



CAREER LEARNING AS A SUCCESS FACTOR FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Guide to Round 1 of Student Panel Sessions

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INTRODUCTION

Underpinning this Guide is the concept of learners as not just key stakeholders, but co-creators of this research. The intention, therefore, is that the Panels should reflect the aims of the project by encouraging reflective thinking, collaborative learning/ decision making and student ownership.

The extent of the ground to be covered by the first Panel and the number of questions to be addressed suggested a sub-division into three sessions, each dealing with one of the themes:

1. Choosing/Making Choices
2. Working Identity/Career Identity
3. Self-Efficacy

This Guide assumes such an approach and presents a suggested format for the first session on Choosing/Making Choices. It is anticipated that a similar approach would be followed in sessions 2 and 3.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR STUDENT PANEL SESSION 1

RATIONALE

The traditional focus group approach to gathering data from students and staff can have a number of drawbacks:

- Reflective thinkers may not have sufficient time to formulate their views before being asked to express them.
- Participants may be reluctant to voice their honest views in front of others, particularly if they do not know one another well.
- More vociferous/confident individuals may dominate the discussion and quieter participants may simply 'go along' with their views.
- In quieter groups, facilitators may be tempted to 'lead' the direction of the discussion.
- The discussion is filtered by a note-taker and the subsequent record created by them.

An alternative approach to data gathering is therefore suggested; one that is in keeping with the social constructivist principles in which this project is rooted. Drawing on Critical Skills/Co-operative Learning concepts, it has the following advantages:

- It makes effective use of a limited amount of time.
- It allows time for individual, reflective thinking which contributes to group discussion.
- It creates opportunities for all views to be heard in an environment in which participants feel safe.
- Participants direct the small-group discussions themselves and the subsequent record is created and owned by them.
- The whole group discussion can be used to probe/clarify responses, producing richer data.

SUGGESTED APPROACH

The approach has a number of stages. Timings are given for a notional session of 120 minutes. Throughout, facilitators should be strict about timings, so that activities remain focused.

In advance of the session:

- Organise a room large enough to accommodate the students moving around tables and coming together for a whole group discussion
- Send the questions to the participants so they have time to consider them in advance (see Appendix 1)
- Prepare a signing-in sheet (see Appendix 2) so that there is a record of who participated (but see note below about stressing anonymity/confidentiality)
- If possible, arrange for refreshments/snacks to be available at a suitable point

On the day:

- Bring along a paper copy of the questions for each participant
- Arrange tables around the room according to the number of questions
- Write each question at the top of a sheet of flip chart paper and place these on the appropriate tables (see Appendix 3)
- Put a coloured marker pen on each table – a different colour for each table

Stage 1: Welcome (5 minutes)

- Thank participants for coming
- Facilitators introduce themselves
- Explain reason for coming together – brief description of project, their role in it
- Explain approach to be taken today
- Stress confidentiality/anonymity/need for honesty

Stage 2: Community builder (5 minutes)

We know that people are unlikely to express themselves honestly if they feel ill-at-ease or fearful of being embarrassed/looking foolish in front of others. So, the purpose of this stage is to help participants to get to know one another, to relax and feel 'safe'. Any quick, simple ice-breaker activity can be used (see Appendix 4 for suggestion).

Even if the group already know one another, it helps to set the tone if the session is introduced with a fun activity.

Stage 3: Divide into 6 small groups (5 minutes)

If it is a small group, this may not be necessary – they can simply work with the one or two people sitting closest to them. In a larger group, you may wish to split the group randomly (see Appendix 5 for suggestions).

If there are 12 or more participants, 6 pairs/groups of 2 or more can be organised and each allocated one of the 6 tables for the carousel activity. If there are fewer than 12, one or more tables will always be empty during the carousel.

Ask each group to appoint a scribe and a timekeeper

Stage 4: Individual reflection (10 minutes)

Many people are reflective thinkers who need time to gather their thoughts before being asked to respond to questions.

In this stage, participants are given the question sheets and asked to spend a few minutes quietly writing down their own responses. Because they have been sent the questions in advance, they should already have considered their responses, so this stage gives them a chance to refocus.

