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Author(s): Kettunen, Jaana; Vuorinen, Raimo; Sampson, James P.

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How do Career Practitioners Experience Social Media in Career Services?

Jaana Kettunen

Raimo Vuorinen

James P. Sampson, Jr.

Jaana Kettunen, and Raimo Vuorinen, Finnish Institute for Educational Researcch, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. James P. Sampson, Jr., Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development, the Career Center; Florida State University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jaana Kettunen, at Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, P.O.Box 35, 40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland (e-mail: jaana.h.kettunen@jyu.fi).

Practitioners' Experiences of Social Media in Career Services

Abstract

This article reports findings from a phenomenographic investigation into career practitioners' ways of experiencing social media in career services. Focus group interviews were conducted with 16 Danish and Finnish career practitioners with experience using social media in career services. Four qualitatively different ways of experiencing social media in career services were identified. Social media in career services was experienced as (1) a means for delivering information, (2) a medium for one-to-one communication, (3) an interactive working space, and (4) an impetus for paradigm change and reform. The results suggest that models of career intervention and ways of experiencing social media appear to be intertwined. The hierarchical structure of the findings may serve as a tool that enables career practitioners to deepen their ways of experiencing and understanding social media in career services using the critical aspects that were identified.

Keywords: career services, career practitioners, social media, ways of experiencing, phenomenography

Practitioners' Experiences of Social Media in Career Services

A growing number of career practitioners and career centers are reaching out to individuals and community members in new ways by integrating various social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, into their professional practices (e.g. Dyson, 2012; Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012). To many, social media are simply online tools to share information and to communicate and socialize with one another. In the broader sense, social media is defined as a process where individuals and groups build a common understanding and meaning with contents, communities, and Web 2.0 technology (e.g. Ahlqvist, Bäck, Heinonen, & Halonen, 2010; Kangas, Toivonen, & Bäck, 2007).

An extensive body of literature has examined the role (e.g. Harris-Bowlsbey & Sampson, 2001; Sampson, 2008; Vuorinen, 2006; Watts & Offer, 2006; Watts, 1996) and the use of information and communications technology in career service delivery (e.g. Watts, 2002; Harris-Bowlsbey & Sampson, 2005; Osborn, Dikel, & Sampson, 2011; Sampson & Osborn, in press). Information and communication technologies in career services are continuously viewed as a tool, as an alternative, and as an agent of change in guidance (e.g. Barnes, La Gro, & Watts, 2010; Watts, 1986, 1996, 2010). Due to the relatively recent use of social media in career services, a very limited amount of research has been conducted in this area. Existing literature provides some examples and evidence that social media have considerable potential for career services (e.g. Bimrose, Barnes, & Atwell, 2010; Hooley, Hutchinson, & Watts, 2010a, 2010b; Sampson & Osborn, in press); however, empirical studies on the use of social media in career services and on the effectiveness of social media in career services are limited. Recently, Dyson (2012) provided an example of using Facebook in career services, Hooley (2011) explored the phenomenon of careers blogging, and Osborn and LoFrisco (2012) investigated university career

centers' use of social media. Osborn and LoFrisco (2012) found that many career centers have

increased their use of such social media tools as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The three

most common ways of usage were to provide students with career-related information, to

connect with students, and to promote career services. Social media can also be used to develop

job networks (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013).

Social media is fast becoming as much a necessity as an opportunity in career services,

and practitioners' competency to work in this new mode is an area of increasing importance (e.g.

Bimrose, Hughes, & Barnes, 2011; Osborn et al. 2011). A recent study revealed that models of

career intervention and the ways of conceptualizing social media appear to be intertwined

(Kettunen, Vuorinen, & Sampson, 2013). The findings indicated that, if the career services sector

is to take advantage, to be innovative, and to fashion novel career service delivery formats

afforded by new technologies (e.g. Hooley et al., 2010a, 2010b; Watts, 2010), it is necessary to

support professionals in their understanding of the various social media tools and the ways in

which they could be incorporated into existing practices. To do so, more detailed research on

career practitioners' experiences with social media and its influence on career professionals'

practice are needed.

