Bridging the gap: Graduate dispositional employability and the interconnected relationship between third space career and learning support services

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Abstract

This conceptual paper explores the dynamic interplay between university career development and learning support services. A distinct focus on enhancing dispositional employability of both staff and the graduates they support is discussed. Integral to successful career preparedness, the essential attributes of dispositional employability include openness to work change; resilience via a sense of control over career decision-making; an optimistic and proactive approach to seeking future opportunities; motivation in career self-management, and confidence in linking work and personal identity. Additionally, the paper also discusses how career and learning support services are positioned within the third space of higher education which is outside of administrative and traditional academic spaces. The significance of collaborating whilst maintaining distinct career development and learning advisory services is highlighted, so as to enhance graduate employability via effective connection of academic learning with career readiness. Investigations of the literature in the field lead to a conceptual model, the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services (MM-ICLS), and recommendations that encourage collaborative peer support and capacity building for these third space staff, and congruent student support that will strengthen the dispositional employability of graduates and empower student success.

Introduction

In the current global landscape of higher education, universities are centrally focused on enhancing graduate employability (Cheng et al., 2021; Kift, 2019; Smith et al., 2018). Bridgstock and Tippett (2019) and Healy et al. (2022) underscore the pivotal role played by support service staff in facilitating student success, emphasising their impact on holistic development and employability.

However, a significant gap persists in understanding the reciprocity between university career development and learning support services. These services are crucial for providing students with

a comprehensive support system that maximises success in both academic and career readiness (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Ledwith, 2014; Lynch & Lungrin, 2018; Roberts, 2018).

This paper explores the dynamic interplay between these two student support services, placing a distinct focus on dispositional employability (Fugate et al., 2004; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008) of students, graduates, and the staff themselves. Dispositional employability encompasses an individual's personal qualities, attitudes, and behaviours that are indispensable for navigating the complexities of the professional landscape. Central to this are qualities such as openness to change, resilience in the face of career challenges, proactivity in seeking opportunities, intrinsic motivation, and the development of a strong professional identity.

Research has highlighted the multifaceted influence of university student support services on graduate employability (Brown et al., 2019). Similarly, studies have emphasised the importance of integrating career guidance into academic curricula to encourage students' self-awareness and career aspirations (Healy, 2023; Soares et al., 2022). Research conducted by Norman and Newham (2018) also underscores the vital role of learning support services (i.e., academic mentoring and skill development programs), in shaping students' readiness for the workforce. As university third space staff who bridge academic and support functions (Whitchurch, 2012), career and academic learning support staff are crucial to the enhancement of graduate employability (Healy et al., 2022; Veles et al., 2019; Whitchurch, 2018). Cultivating dispositional employability within these staff, also enhances productivity and graduate career readiness support (Bennett, 2019).

It is essential to establish the position of this current paper's two authors, due to their significant experience within academic and professional domains of university career education and learning advisory, respectively. As past colleagues within the same university but different student support units, it was observed that students had little or no knowledge of both services and would seek assistance from the service they knew about, regardless of the relevance or suitability. In most cases, a student would benefit from the services of both career and learning advisory. Though distinct in operational approaches, career and academic learning support services complement each other in providing better support for graduate employability and the enhancement of overall student experience.

For universities dedicated to ensuring graduates' success in diverse professional settings, comprehending this dynamic interplay is not just beneficial but imperative (Botterill, 2018). The current paper aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how third space staff in university career and learning support services improve their employability and work together to 'bridge the gap' in assisting graduates to acquire adaptable skills and enhance their own dispositional employability. In exploring the intricate interplay between university career and learning support services, a framework is proposed and discussed - the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services (MM-ICLS).

The Third Space in Higher Education

University employees are often categorised as either academic or administrative staff, creating a binary distinction (Whitchurch, 2012). Many have argued that this binary concept creates artificial divides and does not adequately describe or allow for the many roles within a university (Healy et al., 2022; Veles et al., 2019; Whitchurch, 2018). Career development practitioners and learning advisors possess specialised expertise and operate as third space professionals. Due to their work across multiple organisational areas and spaces, they are in a great position to be 'collaboration champions' for their university (Veles et al., 2019, p. 76). However, the specialist support services offered by both professions often operate independently of each other (Healy et al., 2022), despite the fact that they both nurture student dispositional employability through the services they offer.

