 – What was the main focus of career guidance supports at second level



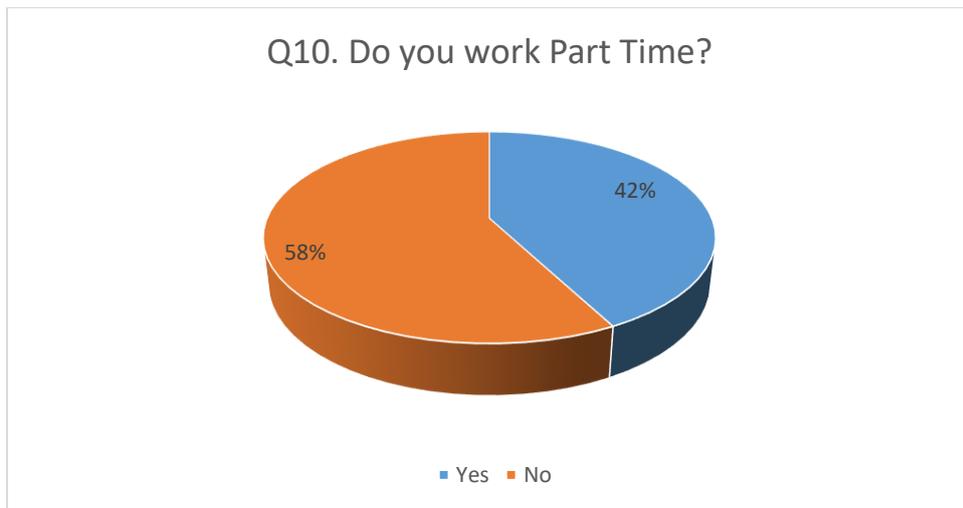
Question 7 - When you picked your college course, did you have a specific career in mind?



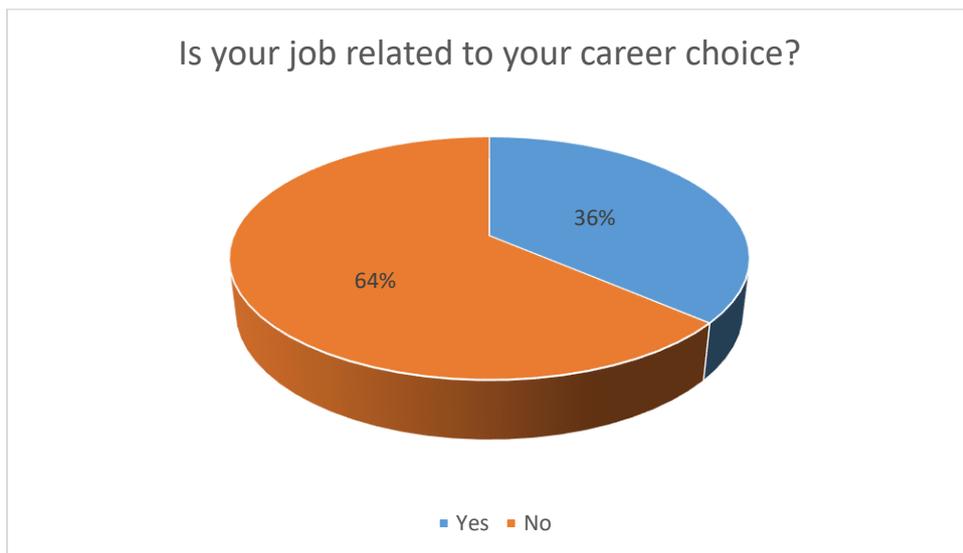
Question 8 – Have you availed of career supports?



