

# The Role and Effectiveness of Coaching in Increasing Students' Self-Efficacy, Outcome Expectancies and Employability Efforts

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## Abstract

Since the employability of graduates has become a very important issue in Higher Education (HEA, 2012), this research investigates the effectiveness of coaching as a learning tool to be used in Higher Education (HE) in order to increase students' career self-efficacy and outcome expectancies, and subsequently, students' employability efforts such as: preparatory and active job seeking behaviors and job search intensity.

The research also explores what aspects of the coaching relationship have most impact in increasing students' career self-efficacy and job seeking behaviours. It will investigate the impact of career coaching on students' outcome expectancies. It will examine whether career self-efficacy is a significant factor in students' job search behaviours and whether it differs for different groups of students.

## Aims

- To provide empirical evidence for the effectiveness of coaching in increasing students' self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and employability efforts (measured as preparatory and active job seeking behaviors and job search intensity).
- To establish what aspects of the coaching relationship are most effective in increasing students' career self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and job seeking behaviors.
- To provide an employability model that incorporates coaching as a particular learning intervention that can be used to increase self-efficacy and outcome expectancies.

## Theoretical Framework

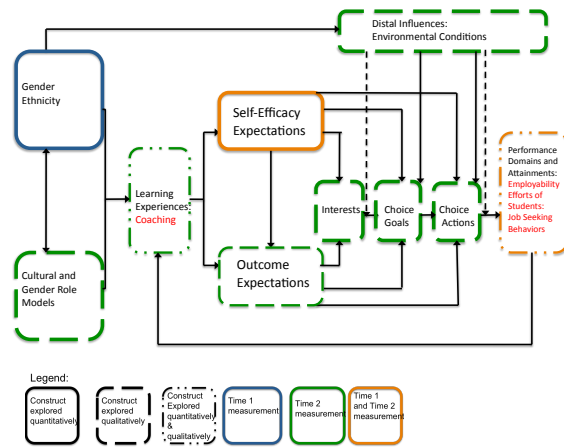
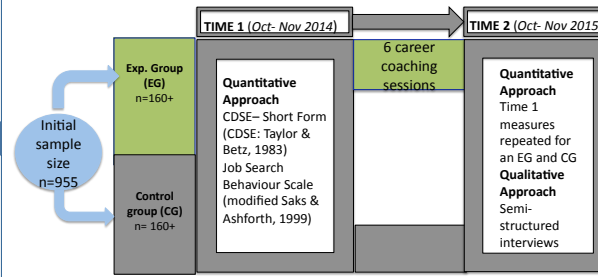


Figure 1. Conceptual Model adapted from Social Cognitive Career Theory (Brown & Lent, 2013). All change to the model are in red.

## Study Design

A longitudinal quasi-experimental mixed method study conducted using the Business Faculty of the University of Greenwich, London, UK populations of Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 undergraduate students. The initial sample consists of 955 students.



## Analysis and Measures

- Time 1**
- In October 2015 questionnaires distributed to 3,550 students yielding 955 responses (27% response rate).
  - The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSE: Taylor & Betz, 1983) and a job search behavior scale (modified Saks & Ashforth, 1999) used to measure students' pre-intervention levels of self-efficacy and job seeking behaviors. Students also asked to provide demographic data on their gender and ethnicity.
  - An experimental group (EG) self-selected for career coaching (n=160) matched by a control group (CG) in terms of self-efficacy, using the independent-sample t-test (n=160).
  - The whole sample (n=955) tested for gender and ethnicity differences (the independent sample t-test, ANOVA and MANOVA).
  - Students career self-efficacy levels were correlated with preparatory and active job seeking behaviors and job search intensity.
  - An EG was compared versus the rest of the sample (T-test for equality of means) in terms of CDSE subscales and preparatory and active job seeking behaviors and job search intensity.
- Time 2**
- In October 2016 questionnaires - (CDSE: Taylor & Betz, 1983) and a job search behavior scale (modified Saks & Ashforth, 1999) – will be distributed to EG and CG.
  - The means at Time 1 and Time 2 for both the EG and the CG will be compared (independent means t-test). As the samples come from the same population, it is expected that their means will be almost equal. The standard error will be used to determine the variability between sample means. The larger the standard error the more confident one is that the null hypothesis is incorrect and the two sample means differ as a result of the coaching (Field, 2005).
  - 10 students with the highest and lowest increase in career self-efficacy (through a maximum variation sampling) will be interviewed, using thematic analysis for qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), to explore any transitions in their career self-efficacy beliefs and their perception of the coaching effectiveness. Data analysis will also explain what aspects of coaching relationship are most effective in increasing students' career self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and job seeking behaviors.

