

**Finnish Guidance Counselors' Conceptions of
Career Management Skills**

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ABSTRACT

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The world of work is constantly changing due to various factors including globalization and technological advancements. Responding to this change, career theories and career education paradigm have evolved. The current paradigm emphasizes individual agency and the development of career management skills (CMS). Many countries are increasingly integrating career education in their school curricula and focusing on developing students' CMS. Finnish career education is a leading practice in the world. Yet, there is limited research on how career education is implemented in practice. Since implementation derives from teacher conception, this study aims to explore Finnish guidance counselors' conceptions of CMS.

This is a phenomenographic study intending to discover the qualitatively varying ways participants conceive CMS. Eleven guidance counselors from lower and upper secondary schools were interviewed. During the analysis process, transcripts were read and visited repeatedly to remain faithful to the data. Therefore, the study results stem from the data alone.

The findings show how Finnish guidance counselors conceive CMS. Guidance counselors conceive CMS as (1) information-based knowledge, (2) personal skills development, (3) interpersonal skills development, and (4) autonomous application of skills. These four hierarchical categories are differentiated into five dimensions of variations: understanding of CMS in curriculum, responsibility, teaching practices, evaluation, and attitude. This study contributes to the field of career guidance by providing a tool for practitioners to map and develop their own conceptions of CMS.

Keywords: career management skills, guidance counseling, guidance counselor, Finnish career education, phenomenography

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1 INTRODUCTION

The world of work nowadays is constantly changing due to many factors including globalization and the development of information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, workplace practices are transforming with larger businesses subcontracting work to smaller businesses under increasingly competitive economy, leading to decreased wages, benefits, and job stability for individuals (Weil, 2014). This unprecedented pace and scale of changes in the workforce have rendered various implications. OECD (2016) reported how the nature and skill requirements of jobs have changed in the 21st century. There has been a decline in routine and mid-level skilled jobs due to automation, while an increase in demand for non-routine, interpersonal and problem-solving jobs (OECD, 2016; Roseveare, 2017). Furthermore, with the continuous technological advancement, some pre-existing occupations are disappearing or transforming, leading to job insecurity, while new and unprecedented occupations are being established (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [Cedefop], 2017; Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999). According to a Cedefop survey conducted in 28 European Union (EU) Member States (2017), 43% of adult workers reported witnessing technological changes in the past five years, while “47% have seen changes in working methods or practices” (p. 1).

Responding to such immense changes in the world of work, new career theories have been introduced and the concept of career has evolved. During the 20th century, individuals aimed to fit into a permanent career with employers providing job security for employees. Career matchmaking and assessing person-environment fit were considered important for individuals to find the optimal job (Nauta, 2013). However, with the growing flexibility and instability in the current labor market, individuals are increasingly required to construct their own careers and continually develop the necessary competencies in order to manage career transitions (Savickas, 2013). Career is therefore redefined as an “individual’s lifelong progression in learning and work” (Watts, 2001, p. 211).

In line with the changing paradigm, there has been a shift of focus on how career guidance should be provided in schools. As described by Hooley (2013),

career guidance has developed from taking a remedial and responsive approach to a preventive and proactive approach. It is no longer sufficient to provide career guidance only as a crisis support or mainly during an individual's life transitions. Career education should be given throughout a person's life with the emphasis on developing one's career management skills (CMS).

International organizations and countries around the world have also placed growing emphasis on career guidance. OECD (2003, 2004a, 2004b) and, more recently, Musset and Kurekova (2018) in their OECD working paper have repeatedly reported and underlined the importance of career guidance services for public policy and how these services could improve economic and education systems. Moreover, OECD (2003) has recognized that career guidance should be understood in a lifelong learning perspective and be integrated into school curriculum to develop students' CMS (Musset & Kurekova, 2018). In the European Union (EU), European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) was formed in 2007 through Member State collaboration to "improve lifelong guidance policies and systems" (ELGPN, 2015b, p. 6). In regard to the effect of career education in schools, multiple research conducted from school-based career education shows that comprehensive and quality career education program positively influences students' academic achievement, their college and career readiness and transitions, as well as school climate and retention rate (Hooley, 2014; Hooley, Marriot & Sampson, 2011; Lapan, Gysbers & Sun, 1997). Career education helps build a bridge between students' school life and their future work by adding relevance to their learning.

In Finnish education system, career education is integrated in the core curriculum as a cross-curricular theme from grades one to six, and as a separate, mandatory course from grade seven to twelve. In addition, Finnish national core curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education [FNBE], 2016a, 2016b) emphasizes the holistic development of students' lifelong, transversal competences, including their CMS. Globally, Finnish career education is considered to be an exemplar with its structured, curriculum-integrated approach. However, there is a lack of research on how career education is implemented in practice.

Since teaching practices derive from teacher conceptions, this study aims to explore and answer the following research question: What are Finnish guidance counselors' conceptions of career management skills? This study will contribute to the field of career education by sharing the existing conceptions of CMS among guidance counselors, and lead to possible improvements in the field.

2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER THEORIES

Along with the ever-changing labor market in the twenty-first century, the concept of career, the underlying career theories, and the manner in which career education is provided have evolved. This section will explore and explain the changing paradigm of career theories. Career theories have started with the emphasis on person-environment fit and assisting individuals by increasing their self and occupational knowledge through assessments. The dominating trend nowadays highlights individuals' own agency and their CMS development.

2.1 Career Matching Theories

Since the twentieth century, career theories have been mainly focused on person-environment psychology. Frank Parsons, a social reformer from Boston in 1909, developed a three-step model that became the foundation of this paradigm: first, individuals gain knowledge and understanding of themselves; second, they acquire knowledge on different occupations; third, they use "true reasoning" when analyzing knowledge gained on self and occupations to reach a vocational match (Lent & Brown, 2013; Savickas, 2013). Following Parsons' three-step model, Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) and Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice and Adjustment (Holland's theory) were developed based on person-environment fit psychology.

TWA focuses on the continuous process a person goes through as he or she adjusts to work environment to reach a state of equilibrium (Leung, 2008; Swanson & Schneider, 2013). Equilibrium between person and work environment is established when the person is satisfied in his or her work environment, and at the same time, also fulfills the requirements and satisfies the organization. TWA underscores the importance of measuring the characteristics of person and environment to find the best match and thus reach equilibrium (Leung, 2008; Swanson & Schneider, 2013).

Holland's theory, similar to TWA, looks for the best person-environment fit by analyzing personalities and characteristics of both sides. Holland has

categorized the characteristics of a person into six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) (Holland, 1997). The characteristics of most people and work environments can be described in a three letter code based on their resemblance to the RIASEC types (Nauta, 2013). These codes can help predict the career decisions people make and the interaction between people and their work environments. Holland's theory provides a simple and visible tool for people and work environments to achieve a well-fitted match. Holland's theory is one of the most influential career theories to date. Many career interest assessments and research were built on this theory and RIASEC types, with many career practitioners utilizing these assessment tools in their daily practices (Leung, 2008).

2.2 Career Development Theories

While not diminishing the importance of differential psychology, i.e. how different traits of individuals fit different occupations, Donald E. Super incorporated developmental aspect and self-concept theory into his Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of Careers. Super's theory states that individuals develop their careers over time in their life-span going through five life and developmental stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Hartung, 2013). In their life-spaces, individuals also assume mainly six different life roles: child, student, leisure, citizen, worker, and homemaker (Hartung, 2013). By experiencing life stages and life roles, people develop and implement many self-concepts, which are ideas about themselves in different environments (Hartung, 2013; Leung, 2008). Their self-concepts develop and change over time throughout their lives. The inclusion and emphasis on 'self-concept' in Super's theory has increased individuals' agency in their own career development by describing "individual as the synthesizer of personal data, the interpreter of experience, and the maker of decisions" (Super, 1969, p. 2). Career is not only viewed as a match between person and environment, but also understood in a developmental, changing, and continuous concept.

In Gottfredson's earlier theory of circumscription and compromise, she integrates concepts from person-environment fit, development theory and self-concept theory. The theory of circumscription and compromise states that individuals make career choices by comparing their own self-concepts with the occupational ideas and try to find a suitable match (Gottfredson, 2002). Throughout this process, individuals practice circumscription and compromise of career choices. Children start the process of circumscription, or elimination of vocational choices, since they are young based on the development of their self-concepts through different life stages, namely orientation to size and power from ages 3 to 5, orientation to sex roles from ages 6 to 8, orientation to social valuation from ages 9 to 13, and orientation to internal, unique self from age 14 and onwards (Gottfredson, 2002; Leung, 2008). Youngsters also compromise their career choices by giving up their ideal choice for a more reachable, realistic, and socially acceptable, but less preferred option (Leung, 2008). Gottfredson recognizes the impact of environmental, societal, and cultural factors when individuals make career decisions. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that although these external forces influence individuals' career paths, "Gottfredson assumed that career choice is a process requiring a high level of cognitive proficiency ... and that the person is still an active agent who could influence or mold their own environment" (Leung, 2008, p. 123).

2.3 Career Cognitive Theories

Whereas career matching theories and career development theories are focused on individuals making career choices through person-environment fit and self-concept development over different life stages, career cognitive theories look into how people acquire occupational interest and make career decisions, as well as how career practitioners can help individuals in their decision making process.