Consequently, the present study examines how career practitioners experience social

media while using it in career services. The aim is to discover and describe the qualitative

variation in the ways of experiencing the phenomenon. The study was guided by the following

research questions: (1) What are career practitioners' ways of experiencing social media in

career services? (2) What are the critical aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying ways of

experiencing social media in career services? This study lent itself to a qualitative research

methodology known as phenomenography (e.g. Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997) that is

specifically designed to investigate the qualitatively different ways in which people at a

collective level experience or conceptualize a particular phenomenon, in this case social media in

career services. The reason for choosing this methodology, and the ultimate aim of describing the

variation in experience, is to expand the understanding of critical aspects in the development and

successful use of existing and emerging technologies in career services.

Method

Participants

Participants were 16 Danish and Finnish career practitioners with experience using social

media in career services. Seven of the sixteen participants were from Denmark and nine were

from Finland (ten women and six men, aged 30-59 years, with career service experience ranging

from two to 17 years). In keeping with phenomenographic techniques (Åkerlind Bowden, &

Green, 2005), variation within the participants was deliberately sought out to maximize diversity

in the ways of experiencing the phenomenon. Emails inviting practitioners with experience using

social media were sent to a national eGuidance center, eVejledning, in Denmark, that provides

service via various communication channels and in social media settings. Emails were also sent

to lists of Finnish professional guidance bodies and training units. Practitioners were self-

identified with experience using social media in career services. Experiences concerning the use

of social media guided the identification and selection of interviewees, and purposeful sampling

(Patton, 2002) was utilized to ensure information-rich cases from which knowledge concerning

the research objectives could be gathered. The aim was to ensure that a sufficient number of

relevant voices were heard (Bowden & Green, 2010). In previous phenomenographic studies, it

has been suggested that, as long as the sample is selected to maximize variation, between 10 and

15 subjects is normally enough to capture the variation (Åkerlind, 2008; Trigwell, 2000). The

study participants represent career and guidance counselors from a variety of settings:

comprehensive, secondary, and higher education as well as public employment services in both

urban and rural settings. All the participants had a masters' degree and were qualified in

accordance with the national certification requirements.

Procedure

Data were collected using the focus group interview methodology (Bogdan & Biklen,

2006, Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Krueger, 1997a, 1997b, 1998). Interviews are the most

common method of obtaining phenomenographic data, although other methods are possible

(Marton & Booth, 1997). Since the aim of this study was to investigate the range of different

ways of experiencing the same phenomenon, focus groups were considered to be an effective

method for encouraging the participants to express their thoughts, views, and experiences

through interacting with each other. Furthermore, focus groups were considered appropriate

because phenomenographic research aims at capturing collective rather than individual accounts

of people's experience of the phenomenon.

Three focus groups, one in English with Danish career practitioners and two in Finnish

with Finnish career practitioners, were carried out between February and May 2012. Each focus

group comprised four to seven career practitioners and was conducted in Finnish by the first

author and in English by the first and second authors, who are fluent in both languages. When

conducting focus groups jointly, the researchers had both individual and shared responsibilities.

One acted as a facilitator and was primarily concerned with directing the discussion and keeping

the conversation flowing. The other managed the recordings and occasionally probed the

response of a participant in more depth. When facilitating the focus group alone, the facilitator

managed the recordings. For quality control, the list of questions and the roles of the facilitator

and assistant were reviewed and discussed prior to the focus group interview.

