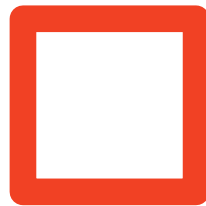


Sarah Alberson

CDI Scotland Student
Conference






My research project

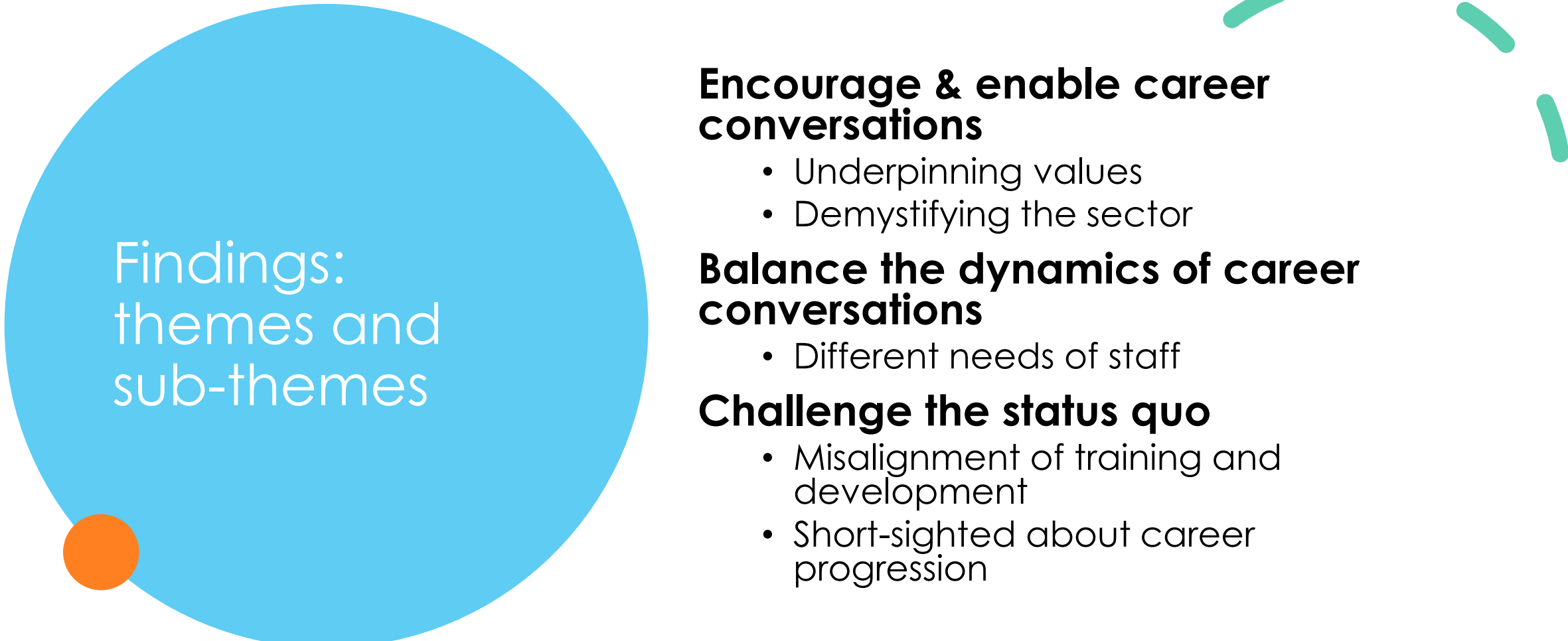
- Completed PGDip at University of the West of Scotland in 2008
- Worked as a practitioner and manager in Scotland & Wales
- Writing a dissertation and completing the Masters had been on the to-do list for a while!
- Career break in 2023 provided an opportunity
- Change of direction and considering occupational psychology
- Organisational career conversations – line-manager perspectives in a public sector context

Introduction & background

- Organisations not confident about their career development strategy but career conversations with line-managers are one of the main ways in which it is carried out (Hirsh, 2021)
- Many studies analyse career conversations, but do not gather the views and experiences of line-managers directly (e.g. Kidd et al 2004 & Bosley et al 2009)
- Improving access to organisational career development can be seen as a social justice issue – careers and employment in the UK are areas with a significant level of social injustice (e.g. Resolution Foundation, 2019)
- Public sector is distinctive in its approach towards staff, but many studies focus on a private-sector setting (Kravariti et al 2022) and the careers of university PS staff is an under-researched area (e.g. Ishaq & Hussain, 2022)

What are the experiences of line-managers in professional services in UK HEIs in holding career conversations?

- Qualitative research
 - Semi-structured interviews with 8 people
 - At least 1 year of line-management experience
 - Recruitment of participants via LinkedIn
 - Inductive thematic analysis of transcripts
- 



Findings:
themes and
sub-themes

Encourage & enable career conversations

- Underpinning values
- Demystifying the sector

Balance the dynamics of career conversations

- Different needs of staff

Challenge the status quo

- Misalignment of training and development
- Short-sighted about career progression

Limitations

- Small-scale qualitative study – not aiming to generalise findings
- Only 1 person on project and carrying out thematic analysis
- My background in career development – 4 of 8 participants also had a career development background
- Personal interest in the topic – aimed to engage reflexively with the research and maintain awareness about any personal connection to the topic including engaging with supervision and constructive feedback

Conclusions

Line-managers value career conversations and feel equipped to hold them

- New dimension by seeking views of line-managers directly. Differs from previous findings using views of employers (Hirsh, 2021). Opportunity for further research to investigate this discrepancy as well as explore the nature of line-management training and how HR professionals and line-managers work together around career development.

Organisational support needs re-evaluation

- New dimension by providing line-managers views about holding career conversations and what support they need to do so effectively.
- Line-managers feel they need more support not in terms of skills and abilities, but in terms of the organisational back-up that lies behind a career conversation. Efforts in the sector could be focused on how organisational career development works in practice including the nature of training and development and how it links to career development, how social justice is promoted and the roles of institutions, line-managers and HR.

Addressing barriers to career progression

- Clear priorities for more strategic thinking and change in the current approach to the career development of professional services staff in UK HEIs - address barriers to progression and nurture skills and potential.



Next steps & learning points

- Encourage everyone in an organisational context to be proactive about their options!
- Relevance to practice and line-management
- Return to study was demanding – but rewarding!
- Hoping to publish a research paper...