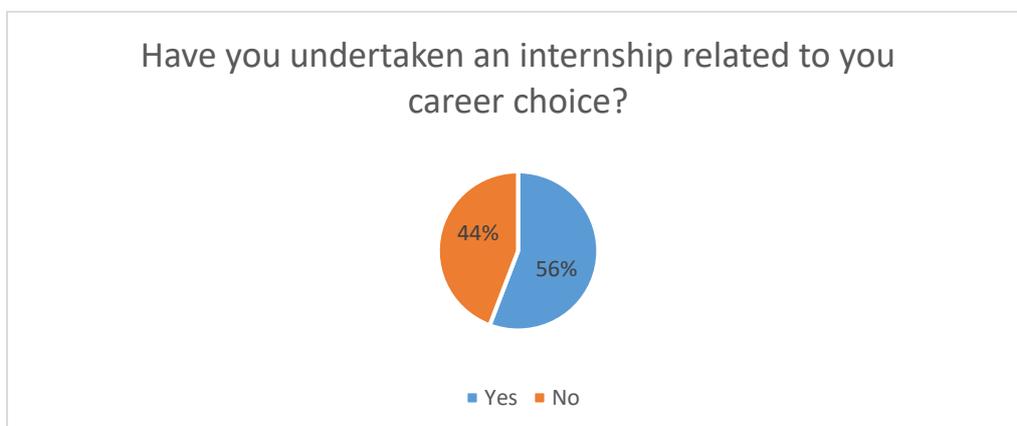
Question 9 - Do you currently work part time?



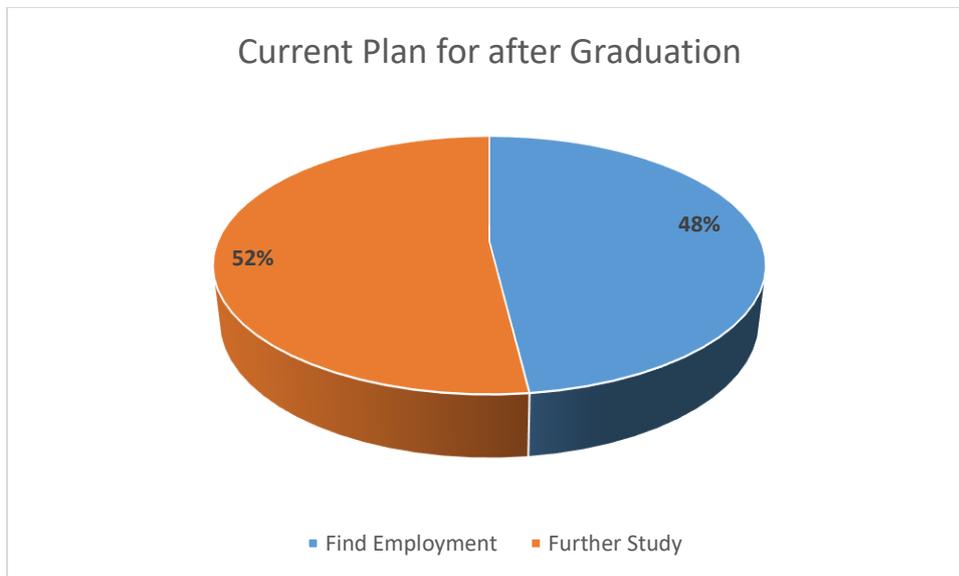
Question 10 - Is your job related to your career choice?



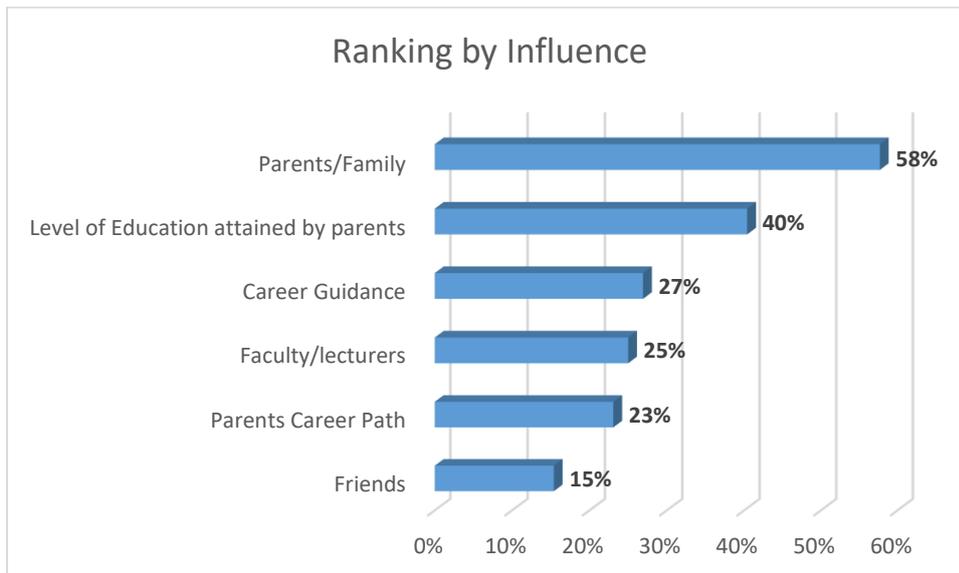
Question 11 - Have you undertaken an internship related to your career choice?



