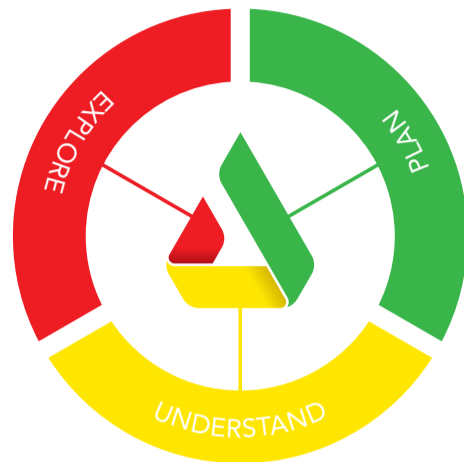


'What can I do with a Doctorate?'

Supporting the transition of doctoral graduates into an evolving employment market; a workshop intervention

The Problem

A rise in doctoral completions and a fall of secure posts within the academy is creating a growing cohort of PhD graduates who sit on the periphery of academia, often on unstable low paying contracts (OECD, 2013). Graduates are in danger of experiencing elongated transitions, with implications for long-term career opportunities and wellbeing (Vitae, 2018). Universities, especially those who sign up to The Concordat, have a responsibility to provide support for postgraduate and early career researchers in their transition to work post PhD.



A Solution

A workshop intervention is proposed to support transition from postgraduate researcher to professional, whether within or outside academia. In-depth interviews and supporting data (Grande et al, 2014, CRAC, 2016; Willson, 2016) identifies a need for:

- Opportunities to collaboratively explore and plan career goals
- Current and accurate information regarding PhD transitions
- The development of support networks to navigate uncertainty

To address the challenges identified a three part framework is offered, informed by Bourdieu's (1977) thinking tools and Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice theory. The framework encourages participants to **explore** potential career ideas in relation to their social networks and their own identities; to **understand** the PhD employment market; and to use this awareness and information to **plan** a strategy moving forward.

Workshop Framework

Explore

Participants use Bourdieu's thinking tools namely 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) to critically explore influences shaping decision-making by mapping their social networks and associated career options. Developing the richness of these maps and reflecting upon them using Bourdieu's tools, enables participants to gain insight into the 'value' and potential fit of different options. This process also supports an understanding of how perceptions have changed over time (Skeggs, 1997) and identifies tensions which can block career planning (Brooks and Everett, 2008). Exploring options and influencing factors in this way creates an interruption, provides the opportunity to develop reflective thinking and can enhance career agency.

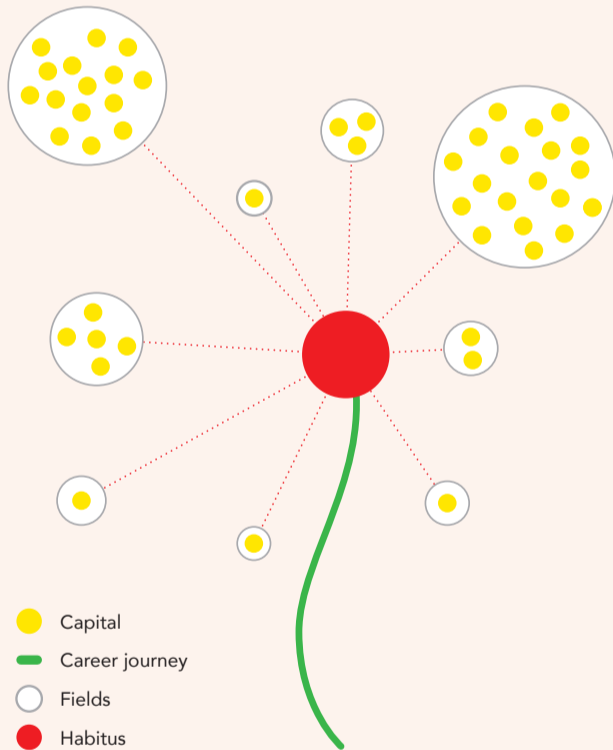
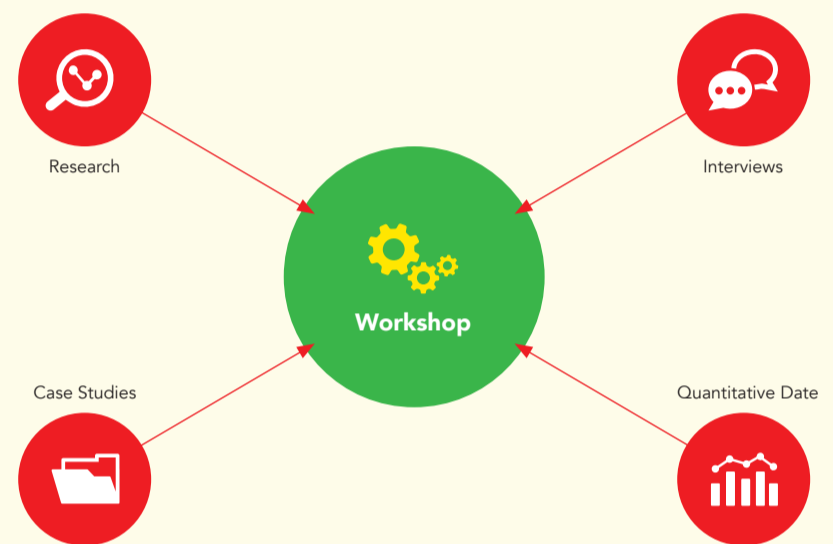