It is common for career and learning specialists to work within their own profession as 'bounded professionals' (Whitchurch, 2012, p.8). This is often compounded by the requirement to also work as 'blended professionals' to bring their specialised knowledge, skills, and expertise across academic and professional domains (Veles et al., 2019; Whitchurch, 2012, p. 8). This can be a complex process as they have to balance their responsibilities and expectations in both domains. Collaborating with other third-space professionals is a related but distinct process, with each specialist bringing their expertise to provide a collaborative service or to solve a problem. This collaborative effort acknowledges the highly specialised skills, knowledge, and experience of each professional, without expecting third-space professionals to be experts in both the careers and learning professions. The outcome of such collaboration can provide a high-quality service that supports students in developing their employability and preparing them for diverse professions and work environments.

Third Space Career and Learning Support Staff

Australian career development practitioners adhere to stringent standards set by the Career Industry Council of Australia (2019), providing a framework for professionalism, ethical conduct, and practitioner guidelines. The standards define industry systems, procedures, membership criteria, and services, guiding entry into the field with a foundation for training and qualifications. The established standards incorporate core competencies that include career development theory, labour market information, communication, ethical practice, diversity and inclusion, technology, and professional practice application. These competencies form a versatile skill set applicable across diverse settings. Additionally, specialised competencies such as program delivery, project management, employer liaison, and working with diverse clients enhance practitioners' ability to navigate the dynamic career development and employability landscape. This significantly contributes to professionalism and service quality, particularly for career development staff operating within the third space of higher education (Brown et al., 2019).

In Australian higher education, professional learning advisor positions started emerging as a result of the changes in education policies which created a more inclusive and expanded sector in the 1970s (Barthel et al., 2021). These positions were recognised as essential to providing support for new cohorts of students entering university, who may not have had previous opportunities for higher education (Barthel et al., 2021). The roles and titles associated with learning services vary across universities, encompassing centralised teams, centre-based services, and distributed faculty-based services, with diverse titles such as Academic Skills, Learning Skills Specialists, Learning Advisors, Study Skills, Learning Centres, Learning Hub, Learning and Academic Skills, Student Learning, and Learning Development (Association for Academic Language and Learning [AALL], 2021; Barthel et al., 2021).

At the University of Southern Queensland, the title 'Learning Advisor' is utilised, aligning with the broader framework of learning specialists in higher education, as represented by the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL; Barthel et al., 2021). According to the AALL position statement, Learning Advisors collaborate across disciplines to contribute significantly to the development of academic language and learning strategies, playing a vital role for students, colleagues, and institutions (Bartlett, 2010, p.1). In this context, Learning Advisors work as third space professionals within and alongside the curriculum, offering resources, workshops, and individual appointments with the overarching goal of supporting students in cultivating the academic skills essential for success in their studies, including academic writing, study skills, self-regulated learning, and numeracy development.

Professionals in the third space often take increased responsibility for their career development (Healy et al., 2022; Veles et al., 2023). This tendency may stem from not neatly fitting into academic or administrative streams, and therefor standard university support mechanisms may be less suitable. The experience of not fitting precisely into either category makes third-space staff more

open to collaboration outside their team boundaries, fostering an adaptable approach. For those working in this space, dispositional employability becomes crucial, especially when supporting students in developing graduate dispositional employability. This is significant in an environment where institutional support for career growth may be limited, and successful navigation of complex organisational structures is essential.

Dispositional Employability of Graduates and Third Space Staff

Understanding dispositional employability is crucial for evaluating graduates' readiness for the workforce. Fugate and Kinicki (2008) define it as a complex construct, encompassing attributes such as openness to change, resilience, proactivity, career motivation, and work identity. This perspective highlights the need to recognise and strengthen these dimensions, which are influenced by personal and organisational factors, and are essential for assessing graduates' preparedness to navigate workforce challenges (Brown et al., 2022). Additionally, it is crucial to recognise that employability goes beyond a mere list of skills and differs significantly from employment or job status (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; McIlveen, 2018; Sin et al., 2019).

Examining the interplay of dispositional employability within the 'third space' of higher education (Whitchurch, 2018) adds a layer of importance. This space requires flexibility and responsiveness to the evolving needs of students, providing an environment conducive to effectively nurturing and applying dispositional traits. As practitioners of graduate employability navigate this 'third space,' they play a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic learning and career readiness. This contribution fosters a holistic approach to student development that extends beyond traditional academic boundaries.

In the subsequent sections, each dispositional employability (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008) construct will be discussed and contexualised specifically to university graduates and the staff operating within the third space as career or learning support specialists.