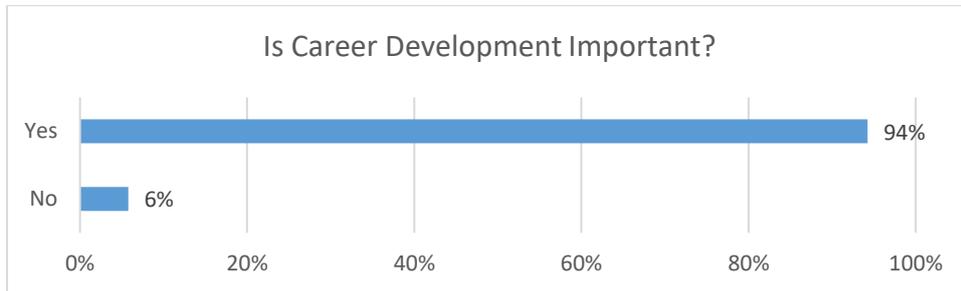
Question 12 - What is your current plan after graduation?



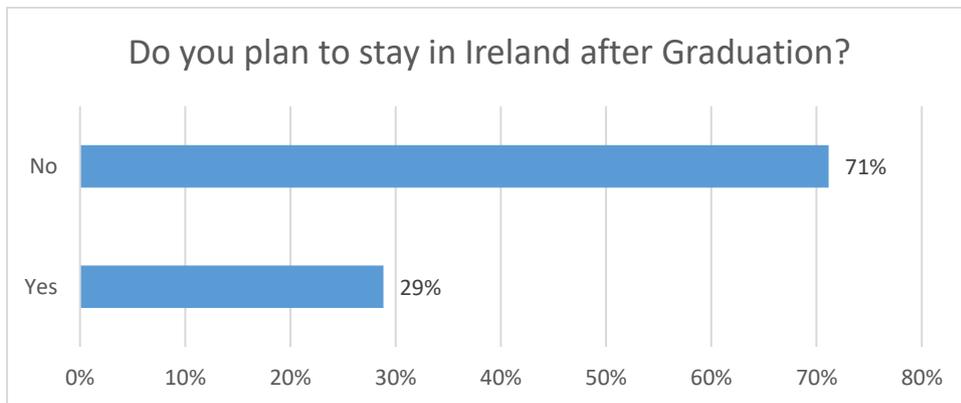
Question 13 – Ranking of influences on undergraduate students decision making



Question 14 - Should Career Development be part of an undergraduate Programme?



Question 15 - Do you plan to stay in Ireland?