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) explores how individuals develop career interests, make career choices, and perform in their careers by analyzing three cognitive-person variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Lent, 2013; Leung, 2008). Self-efficacy beliefs are individuals'

beliefs of their own capabilities, outcome expectations are their presumed beliefs of the consequences after performing an action, and personal goals are “one’s intention to engage in a particular activity or to produce a particular outcome” (Leung, 2008, p.125). SCCT explains its three different models, i.e. interest model, choice model, and performance model, with these three variables. Interest model states that people develop vocational interests when they have high self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations (Lent, 2013). Choice model, building on interest model, states that such interests lead individuals into setting career choices and achieving personal goals; although this process may be fostered or prevented by environmental support or barriers (Lent, 2013; Leung, 2008). Performance model describes how one’s past performance provides individuals with objective and realistic feedback of one’s capability that could help shape one’s self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations.

Another more practical career cognitive theory is Cognitive Information Process Theory of Career Decision Making (CIP). As the name of the theory suggests, CIP assumes that people process information in order to make career decisions. CIP framework is a useful tool for career practitioners to assist individuals to develop self- and occupational knowledge and become better career decision makers (Peterson, Sampson, Lez, & Reardson, 2002). All in all, SCCT and CIP provide career practitioners with valuable inputs to support individuals form interests and goals, and make good career decisions.

2.4 Career Construction Theory

Along with societal and industrial development, the understanding of the concept of career has evolved and incorporated many aspects. Career is increasingly viewed with individuals in the center of its development rather than organizations or employers. “Career construction theory views career as a story that individuals tell about their working life, not progress down a path or up a [hierarchical organizational] ladder” (Savickas, 2013, p. 150). Career construction theory holds a meaning-making narrative approach, stating that individuals construct their own reality in a meaningful way based on individual cognitions

through thinking, processing, and forming ideas from interactions with people and environment (Patton, 2008). Individual agency and individual's capability to "make meaning of their careers" is highlighted in this theory (Savickas, 2013, p. 147). Savickas explores further on Super's self-concept theory by describing individuals as active actors, agents, and authors of their own career narratives (Savickas, 2013). Through constructing their own career stories, individuals find meaning, passion, and vocational directions to lead their careers (Savickas, 2008). Career is not only a job or an occupation a person holds, but a story that continues on throughout a person's life. Career, therefore, takes on a lifelong perspective.

Building on career construction theory, as well as other construction theories, Savickas et al. (2009) developed a life-designing model for career intervention. This model provides career counselors with a model that focuses on individuals' dynamic career narratives in this changing world of work. Life-designing model presupposes the following about people and the world of work: environmental instability, emphasis on how to manage instability, non-linear and flexible progressions, continuous construction of one's subjective realities, and modeling from individual's personal patterns (Savickas et al., 2009). With these presuppositions, life-designing models takes on a "life-long, holistic, contextual, and preventive" (p. 244) approach to support clients to better adapt to change and narrate their own career and life stories, while taking activities to design and build their lives (Savickas et al., 2009). This model looks at how career counselors could benefit clients in their own life-design. While acknowledging individuals' dynamic interaction with the environment, the model strongly believes in individuals' responsibility to construct their own career and identity, with career counselors' support.

2.5 Twenty-first Century Theories

As described in the introduction, twenty-first century world of work is continuously changing. New jobs are being created while older occupations are being replaced by technology. There are more temporary and flexible jobs with less stability and job security. In response to the more recent changes and the

focus shift in career theories, career researchers developed new theories and models to help individuals better manage their careers.

In their Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC), Bright and Pryor recognize the unstable labor market and highlights four constructs: complexity, change, chance, and construction (Bright & Pryor, 2011). It states that people and environment are complex with constant and dynamic changes, which produces chance events for individuals. Individuals should actively construct their own future career under these circumstances (Bright & Pryor, 2011). Krumboltz's Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT) also focuses on chance events and how people can learn from such events in their career development (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). HLT recognizes that unplanned, chance events are inevitable in people's careers. Therefore, career should not be merely about finding and making a single career decision or matching personal and occupational characteristics. Instead, HLT aims to help people construct a more satisfying life by highlighting the importance of learning the skills needed to create and capitalize on unplanned events, and transforming these chances into new learning opportunities in people's careers (Krumboltz, 2009). Hope-centered model of career development (HCMCD) suggests a more detailed list of attitudes and behaviors for individuals to effectively manage their career flow. The list includes hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting/planning, and implementing/adapting (Niles, 2011).

All three models and theories discussed above bring new insights and creative ways for career practitioners and individuals to understand the changing nature of the current world, adapt and learn from unpredicted events, and become active agents in managing one's own career.

2.6 Integrative Approach in Career Theories

Amidst the paradigm shifts and evolution in career theories, there is an increasing emphasis for an integrated and holistic approach to this topic. As several researchers (Hesketh, 1985; Patton, 2008; Super, 1992) stated, essential aspects from each career theory should be converged in order to explain the

complex nature of career behavior and development. One of the integrative frameworks could be the Systems Theory Framework (STF).

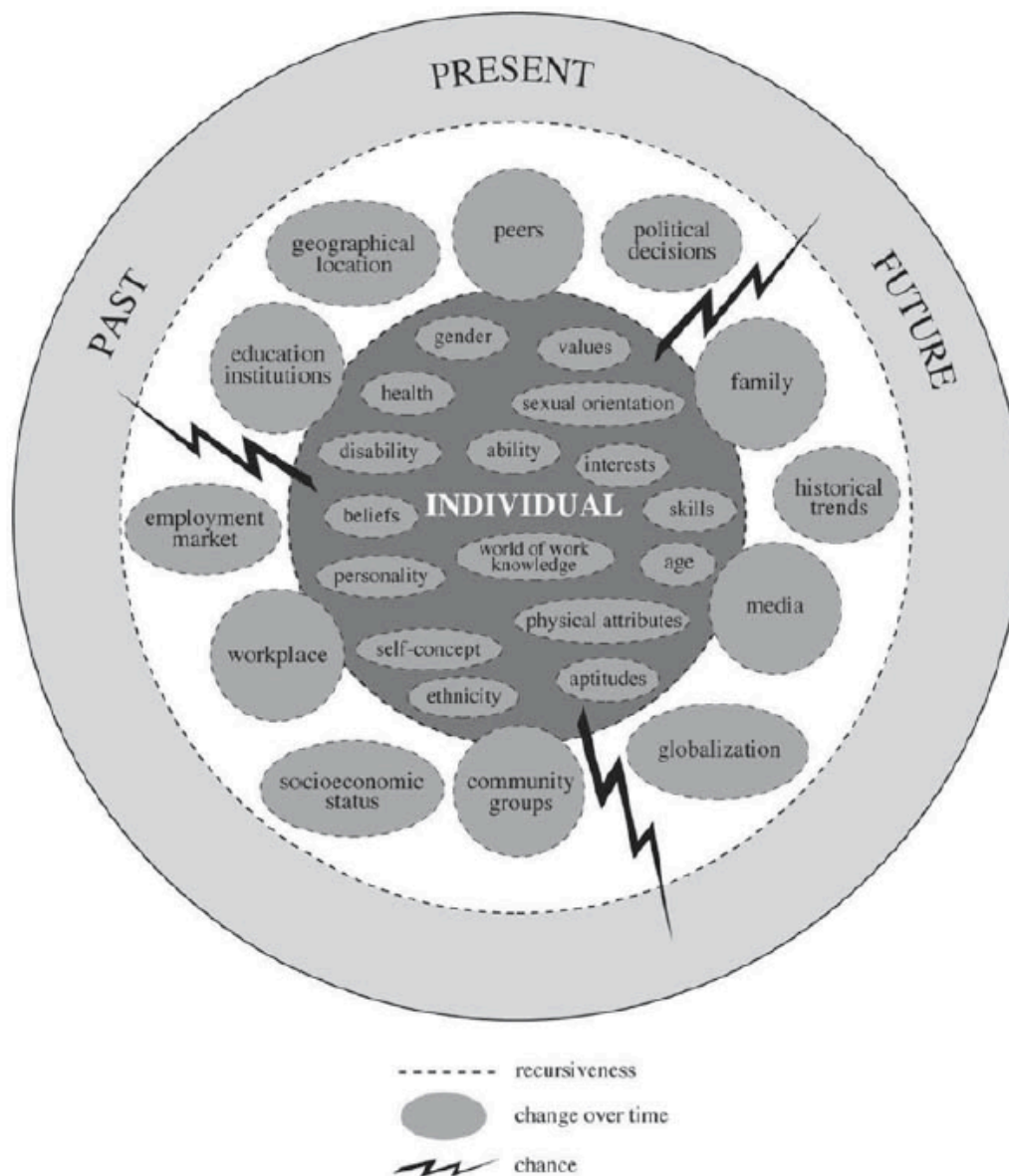


FIGURE 1. Systems Theory Framework (Patton, 2008, p. 146)

STF, although not strictly a career theory, could explain aspects of career development in a constructivist perspective. STF puts individuals in the center of its framework with social system and environmental-social system surrounding the individual. Elements from each system works interdependently with one another. As shown in Figure 1, individuals are understood as a whole, including their ability, personality, interests, skills, self-concept, ethnicity, etc.