Stage 5: Carousel activity (60 minutes – 10 minutes x 6 tables)

Each group is given a different-coloured marker pen and allocated one of the tables with the flip-chart questions. They share their personal responses to the questions and decide together what they will write on the flip-chart sheets.

Keeping the same coloured marker, they then move to the next question table and discuss their responses to these questions. They also consider the responses given by the previous group; they put a tick beside any they agree with, a cross beside any they disagree with and add any of their own responses that are not already there.

During the carousel activity, the facilitators should move around, listening discreetly, so as to pick up any points of interest/confusion/debate, etc.

60 minutes is a long time for this activity, so you may wish to stop for a short break mid-way.

Stage 6: Whole group discussion (30 minutes)

The facilitator takes the flip chart sheets for Table 1 and displays them where everyone can see. S/he then picks up any points that require clarification or further probing and facilitates the subsequent discussion. It is important to select only these points or the discussion will not move through all the questions in the time available. The different colours make it clear which group made which response and the ticks and crosses make it clear where they agreed or disagreed with one another. This is repeated for all the question sheets.

A second facilitator is needed at this stage to note the points made (this could be a member of the group).

Note: This session may go on for longer if students have a lot to contribute, so good facilitation is important.

Stage 7: Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Thank participants for their time and contribution
- Ask participants to hand in their completed questionnaires – they may later provide supplementary data
- Ask for feedback on what they felt about the session
- Explain what will happen next

After the session:

The facilitators collate the flip chart responses and the notes made during the whole group discussion in a Panel Report (see Appendix 6 for suggested template).

STUDENT PANEL 1

SESSION 1:

CHOOSING/MAKING CHOICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

1.1 Choosing my education/career path makes me/made me ...

	Yes √	No X
Stressed: I think/thought that the task is too heavy, or that I can't do it		
Excited: I think/thought that I will be successful, I am curious, it's something new/fun		
Other (please explain)		

**1.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

2.1 What motives for your choice of education/career path are/were important to you? (Please tick any that apply and give reasons).

	√	2.2 Why was this important to you?
<p>Motives related to my future: (I was influenced by considerations about what I can do with this education, the labour market/job prospects)</p>		
<p>Motives related to my performance: (I was influenced by considerations about what I think I can cope with/be successful in, rather than what I like)</p>		
<p>Motives related to my interest in the content of the course/occupation: (I was influenced by my enjoyment of the area of study, the studying itself, being a student)</p>		
<p>Mixed motives: (I was influenced by a number of factors, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this seems fun to me - my friends/parents do/did this too - the college is nearby) 		
<p>Other motives: (please describe)</p>		

**2.3 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

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**3.1 What are/were your feelings when choosing your course of study/career path?
(Please tick any that apply and comment).**

	√	Comments
I feel/felt unsure of the content of the various choices and of what the alternatives are/were		
I feel/felt paralyzed by having too many choices		
I feel/felt unsure of what the consequences of my choices would be, unsure of what's going to happen		
I was worried about my own competence to make the right choices		
I had no problem at all in making my choices and didn't feel insecure at all		

**3.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

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4.1 While choosing your education/career path, did you ever feel ...

	Yes √	No X	Comments
"My whole future depends on it!"			
"I can't make choices at all!"			

**4.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

--

5.1 Who did you talk to when making your choices about your education/ career? (Please tick any that apply and say what you talked about).

	√	5.2 What did you talk about?
Friends/peers		
Professionals (someone who works in the field/vocation of your choice)		
Guidance staff in school/college		
Other (please say who)		

5.3 What was important in these conversations?

5.4 What was missing in these conversations?

**5.5 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

--

6.1 Do you think you can make a wrong choice when choosing your education/ career?

Yes √	No X	Not sure ?	Comments

6.2 What do you think are the possible consequences of making a wrong choice?

--

**6.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?**

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STUDENT PANEL 1

SESSION 1:

CHOOSING/MAKING CHOICES

CAROUSEL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Table 1, Sheet 1

Choosing my education/career path
made me ...

(e.g. stressed, excited)

Table 1, Sheet 2

How would you like to be helped in
this regard? What could/should
College do?