The focus group interviews were semi-structured and consisted of questions designed to direct the interviewees' focus toward the target phenomenon. Five questions were addressed: What is the role of the career practitioner in meeting career services goals?; What is the role of social media in career services?; What is career service like in social media?; What are the skills needed for social media in career services?; and How can social media be best utilized in career services? The interviews were informal and conversational, allowing the interviewees to reveal their current experience of the phenomenon as fully and openly as possible. Follow-up questions such as Could you tell a bit more about that?, Could you describe it/explain it a little further?, and Could you give an example of it? were used to encourage the participants to elaborate on or clarify their responses. When asking follow-up questions, the facilitator was careful to avoid leading the interviewees' responses. The focus group interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using a phenomenographic approach (Åkerlind, 2005b; Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Pong, 2005). There are various approaches to phenomenographic data analysis concerning whether the focus should be on the whole transcript (Bowden, 1995, 2000) or on quotations that have been extracted from the data (Marton, 1986). The approach taken in this study began with looking at the transcripts as a whole in order to establish interrelated themes and meanings. Subsequently, large sections of each transcript were considered, and excerpts that exemplified variation and meaning were selected. The purpose behind using the entire transcript or large sections of each transcript was to increase accuracy in interpreting the answers (Åkerlind et al., 2005).

The first phase of the analysis focused on identifying and describing career practitioners'

ways of experiencing social media in career services in general terms. Repeated readings gave

familiarization with the data, and by focusing on the similarities and differences in the expressed

meanings, cases of variation or agreement were identified and grouped accordingly. Prior to the

data analysis, no codes were developed. Gradually, by comparing and contrasting identified

similarities and differences, a draft set of descriptive categories for collective meanings was

developed, defined, and named.

The second phase of the analysis focused on delineating logical relationships among the

various categories. Critical aspects—themes that consistently occurred across all categories

representing differences between various ways of experiencing social media in career services—

were identified and used to structure the logical relationships both within and among the

categories (Åkerlind, 2005a). The aim was to reveal one way of seeing a phenomenon in

comparison to another, more complex one (Åkerlind, 2005a; Marton & Booth, 1997).

To ensure a robust analysis of the data, the first author, fluent in both Finnish and English,

initially analyzed them and then a second opinion was sought from research colleagues whom

she met with several times to discuss and revise the categories and their structures so each

category would confirm that the interpretations of the data were valid. Co-authors act as devil's

advocates, probing the category candidates and their critical aspects and asking for justifications

from within the transcripts for the particular formulation. This group process, emphasized by

Bowden (e.g. 2000), made it less likely that analysis would stop partway. This was also a means

to minimize the researcher's individual perspective and to ensure loyalty to the data when

formulating the categories of description. Iterative re-reading and re-drafting was repeated until

saturation occurred, that is, until the re-reading failed to produce any significant change in the

categories of description (Bowden & Green, 2010). All three researchers have experience in both information and communication technologies in career services and in qualitative research. The steps described above were important in ensuring the trustworthiness of the results.

According to Marton and Booth (1997), categories of description should meet three quality criteria: each category should describe a distinctly different way of experiencing the phenomenon; a logical relationship between each category should be hierarchically represented; and there should be a limited, parsimonious number of different categories that describe the variation across the sample. The final phase of analysis made sure that these criteria met the hierarchically structured set of categories of this study.

Results

The analysis of the data revealed four distinct categories of description that reflected career practitioners' ways of experiencing the use of social media in career services (Table 1). Social media in career services was experienced as (1) a means for delivering information, (2) a medium for one-to-one communication, (3) an interactive working space, and (4) an impetus for paradigm change and reform. The formed categories were nested in hierarchies expanding from the least to the most complex understanding. The phenomenal aspects differentiating the categories are called dimensions of variation. They comprise the critical aspects for expanding a more sophisticated or complete level of understanding. These dimensions were named *role of social media, function of social media, attitude, rationale, perception, intervention paradigm, nature of interaction,* and *practitioner's role.* Each category is further detailed below. Excerpts from relevant interview transcripts are included to illustrate key aspects of the categories. It is important to note that this categorization represents collective rather than individual experience of social media in career services.

Description of the Categories

  Category 1: Social media as a means for delivering information. In the first category, social media is experienced as a means for delivering information in career services. Practitioners consider social media as *useful tools* for *delivering information and advice*, but are not convinced of its potential for any other types of guidance intervention.

    "I somehow just always want to remind people that it is just a tool . . ."

    "Mainly I just deliver information there . . ."

    "It gives kind of like, like maybe some kind of instant help . . . but I don't see that any kind of
    deep guidance intervention is possible with it [social media]."