Social systems include other persons, groups, workplaces and organizations, whereas environmental-social systems are the historic, global, political, socioeconomic, and other larger factors. STF highlights the recursiveness, or the “non-linear, multidirectional... dynamic, [and] fluctuating process” (Patton, 2008, p. 144), of each element, recognizes how each aspect of the system changes over time, and includes chance events in its framework. Moreover, STF is constructivist in that individuals are viewed as active agents making meaning and stories of their lives through interactions with other systems (Patton, 2008). Thus, STF provides a holistic and integrated approach that encompasses the existing theories.

2.7 Rethinking Career in an Inclusive Framework

Career theories today have evolved into putting their main emphasis on individual agency. Under this new paradigm, it is important to point out Irving’s concerns on the current career theory shifts.

Irving (2010) states that career should be re-positioned in an inclusive and socially just framework. As described above, the concept of career nowadays is construed holistically with the main attention and focus bestowed upon individuals and their self-management ability. Irving (2010) contends that putting the sole responsibility of career construction on individuals, without fully considering the environment or understanding the interaction with one’s community, could engender inequity and injustice. He further asserts that there are inevitable and uncontrollable economic and social barriers, discrimination, and oppression due to inherent differences such as ethnicity, gender, race, social class, etc. Critical reflections on these matters, along with discussions on how individuals’ career construction may be influenced or impeded by these factors, are crucial.

To conclude, career theories have developed from focusing on information and person-environment fit to emphasizing individual agency and skills. The development in theories, which are influenced by the changing society, in turn impacts how career education is provided in schools.

3 THE SHIFT IN CAREER EDUCATION PARADIGM

This section will explore the change in career education in schools as they put more emphasis on students' CMS development in a lifelong perspective. In addition, the influence of ICT in career education and services is discussed.

3.1 The Change in Career Education

The manner in which career education is provided reflects the underlying career theories. Career education based on career matchmaking theories, i.e. TWA and Holland's theory, focuses on providing assessments based on RIASEC codes with main intervention through counseling during students' transition phases. Jarvis (2003) referred to such practice as the old model, as it assumed that individuals would know and decide their lifetime career in advance by finding the best person-environment fit. The new model, on the other hand, is based on career construction theories and takes a career management approach. It recognizes the changing labor market and urges individuals to learn, develop and acquire CMS (Jarvis, 2003). Individuals are responsible for their own careers (Savickas, 2008), and developing CMS will help them make well-informed choices during every transition. Career education, in many countries, has followed the new career theory paradigm, and developed its services to support students' career construction with a holistic and lifelong perspective (see European Commission, 2018; ELGPN, 2015a; Holman, 2014; Sultana, 2012).

This shift in career guidance paradigm is not only driven by the changing world of work and career theories, but also by policy makers, nationally and globally. OECD (2003) emphasizes the importance of career guidance with the following rationale:

1. It can improve the efficiency of labor markets and education systems.
2. It supports key policy objectives ranging from lifelong learning to social equity.
3. It enables people to build human capital and employability throughout their lives (p. 43-47).

When explaining the third rationale, OECD (2003) specifically mentions CMS development as central to building human capital and employability. Following OECD's reports in early 2000s, ELGPN was formed in 2007 to enhance lifelong guidance policies in Europe, with one of its main focus being CMS acquisition (ELGPN, 2012, 2015b). ELGPN (2015a), driven by the EU Council 's Resolution (European Council, 2008) that explicitly recommends CMS integration in teaching and learning programs, stresses that CMS should be incorporated in education curricula in order to engage students with their learning and better prepare them with the skills needed to face changes and instability. More recently, European Commission (2018) proposed eight key competences for lifelong learning; one of which is 'personal, social and learning competence' including "lifelong learning strategies and career management skills" (p. 51). Career education nowadays focuses more on students' competence development, especially their CMS.

3.2 ICT Impact on Career Education and Services

Along with the emphasis on CMS, it is important to recognize the impact ICT has on career services. Throughout the past five decades, career services have been gradually and increasingly influenced and shaped by technology. The role of ICT in career services have expanded from merely a supporting role "for facilitating communication and disseminating information" to a "tool for collaborative construction of knowledge" (Kettunen, 2017, p. 20). Moreover, ICT is becoming more essential in career services as it provides individuals with valuable career information, increases learning experiences using ICT, helps construct knowledge on self through online platforms, and enhances communication (Barnes, La Gro, & Watts, 2010). There is more potential for ICT to help transform career services to become more user-focused and integrated (Kettunen, 2017).

In Kettunen's (2017) phenomenographic studies on "career practitioners' conceptions of social media and competency for social media in career services" (p. 28), she identifies five varying conceptions in a hierarchical order, namely passive approach, information approach, communication approach,

collaborative career exploration approach and co-careering approach. Across the five approaches, the nature of interaction between practitioner and individual evolves from practitioner-led approach to practitioner and individual interaction. Then it expands to include individual and peers interaction and becomes individual-led approach in the highest category (Kettunen, 2017, p. 39-41). To elaborate more in detail on the last two approaches, collaborative career exploration approach emphasizes “a shift in locus of control from expert knowledge to a blend of expert- and user- constructed knowledge” (p. 47). Co-careering approach expands this shift in roles further by the practitioner becoming “a participant in the [guidance] process” (p. 47). Kettunen’s (2017) studies provide a framework to understand guidance practitioners’ conceptions on social media in career services.

4 CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS

This section delves deeper into CMS by exploring the definition and significance of this topic as well as the current inadequacies in CMS programs. Existing research on CMS is further discussed, including how it is perceived in the Nordic context and career practitioners' awareness and practices of CMS.

4.1 Definition and Significance of CMS

The definition of CMS varies in different countries based on their political and cultural contexts and national education systems (Sultana, 2012). ELGPN's definition of CMS is understood and adapted by many. ELGPN defines CMS as:

A range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyze, synthesize and organize self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions (ELGPN, 2012, p. 21).

CMS includes knowledge and skills necessary for personal, learning, and work management. With the push towards integrating CMS in school curricula, a few countries have developed their own CMS frameworks to provide more structure and details on what skills individuals should develop and how they could manage their careers (Hooley, Watts, Sultana, & Neary, 2013; Neary, Dodd, & Hooley, 2015). Most CMS programs and content are in line with Law and Watts' DOTS framework, i.e. decision learning, opportunity awareness, transition learning, and self-awareness (Law & Watts, 1977; Sultana, 2012). ELGPN (2015a) stresses that the language and concepts used in CMS frameworks should be thoroughly understood by the practitioners who are implementing the frameworks. Despite the importance given to CMS integration in education, many countries do not have frameworks to implement CMS in their curricula (Sultana, 2012). Furthermore, although CMS is supported in the theoretical and policy levels, there is a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of CMS programs in relation to employability (Sultana, 2012).

Not only is building a formal framework important for students' CMS development, having qualified practitioners to implement CMS is crucial. ELGPN (2015a) emphasizes that guidance professionals should be well-trained and understand this topic personally through professional development. Guidance professionals should also be able to guide and cooperate with other stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and external providers, for students' holistic CMS development (Musset & Kurekova, 2018). However, it is reported that currently guidance practitioners are not receiving enough training and professional development for CMS provision (ELGPN, 2015a; Sultana, 2012).

4.2 CMS in Nordic Context

Although the term and abbreviation CMS is used in Nordic countries, Thomsen (2014) reports the difficulty of translating this terminology into different Nordic languages. In fact, she writes that "outside of professional guidance circles, CMS is difficult to understand" (p. 26). She recommends to use the term career competences instead to refer to "competences for self-understanding and self-development" (p.26). Career learning leads to the development of these competences.

Career learning theory extends the existing DOTS framework by establishing learning into four levels: sensing, sifting, focusing, and understanding (Law, 1999). Learning starts from sensing information, to sifting them into patterns, then focusing on the specifics that draw attention, and finally understanding the cause and effect and the consequences of different actions based on the information (Law, 1999). Relating career learning to career education provided in Nordic contexts, Thomsen (2014) notes that practical experiences in career activities generally do not go beyond the first level of career learning, i.e. sensing and gaining experiences. She states that there is potential to explore these activities further to achieve the higher levels as stated in career learning theory.

4.3 Previous Research on CMS

Neary et al.'s (2015) surveyed 222 guidance practitioners, trainers, managers, teachers, and lecturers and interviewed focus groups from six different countries to understand their CMS awareness and practices. Their research showed that a majority of the respondents agreed that CMS is very valuable and should be in the center of guidance practices. Respondents' understanding of CMS skills was similar to those competences described in DOTS framework (Law & Watts, 1977). However, there were about a quarter of survey respondents who replied having limited knowledge of CMS. Most of the countries that were represented did not have a CMS framework, or were developing frameworks at the time of the survey. Respondents also shared that there was a stronger need for adequate practitioner training. Concerning CMS assessment, more than half of the respondents reported that they assess CMS through observation, portfolios, assignments, and so on. Neary et al.'s (2015) project shows that more work need to be done in regard to CMS framework, implementation, and practitioners' training on this topic.

Although not diminishing the positive impact (Musset & Kurekova, 2018) that CMS programs could bring to students' career development, Sultana (2012) reflects Irving's (2010) concern that over-emphasizing individuals' CMS development could lead to putting the blame on individuals for their unemployment, despite the fact that some problems stem from various contextual and structural factors. Thomsen (2014) also states that "focusing on career competences does not result in an individualization of societal problems" (p. 17). As important as individual agency and CMS development are, it is essential to recognize the environment in which individuals are located and learn to overcome or work with the contextual barriers.