## Time 1 Findings

Majority of students have moderate levels of career self-efficacy (N=879; M= 3.51; SD = .556) (Table 1) and that results are normally distributed (Figure 2). This is not matched by students' Preparatory Job Seeking Behaviors (Figure 3 and Graph 1).

**Relationship between career self-efficacy and employability efforts:** A medium, positive correlation between the students' career self-efficacy and preparatory job seeking behaviors,  $r=.330, p<.01$ . Career self-efficacy helps to explain 10.89 per cent of the variance in students' preparatory job seeking behaviors. Multiple regression results show that planning, CDSE sub-scale, ( $\beta =.154, p<.001$ ) is the only statistically significant predictor of Preparatory Job Seeking Behaviors.

**Gender Differences:** No statistically significant difference in the mean career decision self-efficacy scores for males (M= 3.53, SD = .565) and females (M=3.50, SD = .550;  $t(872) = .65, p = .516$  (two-tailed).

**Ethnicity Differences:** A statistically significant difference in career self-efficacy for different ethnic groups  $F(8, 1698) = 5.55$ . The highest scores for Black or Black British Male (M=3.71, SD = 0.58) followed by White Female (M=3.64, SD=.57) and the lowest score for Mixed Race Female (M=3.28, SD = .57).

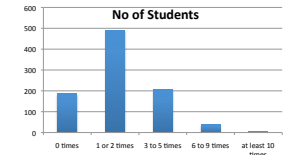
**Experimental Group Differences:** T-test for equality of means shows that an experimental group that self-selected for coaching has a statistically significant higher score for *problem solving* (M=3.45, SD=.63) than the rest of the population (M=3.33, SD=.66) and higher *preparatory job seeking behaviors* (M=1.45, SD=.23) than the rest of the students (M=1.41, SD=.24).

Career Self-Efficacy Sub-Scale	Mean
Accurate self-appraisal	3.35
Gathering occupational information	3.44
Goal selection	3.51
Making plans for the future	3.58
Problem solving	3.60

Table 1. Students' Career Self-Efficacy: Sub-scales

### Score Interpretation:

- 1.0 -2.5: Low to Little confidence; intervention needed
- 2.5 -3.5: Moderate Confidence; may need some help
- 3.5 -5.0: Good confidence; comfortable with this skill set



Graph 1. Students' Preparatory Job Seeking Behaviors (Saks & Ashforth, 1999)

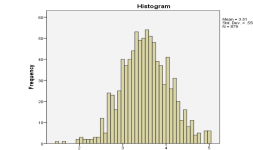


Figure 2. Students' Total Career Decision Self-Efficacy N = 897

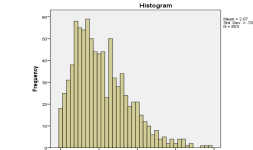


Figure 3. Students' Preparatory Job Seeking Behaviors (N=853)

## Implications for Coaching Practice and Research

- The initial findings are not consistent with existing research, i.e. career self-efficacy is not the best predictor of students' employability efforts. A shared variance of 10.89% is much lower than an expected shared variance of 30% (Rottinghaus et al. 2003; Lent et al. 1994). Ethnicity, outcome expectancies, cultural influences and gender role models might be important factors to be considered by HE in order to increase students' employability. Coaching can be used as an effective tool to work with these factors.
- This findings might also suggest that some students have an inflated view of their self-efficacy (Blakes et al. 2012). Coaching might help students to gain a realistic perceptions of their skills.
- No differences in gender self-efficacy levels are consistent with other studies (Betz and Taylor, 2012).
- Mixed ethnicity students have the lowest self-efficacy and might benefit from coaching in the areas of self-efficacy, planning and preparatory job seeking behaviors.
- The higher scores for problem solving and preparatory job seeking behaviors of the experimental group are consistent with Chung (2002) and Lent et al. (1996) who found that students with higher career decision self-efficacy are more committed to career planning and goal settings. This suggests that the most disengaged students can benefit from coaching in problem solving, planning and goal setting.

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