  Practitioners are *reserved* in using social media and use it in accordance with their existing practices. The rationale for using social media in career services is *visibility*. In this category, social media provides an effective way of making information and services more visible to a defined group of people. Furthermore, practitioners believe that social media may serve as a way to lead people to career services.

    "I am there just in case some people try to find me through that channel, so I am involved there."

    " . . . it [social media] expands information delivery enormously. It cannot be known how much a
    message ultimately spreads."

    "It [social media] is used as . . . kind of like the first step to something real/proper."

  Practitioners perceive the use of social media for professional purposes as a *challenge*. These challenges relate to time consumption, to a choice of tools and resources, and to the transparent and open nature of social media, with the primary concern being a perceived lack of

control over content. Practitioners believe that their professionalism is more easily questioned than ever before and are concerned about the accuracy and validity of the information they present.

> "This is a big challenge for traditional career practice . . . you need a bit of encouragement to post your knowledge."

> "The document will stay there in view and you are liable for each word you write or don't write there."

A preference for *individual face-to-face* career intervention is evident in this category. The interaction between a career practitioner and an individual is predominantly described as a *one-way* activity. The practitioner is regarded as an *expert* who provides credible messages and information to the person served.

> "I do feel that being face-to-face is kind of more important."

> "And the fact that writings go somehow through your sieve. You have the possibility to correct the worst distortions from it [Facebook writings] and kind of like look after [students'] writings a bit."

Category 2: Social media as a medium for one-to-one communication. In the second category, social media is experienced as a medium for one-to-one communication in career services. Unlike in the previous category, practitioners consider social media as a *viable alternative* to traditional face-to-face, on-site services, and are using it for *career service delivery*.

> " . . . so people do have possibilities in terms of different ways of utilizing guidance"

> "We use social media to conduct the work we do."

Although social media is recognized as a useful communication channel, practitioners are *careful* in using this media and use it to communicate in a private, closed manner. The rationale for using social media in career services is *accessibility*. Social media provides convenient and *accessible* career services to individuals, in particular to those who may find it difficult to access face-to-face services. The anonymity afforded by social media is also emphasized.

"You really have to think very carefully about how to express yourself, and about what you actually say here, like in writing."

" . . . so that this easy and accessible opportunity for communication is available"

"Anonymity allows them to ask questions they would perhaps not ask in a face-to-face interaction."

In this category, practitioners perceive the use of social media for professional purposes as a *change*. These changes are related to new aspects that social media brings to career service practices, such as how to establish and maintain relationships online and how to do things if and when communication is done via writing. Practitioners must adapt to new ways of doing things and integrate these new practices with traditional methods.

"As a career practitioner, you really have to consider a lot of aspects you are not normally aware of."

"How do I integrate these new practices into an old, established work routine?"

"You separate yourself from the body language . . . you focus on how to do things."

A preference for *individual* career *intervention* is also revealed in this category, with expansion from previous face-to-face interventions to other methods of individual career intervention. The role of the individual has shifted from recipient of information to that of an

active participant in the career service relationship and the *two-way nature of the interaction* is now apparent. The practitioner's role is now regarded as a *reflexive role*. Practitioners assist individuals in understanding, exploring, and overcoming their difficulties.

> "We want them to be able to guide and help themselves reflect, help them find their way."

Category 3: Social media as an interactive working space. In this third category, social media is experienced as an interactive working space in career services. Practitioners consider social media as a *space for career services* and utilize it to empower *collaborative career exploration* among individuals who share a common question or aim.

> "Well, especially through Facebook, it is a strong and growing community and the career services target group uses it—so that made it a somehow obvious direction to go."

> " . . . better than earlier; it [social media] provides possibilities to kind of like bring together people who are wrestling with the same problems and well, er, bring them into the domain of informed guidance and interaction with each other."

These practitioners are *adaptive* in using social media and use it in a semi-open manner. The rationale behind using social media in career services is *interactivity*. Social media provides a way to facilitate interactive communication and information sharing and to experience this exchange among peer group members. Practitioners believe that it can increase awareness of any misunderstandings and displeasure that might exist via interactive communication.