5 FINNISH CAREER EDUCATION

As the study is focused on guidance counselors in Finland, this section will focus on the Finnish national core curriculum and how career education is structured in Finnish education system. In addition, more elaboration will be provided on the tasks, objectives, and content areas for grades seven to twelve, the grade levels in which this study is conducted. This section will also examine the effectiveness of Finnish career education and how it is referred to globally. At the end of this section, research gap in Finnish career education will be discussed. The term 'guidance counseling' will be used instead of 'career education,' as the former term is used in the Finnish national core curriculum.

5.1 Finnish National Core Curriculum

The Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998 and General Upper Secondary Schools Act 629/1998 state that every student is legally entitled to receive guidance counseling during their school days. Under these legislation, Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 and National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2015, which are the new curricula that came into effect in 2016, have stated the task of guidance counseling during students' nine years of compulsory education and three years of upper secondary school as following:

to promote the pupils' growth and development to allow the pupils to improve their capabilities for study and interaction skills and to acquire knowledge and skills needed in life (FNBE, 2016a, p. 475).

to support the students in their upper secondary school studies and to ensure that the students accumulate sufficient skills and knowledge needed in transitions and changes of life, including moving on to further studies, entering the world of work, and becoming full and active members of society (FNBE, 2016b, p. 228).

Guidance counseling takes on a holistic perspective and emphasizes students' well-rounded development of their study and social skills, as well as acquisition of knowledge and skills for future working life. Students are placed in the center as active agents of career development. Moreover, it is important to note that, in

addition to the task stated above, the curriculum highlights students' development of seven transversal competences in a lifelong context through their nine years of basic education. These transversal competences include thinking and learning to learn; cultural competence, interaction and self-expression; taking care of oneself and managing daily life; multiliteracy; ICT competence; working life competence and entrepreneurship; and participation, involvement and building a sustainable future (FNBE, 2016a). Upper secondary school curriculum also includes cross-curricular themes similar to the transversal competences mentioned above. Students build these competences through learning each subject content, receiving guidance from school teachers and guidance counselors, and interacting with others in school environment throughout their educational career.

5.2 Guidance Counseling Structure

Guidance counseling is provided as a continuum from pre-primary school to further studies in Finnish education system (FNBE, 2016a, 2016b). In each level, guidance counseling is structured differently. Figure 2 depicts the personnel in charge of guidance counseling in each level of schooling and the methods used to promote students' development.

During grades one to six, guidance counseling is integrated in school subjects and activities. All teachers are responsible for students' well-rounded development. From grades seven to nine, students have access to career guidance through weekly lessons, which totals up to 76 hours, in-depth personal and group counseling, and introduction-to-working-life experience, which is a week-long work experience during grades eight or nine (Centre for International Mobility [CIMO], 2012; Vuorinen, 2015). Guidance counselors hold the main responsibility at this stage (FNBE, 2016a). During grades ten to twelve in general upper secondary schools, 76 hours are allocated for guidance counseling to help students with selecting subjects, planning study programs, developing study skills and learning techniques, and managing transitions after upper secondary school (CIMO, 2012).

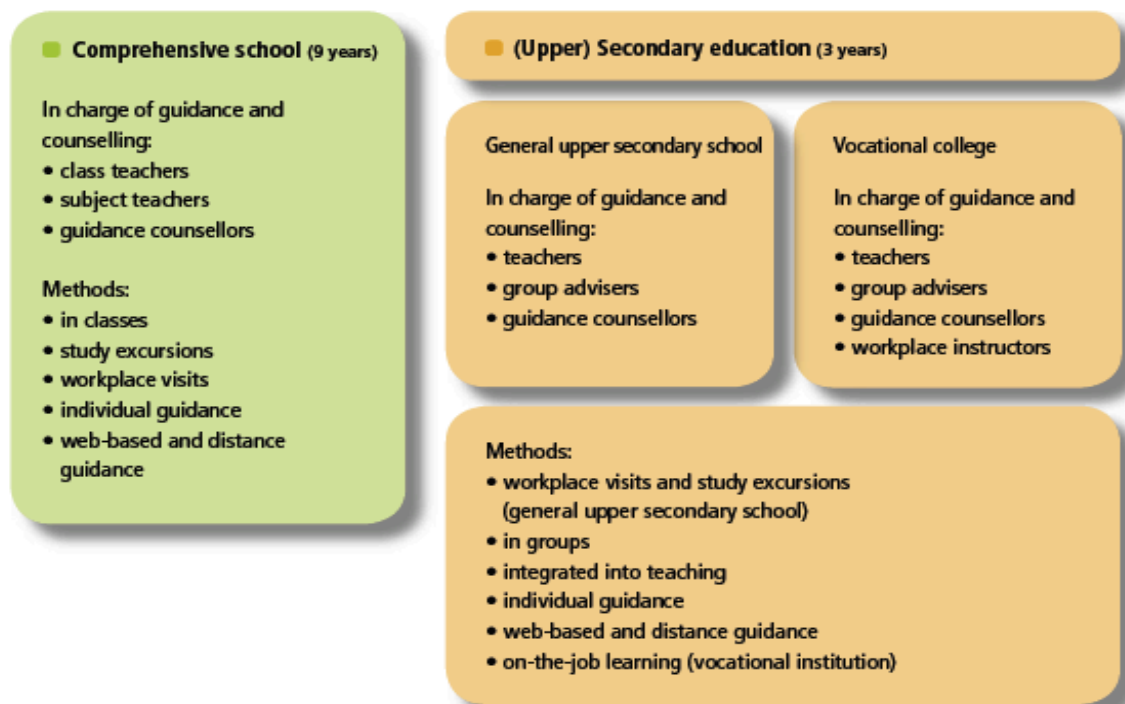


FIGURE 2. Guidance Counseling in Finnish Schools (CIMO, 2012, p. 24-25)

Students also develop their individual study plans, matriculation examination plans, plans for further studies, and career plans with support during their upper secondary school period (FNBE, 2016b). Guidance is considered a shared task with the entire school staff with the guidance counselor holding the main responsibility (FNBE, 2016b). In vocational colleges, until 2017, schools are required to put at least 1.5 credits for guidance counseling, provide personal and group counseling, and draw up an individual study plan with each student (FNBE, 2010). From the beginning of 2018, the new legislation on vocational education and training (673/2017) requires that in each 3-year program, there is a compulsory 1 credit module, which equals to 25 to 30 hours of work, on CMS development.

In Finland, the National Agency for Education establishes the overall goal, while local municipalities have the autonomy and responsibility to implement services. As Finnish education system is decentralized, each municipality and school design their own guidance counseling plan of the school, which “describes the structures, operating methods, division of duties and responsibilities and cross-sectoral networks that are needed to meet the objectives of guidance

counseling” (FNBE, 2016a, p. 476). The local plan must include how schools will cooperate with the labor market (Vuorinen, 2015). This is implemented through connecting different subject content with the world of work, visiting workplaces, inviting labor market staffs to classrooms, sharing information on various occupations, and the abovementioned first-hand working experiences (Vuorinen, 2015).

5.3 Guidance Counseling in Grades Seven to Twelve

The objective of guidance counseling for grades seven to nine is to foster students’ abilities and skills, including decision making skills, so that they can adjust to their changing life circumstances, and to support their educational and career transitions (FNBE, 2016a). Under this objective, the national curriculum lists out eight objectives of instruction and five content areas for guidance counseling. Objectives include the following: participation and being active, learning-to-learn skills, lifelong learning, self-knowledge, setting goals, working-life-oriented learning, utilizing education and working life knowledge in the pupil’s personal career planning, and multiculturalism and internationalism (FNBE, 2016a). In order to achieve these objectives, five key content areas are chosen: learning and studying, self-knowledge and lifelong career planning, skills needed in studies and working life, introduction to working life, and planning and applying for further studies (FNBE, 2016a). Each objective and content areas are also linked to the development of students’ transversal competences. In addition, special attention is given to students who need more support. Assessment of guidance counseling classes is not based on grades, but given through self-assessment, reflection, and constructive feedback (FNBE, 2016a).

Guidance counseling during grades ten to twelve includes two mandatory courses, namely ‘I as a student’ course and ‘Further studies and the world of work’ course (FNBE, 2016b). Both courses have life management skills in their core contents and objectives (FNBE, 2016b). The main emphasis of guidance counseling for grades seven to twelve in Finnish education system goes far beyond support merely during transition phases. It underlines the importance of

students' skills and competence development to face the changing self and work environment. Career education in Finland, therefore, reflects the constructivist and holistic perspective in career theories.

5.4 Effectiveness of Finnish Guidance Counseling

The effectiveness of Finnish career education is recognized through Sweet, Nissinen and Vuorinen's (2014) analysis report of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012's career-related questions. Through examining PISA data, they found that 'perceived career development competence' is strongly correlated with 'participation in career development activities' (p. 15). Among the 22 countries that participated in this optional PISA questionnaire, 15 year olds in Finland are shown to have one of the highest perceived competences and participation levels. In addition, the analysis shows that "school was seen as substantially more important than out of school sources" in Finland (p.17) compared to all the other countries. Although the report found that students' individual attributes play a significant role in their development of career competences, well-developed career services in school systems can have an impact as well (Sweet, Nissinen, & Vuorinen, 2014).

