



An ethnographic study of career aspirations amongst students studying level 3 sports courses at a Further Education college in England

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Presentation aims

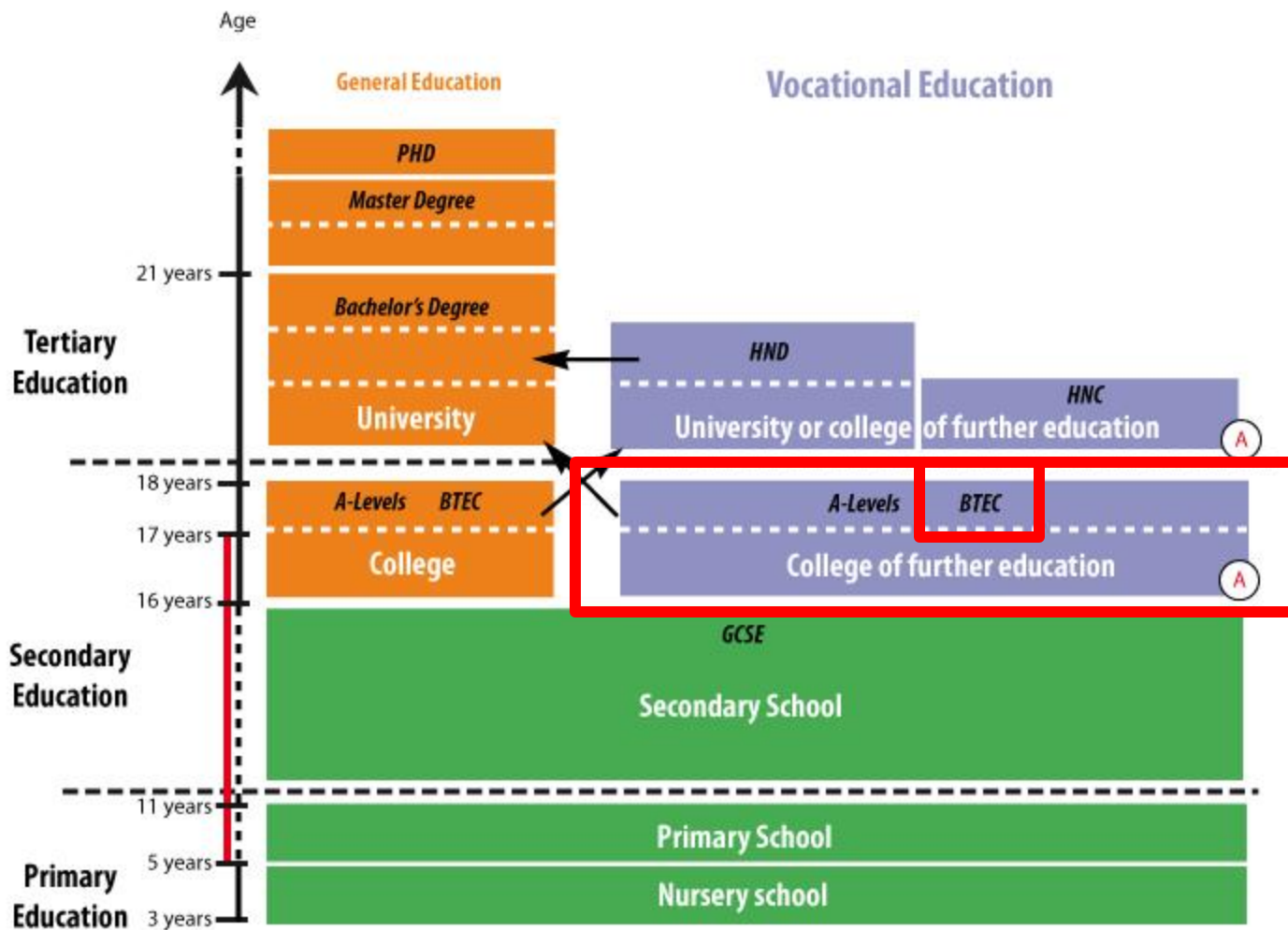


- To portray my study from which the data are drawn utilising a Bourdieusian framework
- To outline differences in level 3 sports students' career aspirations and decisions
- To describe the importance of economic capital for adolescents
- To describe the important role that tutors play in the career development of their students

Study aim

- Examining the career aspirations of 2 **different** cohorts of **level 3** sports students studying at a Further Education college in the North of England
 - Group 1: Lower
 - Group 2: Higher
- Current dearth of research into sports students' career aspirations following compulsory schooling (age 16-17 in UK)
- Results cannot be generalised to the wider population (i.e. inductive reasoning)
 - FE practitioners can understand how students' aspirations are guided by and guide their actions during education

Education System in UK



Key :

- | Compulsory Education
- Basic Education
- Vocational Education
- A Apprenticeship-based qualifications
- General Education
- Vocational Education : Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education

Literature

- Why examine adolescent aspirations?
 - Period of change and instability (Brown et al., 1989)
 - Parents, peers, tutors, education and employment
- Young peoples' motivations towards career aspirations
 - Instant gratification of money (e.g. employment) (Kniveton, 2004)
 - Suggesting the prevailing priority of economic resources (e.g. economic capital) over career-development and achievement?