> "I think that social media just like brings it to this new technological environment where discourse can take place."

> " . . . as they share their experiences or their wonderings and questions, we try to get others to comment and by doing so get the maximum out of them about to the topic . . . "

While in the previous category the practitioners considered social media merely as a change in their working practices, here the practitioners perceived social media as an *opportunity* for novel professional practices. These opportunities stem from features of social media that support increased user engagement with both career professionals and career information, such as increased use of interactive and multimedia content. Furthermore, opportunities refer to redirecting the process of career learning toward more collaborative practices.

> "Social media provides kind of like new ways and new dimensions to career services . . . "

> " . . . so maybe that [social media] is one way to move from, kind of like clearly written culture, and maybe widen that a little bit."

In this category, the career intervention shifts from one-to-one intervention to *group intervention*. Individuals are seen as active information developers and sharers *interacting with practitioners and peers*. Although a practitioner guides the discussions, they also recognize and foster a group's own ability to direct and interact among itself. The practitioner's role is regarded as a *facilitator* who ensures that group activities are conducted in accordance with career service delivery goals.

> "In a peer group that works actively, the practitioner may stay more in the background and only give support when needed, at least on some points."

> " . . . the practitioner is to ensure that activities are on track toward specific objectives so that things don't zone out too far from the main point."

Category 4: Social media as an impetus for paradigm change and reform. In this fourth category, social media is experienced as an impetus for paradigm change and reform in career services. Practitioners consider social media as *participatory social space*, where shared

expertise and meaningful co-construction on career issues, *co-careering*, takes place with and among community members.

> "When you go into social media you accept that it is social media, and social media works in social ways."

> " . . . or if you are having difficulties in knowing what to do, you share your thoughts through social media and you'll have reflection from other community members."

Practitioners are *proactive* in using social media and are forging ahead with this new approach to career services. They experiment and use social media through different, innovative ways in an open manner. For these practitioners, the rationale for using social media is *influence*. Social media provides a way to enhance the direct and indirect influence of career services by operating as members and facilitators of communities of individuals. By monitoring and participating in social media, career practitioners can more readily take steps to address and respond to career-related issues.

> "We need to create a completely new way of thinking in there [social media] . . . "

> "So, if you are good at this, you'll have the capability to make something so interesting that other people will like to share it: the questions or the answers . . . And that's how one uses social media for career services on a much larger scale than just spreading good answers and, or, good questions."

Practitioners perceive the use of social media in career services as *reform*. They indicate that the participatory culture fostered by social media forces them to rethink the whole ideology of career practice. This relates to both practice and organizational culture alike. The emphasis has changed to community building, supported through a fresh approach to interaction and communication dependent on citizens' needs.

"This is also changing the rules—career services can't make social media behave as career services would like it to; instead, career services have to change the way career services work so they will work through social media. That is a big challenge because we have to rethink the whole idea of career services. "

"It can't be only information, because then it is just another newsfeed that, you know, they won't even read. There has to be something that keeps triggering them, makes them wanna take a stand for, wanna answer to what we say. We have to challenge them to make it a success. I really think so."

In this category, there is a paradigm shift in the intervention to a *co-constructed intervention*, whereby *community members and the practitioner* are actively *participating and engaging* in conversations where meanings and understandings are co-constructed. The perspective also shifts from the service deliverer and career practitioner, to delivery from the user's perspective—toward career services that enable delivery as an on-demand service.

"We will work under the premise of social media by being social."

"Social media actually is on citizens' terms."

"They are contacting us, not the other way around."

Relationship Between the Categories

The categories of description were delimited from each other and organized hierarchically through dimensions of variation that emerged from the data. Due to the structural hierarchy of inclusiveness, some conceptions can be seen as more complete and more complex than others (Åkerlind, 2005a).