Finnish career education is considered to be one of the leading practices around the world. Researchers have found that curriculum-integrated, whole-school approach to career education to be the most effective and beneficial for students' holistic development (Holman, 2014; Hooley, Marriott, Watts, & Coiffait, 2012). ELGPN (2015a) reports that career education in Finland is integrated and embedded in the education curriculum. It further states that Finnish career education has the experiential and practical learning component for students to gain field experience in the world of work. This has been successful due to the cooperation between schools and other partners in the field of education, training, and work. Holman (2014) reiterates ELGPN's evaluation on Finnish career education, where he shares that Finland's stable career program is understood by all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, and employees, and is led by qualified and thoroughly trained guidance

counselors. These guidance counselors provide strong individual guidance for their students. In addition, he states that Finnish teachers increase relevance of studying by linking curriculum teaching and learning to career and labor market. Sultana (2012) also highlights that CMS are taught as a separate, compulsory subject and in a cross-curricular manner in Finland with firm teacher cooperation.

5.5 Research Gap

Despite the international recognition of its exemplary career education structure, there is a lack of research and discussion on how career education is implemented and practiced in respective schools. As described above, Finnish education is highly decentralized, which means that schools and teachers have autonomy on the actual planning and implementation in the classrooms. Hence, although the overall structure and objectives of career education are well defined in the national curriculum, the details of its implementation are not well documented. Implementation of activities depends on teacher conception of the phenomenon, that is to what extent career teachers, i.e. guidance counselors, understand the change of the world of work, career paradigm, career education, and CMS. Responding to this gap in research, this study aims to shed light on Finnish guidance counselors' conceptions of CMS.

6 RESEARCHER DISCLOSURE

After exploring the existing theories on career, the researcher has developed her theoretical lens on this topic. Researcher's perspective aligns with those advocating for a more integrative approach in career theories. Individual agency and self-management is crucial in this unpredictable environment. Thus, individuals should strive to develop the necessary skills to support their own career construction. However, one should not overlook the social, economic, political, and other environmental influences that could hinder one's career construction. Therefore, career and career construction are viewed as dynamic, flexible, and lifelong processes, which could also be unstable and contingent upon the larger system in which individuals are situated. Following this lifelong and constructivist perspective, career education should be provided throughout a student's education, not merely during their transition phases.

In addition, during researcher's internship at an education organization, she analyzed the existing career education systems in different countries around the world. This helped her to build an understanding of how career education is provided and the focus each country and its education policies put in its systems. This led to the researcher developing a perspective of how the most effective career education system could and should look like. Researcher is aware of her own bias developed through previous experiences and pre-conceived ideas on career theories. In order to eliminate and avoid such bias, this study has been designed carefully so as not to impose researcher's thoughts on research participants. More details on research methodology are explained in the next section.

7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

7.1 Research Objective and Approach

This study began with the idea of learning how career education is practiced in Finnish schools under the new national core curricula for lower and upper secondary schools. Since the way guidance counselors, i.e. career teachers in Finnish context, understand career and career education leads to how they practice in classrooms, the researcher decided to focus on guidance counselors' conceptions of this phenomenon. Therefore, after examining the shift in career theories and career education, the current study aims to explore how Finnish guidance counselors conceive CMS.

As the research topic is to explore individuals' conception of a phenomenon, the researcher chose qualitative approach for her study. Multiple researchers have stated that research topic and question determine which method and design to implement in a particular study (Brannen, 2011; Edwards & Holland, 2013). Quantitative research is typically conducted among a large number of people, by deducing participants' answers into a few predetermined categories, thereby allowing results to be generalizable (Brannen, 2011; Patton, 2002). On the other hand, qualitative research, although generally lacks generalizability, allows researchers to delve deeper and more in detail about a phenomenon from a small group of participants without setting fixed categories beforehand (Brannen, 2011; Patton, 2002). This study's objective is to explore the varying conceptions Finnish guidance counselors have on career management skills. Thus, qualitative approach, more specifically phenomenography, was applied for this study.

7.2 Research Methodology: Phenomenography

Phenomenography maps the qualitatively different, but logically related ways that individuals experience or conceive the same phenomenon (Bowden, 2000; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017; Marton & Booth, 1997). Phenomenography focuses on the variation in people's conceptions or ways of experiencing a phenomenon at

a collective level (Åkerlind, 2005). In this methodology, individuals and the world are not viewed separately (Bowden, 2005, Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). Instead, the two establish a relationship by the way individuals experience or conceive a common phenomenon. Phenomenography assumes that the varying relationships formed by different individuals are internally and logically related as they are connected by the same phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005). Phenomenographic study, therefore, aims to investigate the varying ways individuals experience or conceive a phenomenon instead of the phenomenon itself (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017).

Furthermore, as Åkerlind (2005) explains below, through phenomenographic analysis, the researcher develops a logically structured set of meanings that conveys how different individuals conceive the same phenomenon in a qualitatively varying and distinctive manner.

The researcher aims to constitute not just a set of different meanings, but a logical structure relating the different meanings. The categories of description constituted by the researcher to represent different ways of experiencing a phenomenon are thus seen as representing a structured set. ... It provides a way of looking at collective human experience of phenomena holistically, despite the fact that such phenomena may be perceived differently by different people and under different circumstance (p. 71-72).

These categories are also considered to form a hierarchical relationship that represents the least to most complex and complete way of conceiving or experiencing a phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005, Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). More details on how the researcher implemented phenomenographic research throughout her entire study, including pilot study, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis, are clarified below as the researcher describes her research process.

7.3 Pilot Interview and Research Question Development

Initially, the study started with the research question asking how guidance counselors understand students' CMS development. With this research question in mind, a pilot study was conducted. Multiple experienced phenomenographers

emphasizes the importance of conducting a pilot study in order to develop researchers' interviewing skills, especially for novice researchers, and to ensure that the interview questions yield the information and data that meets the research objective (Åkerlind, 2005; Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005). In addition, Bowden (2005) also specifies that pilot interview should be conducted with "people similar to the intended interview sample" (p. 19). As this study's target participants are Finnish guidance counselors, pilot interview was conducted with a guidance counselor as well. The pilot interview questions asked how the guidance counselor understood the skills students should develop for future career. The pilot interview showed that the interview questions were rather confusing as they ask the interviewee on their conception of others' skill development. The initial interview questions did not accurately serve the aim of the study. Accordingly, after consulting with a phenomenographic expert, research question and interview questions were revised.

The new research question eliminated the confusion by directly asking guidance counselors their conceptions of CMS. Interview questions were also modified and developed to answer the research question and objective. Interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this paper. The final research question is written below:

Research Question: What are Finnish guidance counselors' varying conceptions of career management skills (CMS)?

7.4 Participant Selection and Recruitment

In phenomenographic studies, interviewees should have the direct, first-hand experience of the phenomenon in question (Patton, 2002). Research participants should be able to provide ample data that fulfills the research purpose. Moreover, as the core of phenomenography is to investigate the variation among the qualitatively different conceptions or experiences of a phenomenon, research participants should be selected with maximum variation in mind (Green, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). "Small sample sizes with maximum variation sampling, that is, the selection of a research sample with a wide range of variation

across key indicators (such as age, gender, experience, discipline areas and so on)” is utilized in phenomenography to provide a more holistic and inclusive picture of the phenomenon (Åkerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005, p. 79).

In this study, practicing guidance counselors in Finnish schools are the target research participants. Variation is given across the following factors: gender, age, years of guidance counseling experience, and practicing grade level.

TABLE 1 Research Participant Information

	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Grade Level
1	Female	46	5	upper secondary
2	Female	46	6	lower secondary
3	Female	42	6,5	lower secondary
4	Female	60	10	lower secondary
5	Male	38	11	upper secondary
6	Female	60	11	lower secondary
7	Female	48	15	upper secondary
8	Female	58	18	upper secondary
9	Female	63	18	lower secondary for adults
10	Female	53	23	lower secondary
11	Female	61	27	upper secondary

Participant recruitment was achieved by sending individual emails to every guidance counselor in the region where researcher is located at, sending interview invitation email to keski-suomen opinto-ohjaajat ry [Central Finland Counselor Association] and posting on its Facebook page, and posting announcements on opinto-ohjaus kaikille kiinnostuneille [for all who are interested in guidance counseling] Facebook page. Appendix 2 and 3 show the email text and Facebook announcement that were sent out for participant recruitment. Participant recruitment was slightly challenging due to the fact that it was during the busy application season for upper secondary schools and higher education. As shown in Table 1, eleven guidance counselors participated

in this study: ten female counselors and one male counselor; counselors' ages ranging from 38 to 63; their years of experiences varying from 5 to 27 years; and five from lower secondary school, five from upper secondary school, and one from lower secondary school for adults.

Interviews from eleven guidance counselors provided researcher with ample amount of information for this study. The number of interviews was determined through a few factors described below. First, the researcher considered whether data saturation was reached, that is if interviewees were adding new meanings to the study topic or merely redundant information (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Moreover, the number of interviews depended on "epistemological and methodological, practical and epistemic community issues" (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 67). After conducting all eleven interviews, in addition to practical challenges of recruiting participants, the researcher realized that data saturation was reached as a few participants provided similar or repeated answers. Therefore, the researcher decided that eleven interviews were sufficient for this study.