Openness to changes at work

In the context of university graduates and third space professionals, the ability to embrace change emerges as a crucial aspect of dispositional employability. Having the flexibility to confront challenges in uncertain situations not only facilitates continuous learning but also empowers individuals to identify and seize career prospects, thus enhancing personal adaptability (Perera & McIlveen, 2014). This openness also plays a significant role in supporting flexible attitudes towards workplace change events, such as institutional restructures or impacts from government policies. Those who possess this inclination tend to view change as a challenge and opportunity rather than a threat (Khaw et al., 2023).

Work and career resilience

Resilient individuals usually have a positive self-image and optimistic views about various aspects of their lives. University staff members and students who have a favourable self-assessment tend to attribute their career achievements to their personal skills and efforts. Conversely, they are less likely to blame themselves for any career setbacks they face, and are more likely to have an outlook that helps them maintain positive expectations about future events (Rottinghaus et al., 2005). Workers with a positive outlook tend to see work opportunities as exciting challenges and learning experiences rather than obstacles. These individuals persistently pursue their goals and desired outcomes based on their values. Therefore, work and career resilience are important components of an individual's work identity (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), and reflect their employability characteristics.

Work identity

The transition from student to professional life is a crucial phase for graduates, requiring a nuanced understanding and articulation of their work identity. They must identify and showcase a diverse set of skills acquired during university, including both academic skills and transferable skills that are highly valued by employers. Work identity for graduates involves exploring various career paths, industries, and job roles aligned with their values (Hoare & Luke, 2021). Building a professional network and cultivating relationships with mentors and peers play a crucial role in shaping work identity (Bartlett, 2021; Hyams-Ssekasi & Caldwell, 2019). Perceiving oneself as employable involves behaviours reflecting a strong self-understanding that influences personal goals. Work identities serve as crucial guides amid unclear career paths, substituting for established structures. They provide motivation, direction, and purpose, ultimately enhancing employability. Recognising and nurturing work identity within dispositional employability is vital for university staff and graduates, improving employment prospects and fostering fulfillment through self-reflection, skill development, and proactive career planning.

Work and career proactivity

Employable individuals are proactively oriented toward goal achievement, meaning they respond to changing environments and create conditions to fit their needs. Dispositional employability, relevant to both graduates and student support staff, facilitates the identification of new opportunities, future changes, and learning possibilities. Highly employable individuals proactively gather information about their environment, such as organisational, industry, or societal changes. Information about specific job roles or employers serves as feedback and is crucial for career adaptive efforts (Hirschi et al., 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017). Positively exploring career opportunities and challenges, optimistically gathering career-related information, evaluating one's own career potential, and making or adjusting a career decision all support the motivation to achieve career goals (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

Students must acknowledge the importance of taking responsibility for their own development (Bartlett, 2021). While career and learning support staff cannot assume this responsibility on their behalf, they can play a role in offering opportunities that facilitate students in taking charge of their own growth. Areas of skill development, such as proactively finding information and undertaking self-reflective activities can provide students with the necessary skills to successfully achieve their career goals (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Staff members exhibiting proactivity will identify opportunities aligned with their values, take initiative in problem-solving, and adapt to changing environments. This proactive mindset is essential for organisational growth and success, motivating staff to achieve career goals and take charge of their own development with a clear sense of career motivation.

Career motivation

Career motivation is a crucial element for university students in shaping their professional and personal lives. It drives them towards setting and achieving career goals, constant learning, and adapting to the ever-changing demands of the professional world. Being motivated not only enhances job satisfaction but also leads to increased productivity and resilience in the face of challenges (Kleine et al., 2019). Additionally, it contributes significantly to employability, as motivated graduates are more likely to actively seek and capitalise on opportunities (Brown et al., 2021). Career and learning support staff play an equally important role in this context. They act as guides, mentors, and facilitators, helping graduates navigate the complexities of career decision-making (Bartlett, 2021). By providing personalised counselling, skill development programs, and creating a supportive community, these staff lay the foundation for sustained career motivation. Their role extends beyond academic and career advising to address the holistic well-being of graduates, acknowledging the interconnectedness of mental health and career success (Kift, 2015).

In essence, the collaboration between graduates' intrinsic motivation and the dedicated support of career and learning staff creates a collaborative relationship crucial for fostering successful and fulfilling professional outcomes.