APPENDIX 10

Semi-Structured Interviews (Coding for Data Analysis)

| | Lecturer 1 | Lecturer 2 | Lecturer 3 |
|--|--|---|--|
| Profile of Students | | | |
| 1. In your experience, do students enter third level with a specific career path in mind? | Generally, not, no. From my experience students generally make their decision based on the love of a subject or a vague understanding of what a career might be but no not necessarily on knowing exactly what their career path might be when they finished an undergraduate programme. | I would say it's generally half and half with the class as. Some have very clearly defined career paths and some still don't know what they want to do when they finished. Students are working on an assignment which is building their brand but for the students who don't know their career path or the industry they want to work they find that assignment difficult. | For certain programmes yes, computing students generally know they want to work in technical field, law students will be thinking of the barrister or solicitor route and journalism students will know they want to work in the media but it's not the case for every students, even students coming in to courses that have a very defined career path at the end. It's possible that students chose programmes that are more general and don't have a clearly defined career path because they don't know what they want to be yet. |
| 2. In your experience, is there a correlation between engagement in career development and retention? | If students have chosen the wrong course this definitely causes a bump in the road for students. Students who realise it's not for them will either leave college, transfer to another course in the same college or somewhere else or struggle on with the course and graduate. Students have an idea of what a subject might be but don't fully understand the course until they are in it. if a student is having a bump in the road and there has been an experience that have been negative for them it can definitely affect them in what their career choice might be and it can dissuade them from actually going down a particular career path. A good lecturer can keep you on the right path. Possibly educate students more at second level on what the course entails rather than just subject matter and the types of jobs in that area. Looking back at career supports at second level definitely affects those decisions. Careers support needs to be encouraging and relevant from day 1 of a degree programme | still not entirely sure which aspect they want so based accounting or marketing and they've chosen to specialise in areas not necessarily knowing that they really want to work in that area. Even when specialising is sometimes based on the particular subject rather than what it means that actually work in that area as a career | To a certain extent. I would more see overall enjoyment of a programme having a positive effect on both engagement with career development and retention instead of career development alone having the effect on retention. If students enjoy their programme I find that they start to look at career prospect at an earlier stage |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>3. In your experience, do outside influences have an effect on Undergraduate students (parents' career/level of education) and to what extent? Is there a way to include parents to keep a 'whole school approach'</p> | <p>They've jumped off a cliff, wings or no wings. Message board/progress report where parents are involved and there can be a conversation at home. Encourage them to have the conversation with those at home.</p> | <p>In business there can be a lot of influence from parents that want them to do business because it's a good choice but those students actually want to study psychology or communications. I would definitely agree with that. And also the Irish students in the class who have come through the Irish education system from primary through second level to third level, have commented that career guidance at second level would have told them that business is a good strong stable choice for a career, without really explaining what a business programme entails.</p> | <p>Yes definitely. Family have advised them there's good job prospects because someone they know works in that industry or they themselves work there. Or they want the student to work in the family business</p> |
| <p>4. At what stage of an undergraduate programme do students begin to take career development seriously?</p> | <p>For a lot of students, it's a lack of emotional intelligence. Create development programmes are being designed by people who have already come through that and have the experience behind them and they're not always developed with students in mind who haven't got that experience .we have gone through the process and can see the light whereas they haven't had that experience yet. Also, family influence, if you have older siblings you may be ahead in your way of thinking, more future focused. Also, parents and family who are actively talking about your career path.</p> | <p>2nd year. 1st year they're still finding their feet.</p> | <p>I think possibly until they're actually applying for jobs they may not see the real benefit and unfortunately even until they're in the real world putting the skills learned into practice which is why relevant work experience is so important, either integrated work placements or encouraging students to find relevant work experience in the summer or alongside their studies as opposed to just any part time job (which isn't always possible if the student has bills to pay)</p> |