Literature

- Social class, gender, parents, peers and tutors/the college
- Tutors
 - Positive teacher-student relationships promoted learning
 - Enhanced by personal qualities such as showing an interest
 - Tutor effects can also be negative (Riseborough, 1992)
 - Rushing through tasks and failing to care
- Post-FE decision point
 - To continue in education (e.g. Higher Education)
 - To seek employment

The study

- Study commenced with 34 students aged 16-20
- **5 months of informal observations (lessons taught by me)**
 - 90 minute weekly lessons (Sept 12 – Jan 13)
- **690 minutes of formal observations (lessons taught by other staff)**
 - lessons lasting 75-90 minutes (Jan 13 – Feb 13)
- **8 semi-structured group interviews**
 - 19 men, 5 women (mean age 17.2 years)
 - Between 22 and 40 minutes duration (mean 32.5 minutes)
- Thematically analysed: Bourdieusian theory as a guide

Theory

(Habitus) or (capital) + field = practice
*also doxa, illusio and reflexivity**

(Bourdieu, 1984, p.101)

Educational capital



Recognising the worth of college education



“I’ve learnt quite a bit ... especially with something like the training programmes ... it’s kind of helping me train differently now to what I was usually training at”

Social capital



Peers’ influential roles during FE studies



“we can talk to each other and stuff like that and we can help each other with assignments”

Economic capital



The importance of money



“Then instead of borrowing off your mum you can just go shopping or do what you want [with] your own money”

Key findings

(Lower group)



- Students indicated a desire to have their own money so they weren't 'borrowing off of people all the time'
 - Money was needed to support college studies
- Economic capital is vital during college
 - Absenteeism due to not being able to afford train fares
 - Some students cannot afford laptops, the internet and/or applications

“Yeah, I find it right hard to do [assignment work] because I **haven't got a computer or internet** or anything at home, so I can't do [assignments] at home ... which makes it a lot harder”

(Chris, age 19)

Key findings

(Higher group)



- Students also experienced financial struggles and a desire to have their own income
- College had made students realise the importance of money
 - E.g. university fees, living costs etc.

- Money appeared synonymous with adulthood and independence

“[the] way that students are these days, **you feel like you’re held responsible to ask ... like your parents for money** all the time instead of like having your own money then you feel more grown up and independent and you can get stuff what you want and like a lot of us will be learning to drive and stuff and you’ve got to get insured, you’ve got to ... buy a car and you can’t do that if you [haven’t] got a job”
(Nick, age 16)

Key findings

(Lower group)



- Value tutors who cared for them
 - Those who offer extra support in lessons
- Students appreciated (and at times relied on) tutors' support to keep them on track
 - Encouragement to complete the course

- Disliked unsupportive, authoritarian teaching styles

- Preferred tutors whom they could 'have a laugh with'

“He just stands there and reads [the] presentation, he'll stand at [the] back of the room and read [the] presentation word for word and then go on to [the] next thing, **he don't explain it**, just keeps going through [the slides]. I like it when [tutors] don't have to look at [the presentation] they can just like tell you what you're [going to do and] be doing and explain [something] to [you]”

(Chris, age 19)

Key findings

(Higher group)



- Advised upon future directions
 - Career direction tutorials
 - Offered trips to visit universities or alternatives
- Staff-student relationships
 - Showing an interest in students' lives (e.g. rapport)
- Lessons made enjoyable and interesting

“It was interesting, you actually looked forward to coming in on a morning [because] you’d know that [the tutor would] have a laugh with you”
(Lauren, age 16)

Conclusions



- 1. Economic capital contours students' career aspirations and achievements**
 - Lower group: a lack of economic capital was detrimental to most of the students' development
 - Higher group: economic capital represented a desire to 'grow up' and gain independence and students' aspired to accrue this

- 2. College tutors are key stakeholders in the development of career habits**
 - Lower group relied on tutor support and guidance, and valued the social aspects of college and 'having a laugh' with staff
 - For the Higher group, their relationship with tutors were more focussed on gaining a rapport (with each other) and fostered a career-orientated habitus (e.g. Future directions)

References

Bourdieu, P. (1984/79) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.
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Brown, B.A., Frankel, B.G., and Fennell, M.P. (1989) Hugs or shrugs: Parental and peer influence on continuity of involvement in sport by female adolescents. *Sex Roles*, 20(7/8), pp. 397-412.

Kniveton, B.H. (2004) The influences and motivations on which students base their choice of career. *Research in Education*, 72, pp. 47-57.

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Thank you for your time

Any Questions?