The career practitioners' views of the *role of social media* in career services expanded across the categories of description. In category 1, where social media is experienced as a means for delivering information, social media was generally considered as *useful tools* in career

services. The viability of social media as an *alternative communication channel* was emphasized in category 2, where social media is experienced as a medium for one-to-one communication. A turning point was category 3, as it marked a shift in social media's role from being an alternative channel to being a *space for career services*. In category 4, where social media is experienced as an impetus for paradigm change, practitioners perceive social media as a *participatory social space* where shared expertise takes place with and among community members.

Shifts in the *function* of social media were the transitions from delivering information and advice to co-careering. The most distinctive difference in category 1, in relation to the other categories, was that social media was merely used for *delivering information and advice* whereas in more complex categories social media was presented as also usable for the independent *delivery of career services*. A turning point was again found in category 3, where social media is experienced as an interactive working space, as this marked a change from career service delivery to *collaborative career explorations*. In the most complex category, the emphasis was on *co-careering* where shared expertise and meaningful co-construction on career issues takes place with and among community members.

In terms of *attitude*, the transition across the categories was from reserved to proactive. In the first two categories, where social media is experienced as a means for delivering information and a medium for one-to-one communication, the attitude was clearly more cautious than in the last categories. A shift from *reserved* (category 1) and *careful* (category 2) to an *adaptive* attitude was discerned in category 3, where social media is experienced as an interactive working space. In the most complex category, where social media is experienced as an impetus for paradigm change and reform in career services, attitude moved from reactive to *proactive*.

Shifts in *rationale* for using social media in career services moved from increasing

outreach to enhancing the influence of career services. In the least complex categories, the main

rationale for using social media was to make career information and services *more visible*

(category 1) and *accessible* (category 2) to individuals. A turning point occurred in category 3,

where social media is experienced as an interactive working space, as this marked a change in

the underlying rationale for using social media from enhancing access to enabling *interactive*

communication and information sharing. In the most complex category, the potential for greater

indirect and direct *influence* of career services provided the rationale for using social media.

The *perceptions* regarding the use of social media varied across the categories. In

category 1, where social media is experienced as a means for delivering information, social

media was perceived as a *challenge*. A more neutral stance, perceiving it as a *change*, was

distinguished in category 2. In the most complex categories, where social media is experienced

as an interactive working space and an impetus for paradigm change and reform, social media

was perceived more as an *opportunity* (category 3) and a *reform* (category 4).

Shifts in the *intervention paradigm* were the transitions from individual face-to-face

intervention to a co-constructed model of intervention. The distinct difference in category 1, in

relation to other categories, was an expressed preference for *individual face-to-face* career

intervention. Enhancements from one-to-one interventions to *group interventions* were discerned

in category 3, where social media is experienced as an interactive working space. A shift to a *co-

constructed model of intervention* was discerned in category 4, where social media is

experienced as an impetus for paradigm change and reform.

In terms of the *nature of interaction*, the transition across the categories was from

practitioner-led interaction to individual-led interactions. A practitioner-led, one-way interaction

that positioned the client as a passive recipient was dominant in category 1. A change from one-

way transmission into two-way interaction was discerned in category 2, where social media is experienced as a medium for one-to-one communication. In the most complex categories, the nature of interaction extended to include *many-to-many, peer-group interaction* (category 3) and interaction between *community members* (category 4), with or without a practitioner.

Shifts in the *practitioner's role* appeared as transitions from an expert role to a participating and engaging role. In the first category, the practitioner was seen as an *expert* who provides the credible messages and proper information to individuals. A turning point was category 2, where social media is experienced as a medium for one-to-one communication, as this marked a change from a directive expert role to a *reflexive* role that is based on dialogue with individuals. In the most complex categories greater emphasis was placed on the group's ability to direct and interact among itself. The practitioner's role was regarded as that of a *facilitator* (category 3) who encourages constructive thinking and conversation and is an actively *participating and engaging* (category 4) member of communities of individuals where meanings and understandings are co-constructed.