Delivery of Career Development

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>5. Are there certain elements of Career Development that students engage with, more than others?</p> | <p>Looking at real-world scenarios that will happen in the workplace but they weren't able to connect it to the workplace because they were still concerned with what was going on in college and one even have will this be an exam question. Students have lost the point that they are going to graduate within the next 6 months to 18 months and what we're doing here is getting ready for what comes after. But there are two students in the class who are extremely future-focused and understand why we're teaching what we teach and how it relates to what they want to do after college with the students in your career</p> | <p>The practical elements, CV's, cover letter. They can see where these can be used in their job search.</p> <p>Also, the skills audit they enjoy because we can relate it back to the job spec</p> | <p>Definitely the practical elements where they've put something together that they can use in their job search.</p> <p>I think it gives students some confidence when they have a portfolio of documents that they know are professionally put together</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| | <p>path they want to take. Development class what really interested in was the practical elements so building the CV and cover letter at the LinkedIn profile. maybe this stuff appeal some because they can see the practical application of it in their lives at the moment if they are applying for jobs if they are applying for graduate programmes these things are relevant even if they're just applying for part-time jobs, they need these things. With the exception of Master students in undergraduate students generally and career focused they are focused on gaining a qualification. Student can lose out on opportunities if they are not career focused. There are many opportunities out there for students while they are still in college that can build a CV, a huge benefit for when they graduate. For students who are being very proactive when it comes to career vs those who I suppose being more reactive, what led to the student being that way.</p> | | |
| <p>6. Is your experience that Career Development taught with the idea of lifelong career management in mind or for the specific task of student gaining employment after graduation?</p> | <p>Professional Development programmes we are setting students up to gain employment (to be able to apply with a good cv, cover letter etc). And basic professional skills so we are setting them up well for getting their first job post-graduation. Looking at the modules we aren't necessarily setting them up to manage their careers long term. It is our job for two reason. The first is around social contract We will help you gain the knowledge needed and we will help see that idea that there are career options. aware of the options are there for them but then it's this them and putting your own plans into place of how they're going to get that for you so they can manage it with her own independent learning when they leave the college. We are not a recruitment company yes as a college we should be setting them up for the career</p> | <p>The time given for career development can be short which doesn't allow for what I'd like to be doing with them but I try to use a lot of group work and practical elements where they can work in groups and learn from each other.</p> | <p>Because it heavily focuses on the practical elements of getting a job, CV's, interviews etc, which is needed it's probably more focused on getting a job rather than managing a career but if it had more skills based assessment and the idea of being able to identify the skills need as different opportunities come along than it would be closer to teaching students career management</p> |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | but there is a line. We can't do everything. | | |
| 7. Is there anything you feel should be included in Career Development Education that is currently missing? | <p>More real world simulations but that can be difficult if the student doesn't know what career path they want to follow Another element that would be a good one to have as part of a programme a career development programme would definitely be career Direction not everyone is thinking long term in terms of having the exact same career so possibly more in terms of what they want out of a career what interests what skills are needed. Setting career goals modelling themselves on people that they stay on LinkedIn etc who have the types of career that they would like to have a future. Ideally what we want to be working with students on is career planning and management but they're just not in that space at the moment because they're in college. They may be working part time while they're in college but it possibly has nothing to do with their chosen career. The hospitality students generally are working in an area that relates that they would be quite different in that they are able to apply what we're doing in college to the job there working in.</p> | <p>Aptitude tests, assessment centers and application forms.</p> <p>Particularly for the assessment centers it's not just practicing the tests but having an understanding of the environment they take place in, being able to do them timed etc.</p> | <p>A lot more skills assessments and not only identifying the skills they but the skills they feel they are lacking, college is the time to start looking at skills gaps and how to fill them. The undergraduate programme is only a base of knowledge, certain jobs or industries might expect other skills or experience even for junior positions so it's important for students to have some understanding of where they would like to go with their career A bit more focus on what careers are available or the types of jobs available. This would also be useful at 2nd level when choosing courses</p> |
| 8. Have you used specific teaching strategies that work better in the delivery of Career Development? | <p>Coaching is something that I have used and I continue to you and I feel it definitely works well in an area where a student has to come up with their own thinking behind something. Traditional teaching can be one sided if your trying to get knowledge into the students head. Whereas Career Development is 50/50. Moving to a more facilitator role.</p> | <p>The time given for career development can be short which doesn't allow for what I'd like to be doing with them but I try to use a lot of group work and practical elements where they can work in groups and learn from each other.</p> | <p>Delivering career development is very different than delivering a subject like math's or finance. The students gain the most from experiences, whether that is the lecturer or from their fellow classmates. The lecturers job is the bring about an understanding of how to do things professionally while guiding the student on how to put that together for themselves as a person's success professionally is also driven by their personality</p> |