

“Change it up, change the system!”



Student march for free tuition 2, Trafalgar Square, London, UK by [Cory Doctorow](#), licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

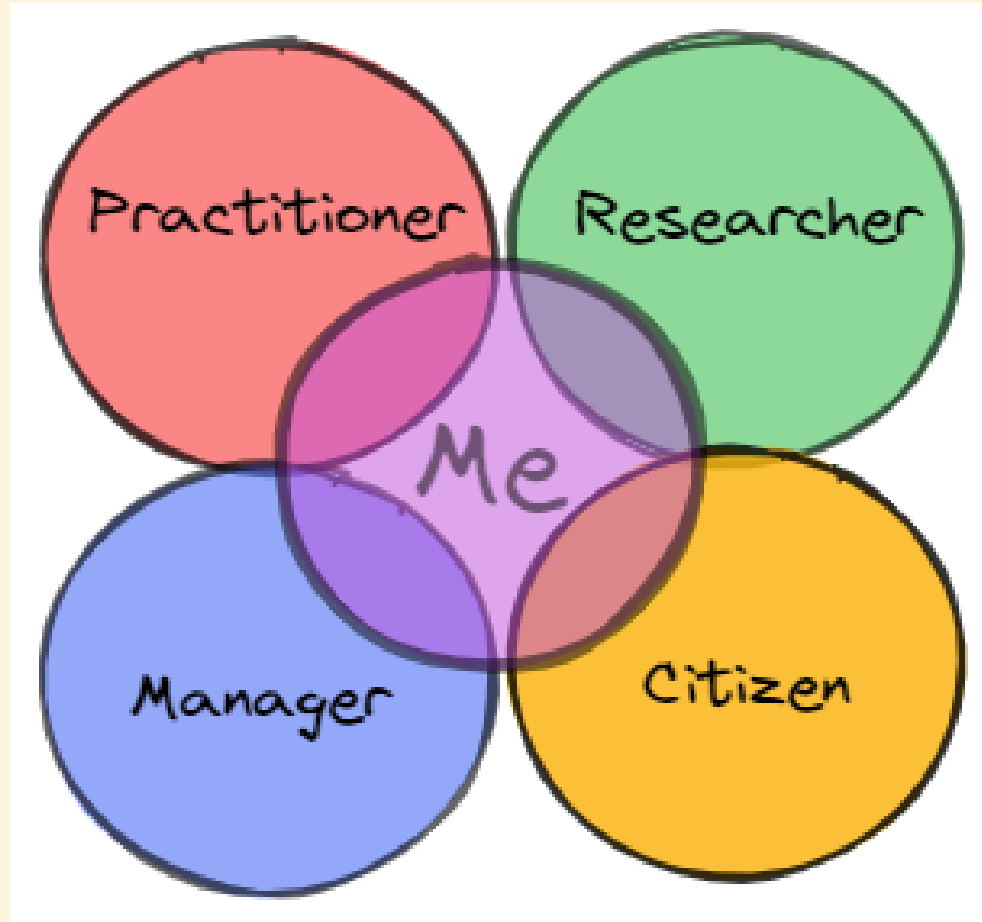
Exploring career development learning and social justice through action research



# Today

- Research question and methodology
- Findings
- Dissemination and impact

# About me







**Core focus on society**

**Core focus on individual**

Change

Radical (social change)

Progressive  
(individual change)

Status quo

Conservative (social control)

Liberal (non-directive)

‘Careers education and guidance is a profoundly political process...It facilitates the allocation of life chances. Within a society in which such life chances are unequally distributed, it faces the issue of whether it serves to reinforce such inequalities or to reduce them.’

*(Watts et al. 1996)*

# Rationale

Social justice and careers: plenty of theory but a dearth of practical examples.

- A key component of practice (Arthur et al. 2013, IAVEG 2013, Christie 2016), but barriers to implementation (Arthur et al. 2009).
- Prominent examples in HE suggest a progressive approach (Watts, Law, Killeen, Kidd and Hawthorn 1996) is the dominant strategy.
- Student engagement – what about the non-careerists? (Tomlinson 2007, also Law 2009) Gen Z?



# Research questions

1. How can I design a career development learning intervention informed by perspectives on social justice?
2. What can I learn about my practice from delivering a career development learning intervention informed by perspectives on social justice?
3. Reflecting on my responses to these two questions, what are the implications for practice?