7.5 Data Collection

Interviewing is the primary mode of data collection in phenomenographic studies (Green, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). The focus of interviews in phenomenographic studies is to investigate the relation between the interviewees and the phenomenon in question (Bowden, 2000, 2005). In order to achieve that purpose, each interviewee is asked the same set of open-ended questions on the phenomenon in a semi-structured interview (Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). During the interview process, it is crucial that the phenomenographic researchers set aside their own preconceptions on the phenomenon. Phenomenographers should not introduce any new ideas that are not mentioned by the interviewee or provide judgmental and leading comments (Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005). Follow-up questions are mainly asked to clarify what interviewees have shared in their responses to fully explain their conceptions of the phenomenon (Bowden, 2000).

In this study, interviews were conducted with a set of predetermined questions, as listed in Appendix 1. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher provided the interviewee with an information sheet and consent form. This form explains the purpose of the study and how participant's confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. The form can be found in Appendix 4. The interview was conducted in the same manner to all interviewees. The researcher tried her best not to give any opinion-based comments, even positive ones. In addition, the researcher was cautious so as not to impose her preconception of the phenomenon on the interviewees. Clarification questions, such as 'You mentioned [an idea], could you explain more about this?', 'Is there anything else you would like to share about this topic?' were asked so that the interviewee could provide a fuller picture of his or her conception.

Despite making these precautions, there were difficulties in the interview process. Since the common language between researcher and the interviewees was English, all interviews were conducted in English, which is participants' second language. Many guidance counselors felt that the study topic was abstract for them to explain. Describing such complexity in English was not an easy task for some participants.

7.6 Data Analysis

The purpose of phenomenographic analysis is to discover the qualitatively varying ways participants relate to, or conceive, the phenomenon under study (Bowden, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). These conceptions are logically related to one another and form "a structured set of logically-related categories," which is the primary outcome of this approach (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, phenomenographic analysis is entirely driven by data, i.e. all analyses are solely based on and generated from transcripts (Bowden, 2005). Hence, throughout the analysis process, it is crucial to set aside any researcher bias and relation to the phenomenon.

For this study, data analysis was conducted after all eleven participants were interviewed and transcribed. This is in line with Bowden's (2005)

recommendation where he strongly suggests that analysis should begin after finishing data collection in order to avoid any researcher perception formed by initial analysis that could influence data collection process. Moreover, it is important to analyze the transcripts as a whole since phenomenographic analysis examines how the phenomenon is understood in a collective level and how the conceptions are logically related (Åkerlind, 2005).

In the beginning of the analysis process, researcher read the entire transcript a few times to familiarize herself with the data. A number of common themes emerged from these initial readings. The researcher noted and gathered how participants described each theme in similar or different ways. The themes were separated with varying meanings that were expressed by the participants. The researcher went back and read the data frequently to make sure each meaning was not taken out of its original context. Then the researcher explored each theme to find out the relationships among the meanings. During this stage, the researcher re-read the transcript multiple times with different thematic lenses. Phenomenographic analysis is highly iterative, requiring researchers to revisit the transcript repeatedly to make sure that the categories of descriptions developed are faithful to the transcript (Åkerlind, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017).

The second phase of the analysis focused on the structural aspect by determining the relation between the categories of description that emerged from the previous step (Bowden, 2005; Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). The analysis process was accompanied by two other experienced researchers in the field of career guidance. Group analysis helps ensure the rigor of phenomenographic analysis and exclude researcher bias (Bowden, 2005). These two other researchers provided critical feedback and questioned researcher's analysis that strengthened impartiality and robustness of this study. Data was revisited constantly during the second phase as well. After several modifications, the final structural and hierarchical set was established, where each category was carefully labeled with a name that encompassed the descriptions under each category.

7.7 Trustworthiness and Rigor of this Study

Lincoln and Guba (1985) listed four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, that are utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Although trustworthiness of a phenomenographic study slightly differ from the criteria listed above (Green, 2005), the four aspects in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) list are still considered valuable when establishing rigor of this study,

Credibility of a study refers to how true the findings are through examining how the data was interpreted and analyzed (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). This was achieved by being faithful to the data through constant iteration and by consulting with other academic researchers who acted as 'devil's advocates' during the analysis process. Transferability looks into the applicability of the study's findings in other contexts. However, in phenomenographic studies, participants' conceptions on a certain phenomenon could vary based on the different contexts they are in. Thus Kettunen and Tynjälä (2017) stated that "the researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient details to enable the reader to judge the study's transferability" (p. 7). In this current study, the researcher explained contextual details such as the Finnish education system and national curriculum.

Dependability is achieved through providing "evidence that the research process has been logical, traceable and clearly documented" (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017, p. 7). In this study, the researcher thoroughly explained the implementation process, from pilot interview, participant selection and recruitment, data collection through interviews, to data analysis. This enables the readers to follow each stage of the study and provides them with a clear picture of the entire process.

Lastly, confirmability is concerned with the objectivity of the findings by exploring if the findings were truly developed from the data and not from researcher bias (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2017). Confirmability is shown in every stage of this study. The researcher disclosed her relation to the phenomenon beforehand and carefully designed the research process while bracketing her

own understanding and biases. During data collection, researcher only asked open-ended, non-leading questions to ensure the neutrality of the interviews. When analyzing data, the researcher adhered to the data consistently to reduce her own prejudices. In addition, data was analyzed with two other researchers from the field of career guidance who actively questioned the findings that increased the rigor of the results. Moreover, the Results section below is presented with direct quotes from the participants to show how the transcripts are connected with the study results.

8 RESULTS

Four categories describing the qualitatively different ways in which Finnish guidance counselors conceive CMS emerged from analyzing the transcript. CMS was conceived as (1) information-based knowledge, (2) personal skills development, (3) interpersonal skills development, and (4) autonomous application of skills. As shown in Table 2, the categories are further differentiated into five dimensions of variations: understanding of CMS in curriculum, responsibility, teaching practices, evaluation, and attitude.

TABLE 2 Finnish Guidance Counselors' Conceptions of Career Management Skills (CMS)

DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION	CATEGORIES			
	information-based knowledge	personal skills development	interpersonal skills development	autonomous application of skills
Understanding of CMS in curriculum	unfamiliar	vague	good	comprehensive
Responsibility	a few teachers	every teacher individually	coordinated effort among teachers	collaboration beyond school
Teaching practices	experts provide information	experts interact with students	students become active agents	students collaborate together
Evaluation	not needed	lacks structure	needs improvement	needs improvement
Attitude	reluctant	hesitant	motivated	committed

These dimensions of variation differentiate the categories by revealing the logical and hierarchical relationship between them, from the least to the most complex and inclusive way of conceiving CMS. The following section will elaborate on each category with direct quotes from the participants to illustrate the key aspects of each category.

8.1 Descriptions of the Categories

8.1.1 Category 1: CMS as Information-based Knowledge

In this first category, guidance counselors conceive CMS as *information-based knowledge*. Guidance counselors feel *unfamiliar* with how CMS is described in the national core curriculum. They express that the concept of CMS is difficult and not visible in the curriculum. In regard to the responsibility of teaching CMS, they share that CMS teaching is only practiced through *a few teachers*, mainly language teachers, social sciences, or natural sciences teachers, along with guidance counselors. Guidance counselors express the desire to have more cooperation with other teachers.

Now that we have a new curriculum, that is on such a conceptual level, I find it [CMS] really hard.

I don't think it [CMS] is very visible in our curriculum.

It [teaching CMS] depends on the teachers if they are willing to make cooperation as they can be busy with their own subjects, maybe Finnish teachers if students are writing some reports. But I think it's something which I would like to develop: more cooperation with other teachers.

Teaching practices in this category are carried out by *experts providing information* to students. Students receive this information through visiting workplaces and upper secondary or tertiary education institutions, through classroom lectures, and through guest speakers in classrooms. Experts, such as guidance counselors, teachers, and employers, provide students with knowledge on working life, Finnish school system, and on practical matters.

We [guidance counselors] give them [students] a big picture of the Finnish educational system. The concepts in those pictures and in the whole system are quite hard for a 13-15-year-old.

You need some information about the work life, about jobs, about possibilities to study in universities or other schools and knowledge about the future or things that might happen in working life, in the future.

In this category, guidance counselors express that evaluating CMS is *not needed*, and their overall attitude towards CMS is *reluctant*. They state that students are too young and far from working life, and other factors in school life are more important.

In our school, we don't believe in systematic evaluation of that [CMS]. How can you control somebody's life? We cannot really have the systematic way. I don't believe in systematic evaluation. You cannot evaluate people's lives.

[What I do with my students] I don't think that this is career counseling. The most important thing is to teach how to plan your studies here.

8.1.2 Category 2: CMS as Personal Skills Development

In the second category, guidance counselors conceive CMS as *personal skills development*. Guidance counselors have a *vague* understanding of how CMS is described in the curriculum. Although they have some awareness of CMS, they are not able to fully explain how the curriculum portrays this topic. The responsibility to teach CMS widens to include *every teacher individually* in his or her own subject, especially under the new curriculum.

Maybe I haven't read that [the curriculum] so deeply but I think that it [CMS] is quite much what I described to you.

So it [teaching CMS] is not only us [guidance counselors] who do this. It is something every teacher has to do. It's also according to the curriculum. It has put more emphasis on this [CMS], that it [teaching CMS] is also everybody's job, not just ours.