Figure 1 Visualisation of Bourdieu's thinking tools 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus' in relation to PhD transition.

Understand

Recognising PhD graduates often lack accurate information regarding academic and non-academic employment markets (Grande et al, 2014) this workshop provides context and insight into the challenges current graduates are experiencing. Workshop participants engage with interview data in the form of case studies and quotes from PhD graduates; these qualitative accounts are supported with national and global data (Vitae, 2013; OECD, 2012; Grande et al, 2014; Mallett and Osborne, 2017). Thus helping participants to develop informed decision-making and stimulate motivation.



Plan

Finally, participants are introduced to Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice theory, which provides a lens to analyse engagement with a particular context. Comparing "paradigmatic trajectories" (Wenger, 1998, 156) with those of actual members highlights that there is often no standard way in which people develop. Participants consider potential challenges regarding the nature and relationships within a community of practice (if one exists), identify possible trajectories, and 'old-timers' who may be able to help them navigate their career progression.

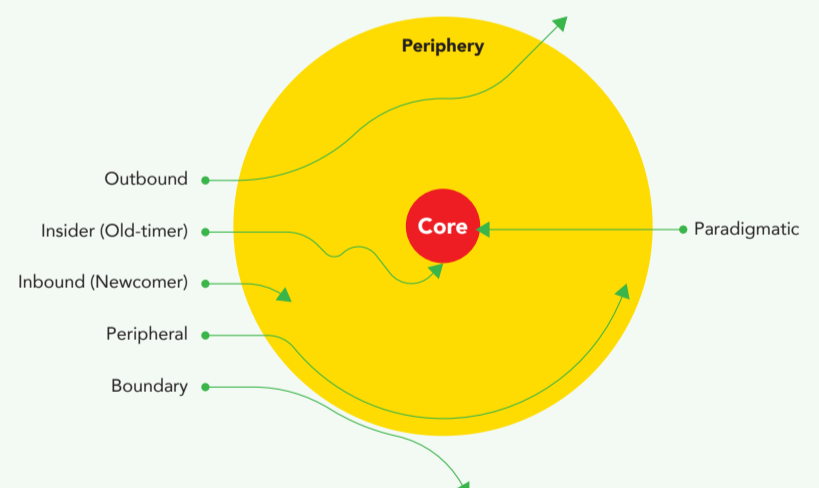


Figure 2. Trajectories into and through a community of practice using Wenger's terms. Representation based on Seabourne (2017).

Outcome

The structure for this workshop and the research and theories on which it is based provide an in depth response to PhD transition challenges. Directly addressing The Concordat principles 3, 4 and 5 and the European Charter for Researchers, interventions such as this are able to respond to the requirements of the HR Excellence Award, and wellbeing needs through the HEFCE Catalyst Fund (Vitae, 2018).

The first edition of this workshop will be held at the University of Huddersfield in November 2018; pre and post evaluation will inform future iterations.

Expressions of interest are welcomed via email.



Dr Danielle White
Education Consultant
DCW Consultancy
d.white@dcwconsultancy.com
@Dr_DaniWhite

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Dr Anna Seabourne
Head of Researcher Environment
University of Huddersfield
a.seabourne@hud.ac.uk
@lucubrat

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