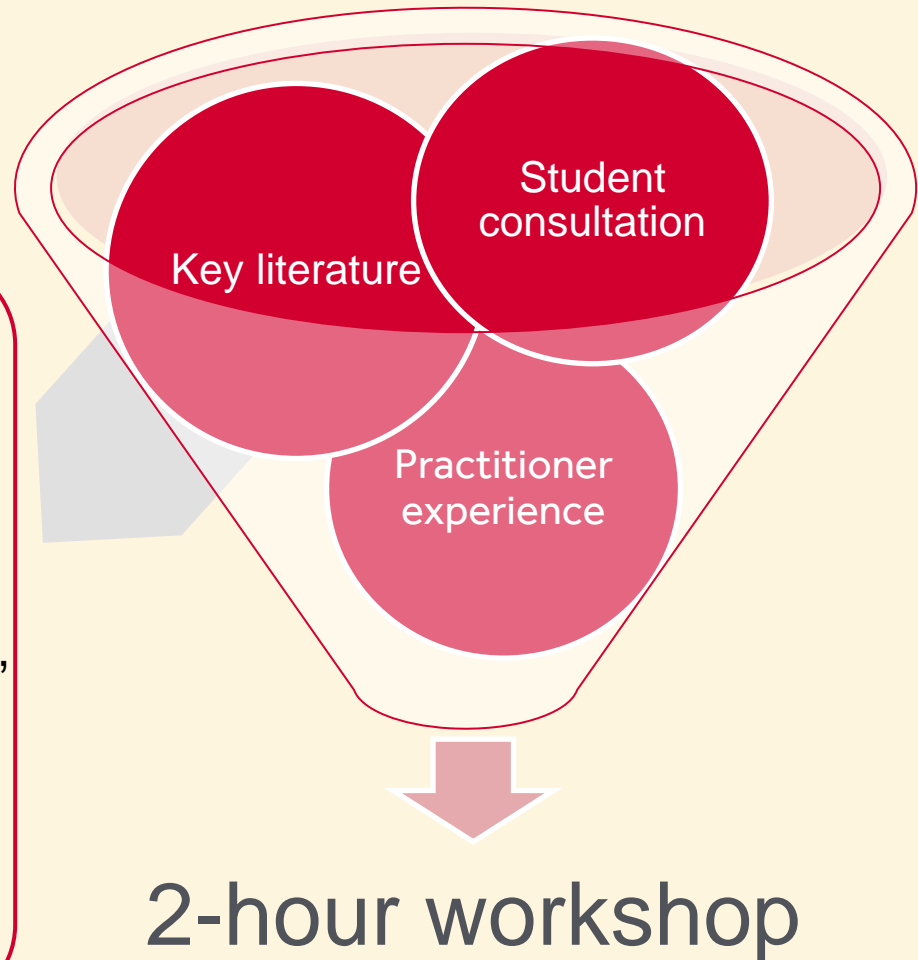
# Why action research as a strategy?

This approach requires the researcher to ‘investigate his or her own practices with a view to altering those in a beneficial way’ (Denscombe 2014).

- Emancipatory research – a focus on bringing about change as part of the research process itself, rather than as an afterthought (Denscombe 2014); ‘critical praxis’ (Hammond and Wellington 2013).
- The ‘action’ in action research is usually done in the interests of others as well as the self (McNiff 2016).
- Neary and Hutchinson suggest that practitioner research should ‘ensure that ‘real world’ challenges are recognised...to maintain the currency of careers practice within a rapidly changing world’ (2009).
- Key features of action research include collaboration, interaction and subjectivity.

# Strategy

- *A critical pedagogy of work education* (Simon et al., 1991)
- *Socio-Political Ideologies in Guidance* (Watts et al., 1996/2016)
- *Career Guidance in Communities: A Model for Reflexive Practice* (Thomsen, 2017)
- Hooley's framework for emancipatory career education (2015)
- Mignot's conceptual framework for anti-oppressive practice (2001)





# Student consultation

Key themes identified included:

- Diversity – the importance of relatable role models;
- Lack of information and tools as a barrier to action;
- Negative perceptions of employer attitudes;
- Focus on individual responsibility to take action;
- Interest in acting for the ‘greater good’.

“Oh, ok... where’s all the females? Aren’t I supposed to be inspired to be like you, but... there’s no-one like me there”

# Workshop design



**Title:** I want to make a difference! Social justice and your career

**Aim:** To increase understanding of social justice as it relates to career and inspire action to promote it.

**Learning outcomes:**

1. Interpret two contrasting narratives about the labour market;
2. Discuss the potential impact of these narratives on themselves and others;
3. Apply strategies of individual or social change to a labour market problem;
4. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies;
5. Propose actions they can take to promote social justice through their career.

**The Gig economy is [redacted]  
[redacted] women [redacted]  
[redacted]**

**Talk to Deliveroo couriers. [redacted]  
[redacted]**

# Impact: participants

Praslova's (2010) criteria:

- **Reaction:** positive, change in perceptions of what 'careers' offer?
- **Learning:** participation, flipcharts, actions on post-its
- **Behaviour transfer:** follow up emails
- **Results?**

Transformative learning.

I enjoyed the debate on individual vs. societal changes.

Look into HeForShe and Lean In. Have a discussion with my friends, (especially male friends) about social justice and gender equality.

Find out the gender pay gap in the property industry. Watch TED talk

What local pressure groups are available in promoting socio-economic justice (e.g. pro investment, anti-austerity?)

"We're just given the resources to go into the world how it is, we're not given the resources to change it...change it up, change the system!! – I think that's really important!"

# Impact: me and my practice

- Collaborative approach to design and learning.
- Harnessing the affective dimension of learning.
- Classroom as 'a site for the interrogating of competing claims to truth' (Simon et al. 1991).
- Applying models and theories to other areas of practice – e.g. student voice/co-creation, anti-oppressive practice
- Team culture
- Advocacy
- Networks and opportunities





# Dissemination & wider impact

## Formal

- External conferences and workshops: NICEC, AGCAS, CDI/NICEC Cutting Edge
- Internal workshops/meetings
- NICEC Journal (now open access!)
- Dissertation available on CDI website (CPD Resources Library, member area)

## Informal

- Career Guidance for Social Justice website
- LinkedIn and social media
- Conversations and networking



# Dissemination & wider impact 2



**Andrea Cox**, Careers Consultant at King's College, London

Action research in partnership with students, reviewing core careers workshop materials through a social justice lens.

# Dissemination & wider impact 3



**Helen Jackson**, school-based Careers Adviser with Skills Development Scotland  
Co-designing a careers intervention with pre-adolescent school pupils who have faced adversity.

# Thank you

**Anne Delauzun**

@AnneDelauzun

[a.h.delauzun@reading.ac.uk](mailto:a.h.delauzun@reading.ac.uk)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/annedelauzun/>

Andrea Cox: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/careercoachcox/>

Helen Jackson: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/helen-jackson-1690a6bb/>



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