In this category, teaching practices are implemented by *experts interacting with students*. Experts include guidance counselors, subject teachers, and employers. Through guidance counseling classes and individual and group discussions, guidance counselors interact with students to help the latter develop self-knowledge, studying skills, information acquisition skills, decision making skills, reflection skills, and future planning skills. Employers also interact and work with students through continuous group work. In this process, students are encouraged to have more input in their own CMS learning.

With my career counseling sessions, we [guidance counselor and students] get to a deeper level about how well the students know themselves, how able can they describe their strengths and weaknesses, the desires and dreams. We have these discussions. I think one of the career management skills is to know yourself.

Our students are divided into three groups. Every group will have its own company, like a godfather/godmother company. They work together for two years. The head of the companies comes to our school and meet with the groups, and the groups visit the companies...They do something together; they help each other.

Guidance counselors share that CMS evaluation *lacks structure*. Although they mention that they evaluate through observation and questionnaires, they add that there is no systematic way or enforcement to evaluate CMS. Lastly, their attitude toward CMS in this category is *hesitant*. Guidance counselors show their hesitation towards this topic as they express how complicated and challenging this topic is for them.

We don't have any measurement on how to evaluate those skills [CMS]. Maybe I just see those.

I think evaluation as a whole is a bit missing from our counseling system. We make a big questionnaire for the students... This is the only evaluation we are doing.

Teachers are not forced to evaluate it [CMS]. The evaluation system is not ready yet. It's not very well organized.

I find it [CMS] challenging in the changing world.

8.1.3 Category 3: CMS as Interpersonal Skills Development

In the third category, guidance counselors conceive CMS as *interpersonal skills development*. They have a *good* understanding of how CMS is described in the curriculum, as they are able to explain on this matter more in detail. Guidance counselors also hold the view that CMS is represented better in the new curriculum. Responsibility to teach CMS is carried out through a *coordinated effort among teachers* with guidance counselors in schools through various project teaching.

I know that there are some phrases, for example, learning to find information, it's in our national curriculum. There's also a bigger, or stronger emphasis on working experiences, you should get during your school time. You have put more power on that nowadays. Then there's sentences of getting to know yourself, you should think about your interests and your characters and so on. That's something in our national curriculum. Learning skills also are mentioned there.

We [teachers and guidance counselor] are starting something where there are several subject teachers who become a team, and they teach the same thing through their own subject, giving the students a broader understanding of some topic.

We [teachers and guidance counselor] have focused on team based learning. Almost all of our teachers have gone through team coach training... We have a few teachers in one group. We have bigger projects. We don't teach just our own subject but we try to make a good project including all the biggest aims for each course together. So we do this kind of phenomenon based learning and team-based learning.

Teaching practices in this category have shifted to putting students in the center and *students becoming active agents* in their own CMS learning. This is achieved through students participating in week-long work experiences during lower secondary school and job shadowing in upper secondary level. Students are also asked to interview various people in the city about work life. This promotes students' self-agency and help them develop their social skills.

Through the process of TET [weeklong work experience], I think they learn quite a bit of skills, let's say, how to approach an employer. When they get the job, they get involved in the community of workers at the job place.

[A participant is talking about the process of looking for TET.] If you [a student] are shy, you are really brave if you go to a workplace and you tell who you are and what you would like to have. Because sometimes it can happen that they [employers] say no, then you have to again be brave and go to another place. Then when they [students] are in TET, they have to work with other people. They need to be social. They have to take responsibility of the work they are given.

Guidance counselors express that CMS evaluation *needs improvement*, especially on a personal level. They also share the difficulty of evaluating CMS. Finally, guidance counselors show a more *motivated* attitude towards CMS in this

category. This is expressed through guidance counselors' longing for more time and education to develop their own CMS teaching.

I should improve that side [CMS evaluation], how to get them [students] to understand those skills. It's hard.

I think many of us [guidance counselors] would like to learn more, have more competence in these questions [CMS].

8.1.4 Category 4: CMS as Autonomous Application of Skills

In this final category, guidance counselors conceive CMS as *autonomous application of skills*. Guidance counselors have a more *comprehensive* understanding of CMS in the curriculum. CMS is understood as transversal competences in the curriculum. Furthermore, responsibility to teach CMS has surpassed school-level and includes *collaboration beyond school* with other community and educational institutions.

Researcher: How does the national core curriculum describe CMS?
Participant: We have a new curriculum in Finland now, and we have new topics [transversal competences]. [Counselor shows a picture of the 7 transversal competences.] So we have how to think, how to learn things, the cultural knowledge and social things and take care of him or herself, and things like that.

We have collective work with our [the name of a community organization]. It's collective work. We can't know everything here. And that's why the collective work is very necessary for the students and for us [guidance counselors] too.

CMS teaching practices encourage *students to collaborate together* as active agents. Students participate in various group work projects, such as conducting research on future working life or organizing business sales activities. Through these independent and autonomous group projects, students build confidence on their own ideas, act on their own plans, learn entrepreneurship, and learn proactively by doing.

[One participant explains about a business sales activity in school.] They [students] find their own ideas what they would like to do. They share ideas with their classmates; they make teams; and they start to work on their ideas. Then we have one day, and they have all kind of businesses. Every student, even those who have

difficulties in learning, finds their place in these businesses... They [students] learn that their ideas are really good, that they can really accomplish something, and they can give wonderful things for the whole school.

We like to teach them [students] the way of thinking that you don't have to own, but you have to work like you own the company. So they are more active. Activate them! They do projects themselves; they do things. Learn to know about working life by doing!

Guidance counselors state that CMS evaluation *needs improvement*, on a collective level. They explain that evaluation is important and should be invested in more. In this final category, guidance counselors show a *committed* attitude towards CMS, as they emphasize the importance and determination to update their own knowledge and competence on CMS all the time.

Evaluation is very important and it's something we should invest in more...so that we could learn for the next year.

As a guidance counselor, you have to learn all the time. You have to update it all the time. You have to be aware of what's happening in the society and in educational policy, etc.

It's important that I [guidance counselor] also take care of my knowledge about those workplaces and also theories about the career management skills. So I have to update my skills. It's very important.

8.2 Relationship between the Categories

The categories of descriptions are hierarchically related, forming a continuum from the least to the most complex and inclusive way of conceiving CMS. Guidance counselors' conceptions of CMS become more holistic in the more complex categories. In the first two categories where guidance counselors conceive CMS as information-based knowledge and personal skills development, CMS *in curriculum* is perceived in an *unfamiliar* and *vague* way. There is a leap in guidance counselors' understanding of CMS in curriculum in the latter two categories. In Categories 3 and 4, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as interpersonal skills development and autonomous application of skills, their understanding of CMS in curriculum widens as *good* and *comprehensive*.

In regard to *responsibility* to teach CMS to students, there is also a shift in conceptions between the first two categories and the latter two ones. *A few teachers*, along with the guidance counselors, are responsible for students' CMS development in Category 1, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as information-based knowledge. The responsibility widens to include *every teacher individually* in his or her own subject in Category 2. In Categories 3 and 4, responsibility to teach CMS starts to incorporate coordination and collaboration. In Category 3 where guidance counselors conceive CMS as interpersonal skills development, a *coordinated effort among teachers* in schools is expected when teaching CMS. Finally, in Category 4 with a conception of CMS as autonomous application of skills, responsibility to teach CMS widens and includes *collaboration beyond school* with other organizations and institutions.

CMS *teaching practices* varies from expert providing information to students collaborating together. In the least complex category with a conception of CMS as information-based knowledge, teaching practices are carried out by *experts providing information* to students. Experts take an active role by informing students with necessary knowledge. This one-way instruction becomes a two-way interaction in the next category. In Category 2, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as personal skills development, teaching practices are implemented by *experts interacting with students*. There is a turning point between the former two categories and the latter ones, where students become the main actors in CMS learning. Teaching practices are designed to enable *students to become active agents* in Category 3, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as interpersonal skills development. Teaching practices are carried out by *students collaborating together* as active agents in Category 4, with a holistic conception of CMS as autonomous application of skills.

Shifts in guidance counselors' conceptions of *CMS evaluation* occur across the categories from not needed to needing improvement. In the lowest category, guidance counselors view CMS evaluation as *not needed*. This conception changes in the following categories. In Category 2, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as personal skills development, they state that CMS evaluation *lacks structure* in the current system. In the latter categories, guidance counselors'

conceptions of CMS evaluation widen as they express that CMS evaluation *needs improvement* on a personal level (Category 3) and on a collective level (Category 4).

The overall *attitude* towards CMS changes from a slightly negative view to a neutral one and finally to more positive notions. In Category 1, guidance counselors' attitude towards CMS starts with *reluctance*. In Category 2 where CMS is conceived as personal skills development, guidance counselors hold a *hesitant* attitude towards CMS. The attitude towards CMS becomes positive in the wider categories. Guidance counselors take on a *motivated* stance in Category 3, as they share their desire to learn more about CMS. In the final category, where guidance counselors conceive CMS as autonomous application of skills, they hold a *committed* attitude as they emphasize the importance and urgency of updating their own knowledge and competence of CMS.

9 DISCUSSION

This study shows the qualitatively varying ways Finnish guidance counselors conceive CMS. The findings consist of four categories in a hierarchical order, described and differentiated through five dimensions of variation.