Discussion

The present study has identified different ways career practitioners experience social media in career services in four distinct categories of description ranging from means for delivering information to an impetus for paradigm change and reform. Eight dimensions of variation were identified: role of social media, function, attitude, rationale, perception, intervention paradigm, nature of interaction, and practitioner's role. The findings show similarities with earlier studies, but they also provide new insight into an understanding of how practitioners experience social media in career services. The main similarities with earlier studies (e.g. Dyson, 2012; Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012) can be found from the first three categories, where

social media in career services is experienced as an alternative medium and an interactive

working space. The findings also further support Watts' (1986, 1996, 2010) earlier observation

that information and communications technology in career services is continuously viewed as a

tool, as an alternative, or as an agent of change.

   The current findings indicate that ways of experiencing social media are interrelated with

models of career intervention. This result is consistent with a previous phenomenographic study

on career practitioners' conceptions of social media in career services (Kettunen et al., 2013).

Ways of experiencing social media solely as a tool/medium for the delivery of information and

services seem to be closely linked to a strong preference for individual, face-to-face, or one-to-

one career intervention. A similar relationship seems to hold between the ways of experiencing

social media as an integral part of career services and a more collaborative model of career

intervention with an impetus for paradigm change and reform. One can see a move toward a

more open professional model (Watts, 2002) and a shift in the locus of control from the experts

to a blend of expert- and user-constructed knowledge (Sampson & Osborn, in press). The most

complex category supports Watts' (2010) notion that the potential of ICT to act as an agent of

transformational change is now greater than ever before. In this category, the participatory

culture fostered by social media was embraced, co-careering was first mentioned, the greater

potential for influencing career services via social media was articulated, the emphasis was

placed on rethinking the whole ideology of career practice, and a more conscious involvement in

communities of individuals where meanings and understandings are co-constructed was

proposed. Barnes, La Gro, and Watts (2010, p. 30) described this paradigm shift as an evolution

from "provider-led" to "user-led" guidance services.

   The findings of this study show that if social media is to play an increasing role in career

services, it is important to expand the awareness of the varying models of career interventions with online technologies. The findings show agreement with the discussion of, for example Hooley (2012), who suggested that it is not sustainable to continue to perceive online technologies solely as a tool; rather, there is a need to see them as an integral part of the social fabric and to recognize that they provide a major context in which career development is enacted.

Successful integration of technology and social media in career services depends not only on the skills or technical facilities available, but also on practitioners' willingness to accept the changes that new technology may bring to service delivery. On the basis of our findings, we argue that it is important to develop pre-service and in-service training of career practitioners and provide them with opportunities to experiment and practice using social media in a broader way. In other words, career practitioners should be exposed in training to situations in which they will become aware of the variations in their current way of experiencing social media and the more advanced ways they may be moving toward. The hierarchical structure of the findings may serve as a tool to enable career practitioners and trainers to deepen their ways of experiencing and understanding social media in career services using the critical aspects that were identified. Since social media may be more frequently integrated into career services, it is important that practitioners function and utilize it in their practice within their scope of comfort and competence.

This study has some limitations. Participation in the study was voluntary and data collected at a single time period may not represent all of the critical aspects from the perspective of the entire career service sector. Further studies on the current topic are therefore recommended. Another intriguing area of future phenomenographic research would be to investigate the issue of the skills and competencies required for development and successful use of social media in career services.

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	CATEGORIES			
DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION	**Means for delivering information**	**Medium for one-to-one communication**	**Interactive working space**	**Impetus for paradigm change and reform**
Role of social media	useful tools	viable alternative	space for career service	participatory social space
Function of social media	delivering information and advice	delivering career services	collaborative career exploration	co-careering
Attitude	reserved	careful	adaptive	proactive
Rationale	visibility	accessibility	interactivity	influence
Perception	challenge	change	opportunity	reform
Intervention paradigm	individual face-to-face intervention	individual intervention	group intervention	co-constructed intervention
Nature of interaction	practitioner $\rightarrow$ individual	practitioner $\leftrightarrow$ individual	practitioner $\leftrightarrow$ individual/group individual $\leftrightarrow$ peers	individual $\leftrightarrow$ community members individual $\leftrightarrow$ practitioner
Practitioner's role	expert role	reflexive role	facilitating role	participating and engaging role