

# Career Practitioners' Conceptions of Career Management Skills at Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

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# Background of the Study

- The role of career guidance has evolved alongside the changing world of work, placing increasing emphasis on adaptability and managing change. Additionally, career management skills (CMS) have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on degree completion rates, reduced dropouts, and a smoother transition to the world of work (Bridgstock, 2009; Hooley & Dodd, 2015; Kasurinen, 2019; Lovšin, 2017; Taylor & Hooley, 2014; Vuorinen, 2012).
- However, guidance services often focus on supporting students' educational choices and academic growth within their chosen field, rather than enhancing CMS acquisition.
- Previous studies have indicated that career practitioners' understandings of the CMS vary (Dodd & Hooley, 2018; Draaisma et al., 2016, 2018; Kettunen et al. 2020; Neary et al., 2015).

## Aim of the Study

This study contributes to the paucity of knowledge regarding the conceptions of CMS by career practitioners, particularly within the context of Finnish higher education.

The main aim of the study was to examine the qualitative differences in career practitioners' conceptions of CMS at Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS).

**The study was guided by the following research questions:**

- (a) What are UAS career practitioners' conceptions of CMS? and
- (b) What are the critical aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying ways of understanding CMS?

## Study Context and Participants

- **17 career practitioners** from **six Finnish UAS**
- Participants' institutions varied in location, size, and degree programme offerings
- Participants had different backgrounds and experiences in career guidance
  - 8 guidance counsellors and 9 lecturers who performed the role of academic tutor as part of their duties
  - 10 females and 7 males, aged between 33 and 60 years
  - professional experience at UAS from 1 to 30 years, with guidance experience from 4 months to 29 years

## Data Collection and Data Analysis

- Data were collected through individual interviews lasting 50 to 90 minutes
- Data were analyzed using a phenomenographic approach

# Results

## Career practitioners' conceptions of CMS at UAS

Dimensions of Variation	Categories				
	Irrelevant	Secondary	Noteworthy	Significant	Indispensable
Awareness	Unfamiliar	Limited	Evolving	Good	Comprehensive
Relevance	Insignificant	Enhancing engagement	Expanding knowledge	Strengthening self-awareness	Enabling meaningful life
Emphasis	Lacking	Job search techniques	Occupational options	Career prospects	Ability to adapt
CMS acquisition	Before UAS studies	Ad hoc	Graduation	Transitions during studies	Throughout studies
CMS promotion	Student	Academic tutor	Academic tutor and study counsellor	All members of staff	Staff with external service providers
Practitioner's role	Reactive	Advisory	Informative	Reflective	Collaborative

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# Discussion

- The present study aligns with previous research which indicates that career practitioners' conceptions of CMS vary.
- The diverse conceptions of CMS among UAS career practitioners may well reflect the relative autonomy of these institutions and the varying status of career guidance in different educational settings. The findings confirm the importance of fostering a shared understanding when designing and implementing career guidance services and practices.
- The findings highlight the necessity to ensure that CMS promotion extends beyond information-based or discipline-specific knowledge and current educational choices by fostering CMS acquisition and career learning.
- Further research is needed to gain deeper insights into how CMS acquisition can be promoted in higher education contexts.

# Thank you!

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