Across the four categories, guidance counselors' conceptions of CMS vary from information-based knowledge to personal and interpersonal skills, and finally to autonomous application of skills. The elements that are present in the changing paradigm of career theories described earlier in this paper are visible in this transition. The focus on information-based knowledge in the lowest category resembles the key features found in career matching theories (Lent & Brown, 2013), where acquiring knowledge to find the optimal match is considered essential. Guidance counselors' conception of CMS as personal skills development in the following category align with Super's self-concept theory (Super, 1969). Super's theory states that people develop and implement many self-concepts, i.e. ideas about themselves, through experiencing life stages and life roles (Hartung, 2013; Leung, 2008). These personal and interpersonal skills in the second and third categories are also in line with Law and Watts' DOTS framework, as do many existing CMS programs (Law & Watts, 1977; Sultana, 2012). Moreover, the emphasis on developing skills promotes students' agency, which is underlined in career construction theory (Savickas, 2009).

CMS conception in the widest category encompasses students' autonomous application of skills, resembling features in career construction theory as the previous categories and aligning with the highest level of learning, i.e. understanding, in career learning theory (Law, 1999). In order to autonomously apply skills, students need to understand the cause and effect and the consequences of different actions (Law, 1999). Hence, the four categories show aspects that correspond with the changing paradigm of career theories.

Guidance counselors' understanding of CMS in curriculum in the lower categories supports the existing research on CMS. Guidance counselors are unfamiliar and vague with CMS in curriculum in the lower two categories. This finding resembles Thomsen's report (2014) that it is hard to translate this

terminology CMS into Nordic languages and to understand this topic. This also corresponds with Neary et al.'s (2015) survey result, in which a quarter of their participants replied having limited knowledge of CMS.

The findings on responsibility to teach CMS align with the existing evaluation on Finnish career education. Every teacher assuming responsibility individually (Category 2) could be seen as following the guidelines of Finnish national core curricula (FNBE, 2016a, 2016b) where guidance is a task shared by all teachers. The responsibility to teach CMS widens in the higher categories. In Category 3, it includes a coordinated effort among teachers, echoing Sultana's (2012) positive evaluation on Finnish career education that it possesses firm teacher cooperation. The widest category includes actors beyond school and collaboration among them. This is in line with ELGPN's (2015a) and Holman's (2014) reports that good cooperation between schools and other partners in the field of education, training, and work contributes to the success of Finnish career education.

The findings show a range of teaching practices from expert-led to student-collaboration approaches. This spectrum resembles the frameworks developed by Kettunen (2017). Both the current study and Kettunen's studies identify expert-led approach, where experts actively provide information while students take on a passive role, as the lower categories. The nature of interaction develops from expert-led approach to two-way interaction in the following categories. Both studies further classify individual-led approach, where students assume active roles, in the higher categories. Moreover, teaching practices in the higher categories show features found in career construction theory (Savickas, 2009, 2013). Students are placed in the center as active agents and encouraged to construct their own careers through various work experiences and group projects.

In this section, the researcher has discussed in depth on how the results of this study correspond with aspects found in the existing literature and research. The results align with the development of career theories and existing research on CMS and Finnish career education. The following will explore the limitations and implications of this study.

9.1 Limitations

There are a few limitations in this study. First, despite researcher's effort to reach as many and as diverse research participants as possible, participant recruitment was challenging. Those who responded and partook in this study could be the guidance counselors who are more motivated and confident in the study topic or the profession in general. Second, as illustrated in the Implementation section above, there was a language concern between the researcher and a few participants during the interview process. They had difficulty fully explaining their thoughts in English, and were resolved to simplify their answers when using English to answer the questions. These factors could have an effect on this study and the study result.

Third, as mentioned in the Researcher Disclosure section, researcher developed her own bias through previous experiences and pre-conceived ideas on career theories. In order to eliminate and avoid such bias, the researcher took the following steps, which are also explained more in detail in the Implementation section. During the interview process, researcher only asked open-ended questions and clarification questions, and was careful not to provide any leading comments. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher repeatedly visited the interview transcripts to ensure the results are solely based on the data. Furthermore, two other academics acted as 'critical friends' during this process that enhanced trustworthiness and rigor of this study.

9.2 Implications

This final section will examine the implications this study has on theory, practice, training of practitioners, future research, and policy. First, in relation to theory implications, the discussion above explains how the four hierarchical categories reflect the development and paradigm shift in career theories, i.e. from career matching theory to self-concept theory to career construction theory. The widest category views CMS as autonomous application of skills emphasizing individual

agency, validating the current dominating paradigm in the field of career guidance.

Second, this study on guidance counselors' conceptions on CMS could provide an opportunity for career practitioners to map their own conception based on this framework. This could lead to more discussion and improvement on their CMS understanding and influence how practitioners are trained. This framework could be utilized during practitioners' professional development to spark more interests and create practical measures to enhance CMS understanding and teaching.

In regard to future research implication, this study could serve as an initial phase for different research studies. The present study focuses on guidance counselors' conceptions of CMS. Future study could be conducted to seek how CMS is taught and implemented in practice through classroom observations. Another future direction could be listening to students' voice on this topic, asking their varying conceptions of CMS. This could provide career practitioners, policymakers, and other related actors a more comprehensive picture on CMS development, thus helping them to find and bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice.

Finally, there is much research and policy development to be done on CMS evaluation. Three of the four categories in this present study show that guidance counselors perceive evaluation as lacking structure and needing improvement. There is a need to delve deeper into CMS evaluation. Neary et al. (2015) reported that many practitioners assess their students' CMS in various formats. However, more research need to be done to explore the purpose and effectiveness of evaluation. It is imperative that policy makers allocate resources on CMS evaluation to find out whether students develop the necessary CMS throughout their school years, as well as the effect of these CMS in students' lifelong careers and the efficiency of the education system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interview Questions

1. How do you understand CMS, urasuunnittelutaidot?
2. How does the national core curriculum describe CMS?
3. How do guidance practitioners build competence in teaching CMS?
4. Could you describe how CMS is taught? (Explain more on teacher cooperation.)
5. How is CMS assessed or evaluated? (Alternatively: How do you know whether students have learned CMS?)

Appendix 2 Email Text for Participant Recruitment

Subject: Invitation for Research Interviews

Content:

Hello! My name is Jeong Lee, a student from South Korea studying Master's in Educational Sciences at University of Jyväskylä. I am currently conducting a master's thesis study on guidance counselors' conceptions on career management skills (urasuunnittelutaidot). For my data collection, I would like to interview guidance counselors from "yläkoulu and lukio" on this topic. Would you be willing and able to take part in my research? I would come to your school for an interview which would take about 30 minutes. If appropriate, during my visit I could be able to attend a meeting with your students during an "opotunti" and share experiences on studying abroad.

I would deeply appreciate your participation. My email address is jelee@student.jyu.fi. Please feel free to contact me for any questions. I look forward to your participation. :)

Thank you. Paljon kiitoksia!

Best Regards,

Jeong

Jeong Lee

Master's Degree Program in Educational Sciences

University of Jyväskylä

Appendix 3 Facebook Post for Participant Recruitment

Hello! My name is Jeong Lee, a student from South Korea studying Master's in Educational Sciences at University of Jyväskylä. I am currently conducting a master's thesis study on guidance counsellors' conceptions on career management skills (urasuunnittelutaidot). For my data collection, I would like to interview guidance counsellors from "yläkoulu and lukio" on this topic. Would you be willing and able to take part in my research? I would come to your school for an interview which would take about 30 minutes. If appropriate, during my visit I could be able to attend a meeting with your students during an "opotunti" and share experiences on studying abroad. If interested, please email me at jelee@student.jyu.fi. I would deeply appreciate your participation. Please feel free to contact me for any questions. I look forward to your participation. :)

Appendix 4 Information Sheet and Consent Form

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear participant,

As part of my Master's thesis in Educational Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä, I am conducting a research study. I became very interested in career education in Finnish schools. For my research study, I will explore how guidance counsellors in Finnish schools understand career management skills.

The study will consist of interviews for about 30 minutes. I will audio-record the interview sessions for further data analysis for my thesis. You have been asked because of your profession and expertise as a guidance practitioner. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Throughout the research, I will maintain your anonymity and ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous. In addition, you have the opportunity to read the analysis and check if I have interpreted your interview inputs in a transparent manner. At any point, you have the right to receive further information about the study by contacting the researcher.

The data collected will be kept confidential for the duration of the study, available only to me and my thesis supervisor. On completion of my thesis, they will be destroyed.

I do not foresee any negative consequences for you in taking part of the study. You will be contributing to the field of career education by sharing your experience and expertise.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My information, as well as my supervisor's information, is provided below:

Contact information of the researcher:

Jeong Lee: jelee@student.jyu.fi

Master's degree student in Educational Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä

Contact information of the supervisor:

Raimo Vuorinen raimo.vuorinen@jyu.fi

Project Co-ordinator at Finnish Institute for Educational Research

If you agree to partake in the study, please sign the consent form below:

I agree to participate in Jeong Lee's research study. The purpose and nature of the study, as well as the use of the collected data, has been explained to me in writing. I am participating voluntarily, and I give permission for my interview to be audio-recorded. I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without any repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in her thesis by disguising my identity. I understand and agree that disguised extracts from my interviews can be quoted in the thesis.

Date

Signature of the research participant

Date

Signature of the researcher