Table 2, Sheet 1

What motives for your choice of education/career path are/were important to you?

Table 2, Sheet 2

Why?

Table 2, Sheet 3

How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?

Table 3, Sheet 1

What were your feelings when choosing your course of study/career path?

Table 3, Sheet 2

How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?

Table 4, Sheet 1

While choosing your education/career path, did you ever feel:

My whole future depends on it
or
I can't make choices at all?

Comments

Table 4, Sheet 2

How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?

Table 5, Sheet 1

Who did you talk to when making your choices about your education/career?

Table 5, Sheet 2

What did you talk about?

Table 5.3

What was important?

Table 5.4

What did you miss?

Table 5.5

How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?

Table 6.1

Do you think you can make a wrong choice when choosing your education/career?

Table 6.2

What do you think are the possible consequences of making a wrong choice?

Table 6.3

How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?

“Getting to Know You” Community Builder

The Name Game

Everyone sits in a circle and thinks of an adjective to describe themselves – it must begin with the same letter of the alphabet as their first name.

Person 1 “Hello, my name is Anne and I’m amazing”.

Person 2 “Hello, my name is Linda and I’m lovely. This is Anne and she is amazing”.

Person 3 “Hello, my name is Mark and I’m musical. This is Linda, she’s lovely, and this is Anne, she’s amazing”

... and so on round the group so that the last person has to introduce everyone else.

If someone gets stuck, the others help out!

Variation

Everyone has to give themselves a job that begins with the same letter of the alphabet as their first name.

Person 1 “Hello, my name is Anne and I’m an astronaut”

Person 2 “Hello, my name is Linda and I’m a lumberjack. This is Anne and she’s an astronaut.”

Person 3 “Hello, my name is Mark and I’m a mountaineer. This is Linda, she’s a lumberjack and this is Anne, she’s an astronaut.

etc.

Random methods for allocating people to groups.

1 Birthdays

Ask everyone to make a line across the room according to the date of their birthday, from 1 January to 31 December (this also acts as a community-builder as they have to speak to one another to find their place in the line).

Then go along the line giving everyone a number according to the number of small groups you need, so “1, 2, 3, 4; 1, 2, 3 4 ...” for four groups.

Everyone has to remember their number and go to the others with the same number.

Variations:

Ask them to line up according to the letter of the alphabet their surname begins with.
Ask them to line up according to how far/close to the school/college they live.

2 Favourites

Ask everyone to stand in a corner according to their favourite season of the year.
Then just go round the groups allocating each person a number.

Variations:

The possibilities are endless! Group people by their favourite colour, favourite ethnic food, or by hair/eye colour ...

REPORT OF STUDENT PANEL 1

SESSION 1:

CHOOSING/MAKING CHOICES

INTRODUCTION

This report contains the findings for the Student Panel session which took place at

_____ on _____
(name of organisation) (date)

_____ (insert number) students participated in this Student Panel session
and had the following profile:

	Gender		Age	Course/Subject Area
Student 1	M	F		
Student 2				
Student 3				
Student 4				
Student 5				
Student 6 .. etc				

FINDINGS

QUESTION	SMALL GROUP RESPONSES	WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS
1.1 Choosing my education path made me ...		
1.2 How would you like to be helped? What could/should College do?		
2.1 What motives for your choice of education/career path are/were important to you?		
2.2 Why?		
2.3 How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?		

<p>3.1 What were your feelings when choosing your course of study/career path?</p>		
<p>3.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?</p>		
<p>4.1 While choosing your education/career path, did you ever feel ...</p> <p>My whole future depends on it; or I can't make choices at all?</p>		
<p>4.2 How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?</p>		
<p>5.1 Who did you talk to when making your choices about your education/career?</p>		
<p>5.2 What did you talk about?</p>		

5.3 What was important?		
5.4 What did you miss		
5.5 How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?		
6.1 Do you think you can make a wrong choice when choosing your education/ career?		
6.2 What do you think are the possible consequences of making a wrong choice?		
6.3 How would you like to be helped in this regard? What could/should College do?		

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

REFLECTIONS

(emerging points of interest, how well students participated, reaction to the approach, changes for future sessions)