Importance of third space staff's dispositional employability

The cultivation of dispositional employability within university staff operating in the 'third space' represents a strategic investment in enhancing overall productivity and developing a supportive environment for students. Embodying a range of transferable skills, such as adaptability, communication, and problem-solving, these staff members serve as role models for students, showcasing the practical application of academic knowledge in professional settings. Furthermore, staff with high dispositional employability contribute to a positive and supportive campus culture, fostering an environment where students feel encouraged to explore diverse career paths and seek learning opportunities beyond the classroom (Veles et al., 2023).

Individuals with elevated dispositional employability are aptly suited for empowered, supportive, and developmental management practices (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), including situations like self-managed teams and self-directed work. This aligns well with the need to encourage university support staff to take initiative, delegate, and collaborate with colleagues in both process and practice.

Graduate employability initiatives supported by Career and Learning Staff

Initiatives like graduate employability awards or work integrated learning integrate academic achievement with career preparation (Brown, 2023). These initiatives aim to help students understand their professional identity and enhance their competitiveness. Real-world experiences, such as internships, further enrich graduates' practical exposure, making them valuable to employers (Bartlett, 2021). Collaboration between career support and learning advisory services can strengthen these initiatives via personalised learning plans and career counselling to facilitate a seamless transition from education to employment. A feedback loop between services enables continuous improvement, keeping graduate employability award programs responsive to evolving industry demands as well as providing students with relevant and effective academic understanding and career preparation for their professional future.

Collaboration between academic learning support and career services can also enhance underrepresented student groups' access to graduate employability initiatives. Recognising the multifaceted nature of student backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations establishes a holistic support system that encourages students' intellectual growth and the cultivation of essential attributes for professional success. There is a call for greater 'employability for inclusion' (Dollinger et al., 2024) within Australian universities, and initiatives that empower and connect underrepresented students (i.e. socio-economically disadvantaged, first-generation students, students with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse) to real-world opportunities (Tham et al., 2023).

Learning and career support is also indispensable across all academic levels of study. For pathway students and undergraduates, it lays the groundwork, aiding in academic skill development and career exploration (Bartlett & Derrington, 2021; Kleine et al., 2021). Post-graduate students benefit from specialised knowledge acquisition, advanced research skills, and networking opportunities. Research students, engaged in contributing to their field, require support in advanced research methodologies, publishing, and transitioning to academia or industry (Seo et al., 2021).

In creating inclusive and culturally safe learning and advisory environments, career and learning support services enrich a student's academic experience and contribute to smoother transitions

into the workforce. Exposure to both services ensures a holistic approach to student development and their dispositional employability.

Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services

In the current landscape where universities confront escalating pressures surrounding graduate employability, dedicating resources to evidence-based careers, learning, and employability strategies becomes imperative (Healy et al., 2022). Establishing a collaborative community of professionals within the graduate employability realm enhances students' development more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably. This collaborative approach creates rich career learning environments throughout students' educational journeys, ensuring that they are not only academically proficient but also well-equipped with the attributes essential for a successful and fulfilling professional journey.

In exploration of the intricate interplay between university career and learning support services with respect to graduate dispositional employability, a framework is now proposed for investigating the level of collaboration between services - the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services (MM-ICLS). The MM-ICLS is presented as a conceptual model based on the authors' extensive experience in the academic and professional domains of higher education careers education and learning advising, respectively. The model has also been informed by the experiences of colleagues in similar roles within other Australian universities. The aim of the model is to provide a framework to assess the maturity of an institutions delivery of career and learning services, with a focus on how well the institution draws on the differing expertise of career development practitioners and learning advisors. A truly mature model would involve career development practitioners and learning advisors providing highly relevant and contextualised services for students.

The MM-ICLS framework outlines four stages of collaboration maturity that should not be considered as discrete stepping stones to developing a collaborative service for students, but rather as overlapping stages that progress towards a fully mature service. It should be noted that a number of the indicators of maturity are not under the direct control of individual practitioners and require institutional support or investment. Institutional endorsement and recognition of the importance of career and learning services is, in itself, an indication of the maturity of the integration of these services. This involves an institutional understanding and recognition of the deep professional expertise that career development practitioners and learning advisors hold in their respective domains.

One of the first maturity models, the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) (Paulk et al., 1993), was developed as a framework to assess process benchmarking related to software development. The successful implementation and outcomes from the CMM led to the development of maturity models in other areas (Marshall, 2010). For example, the e-Learning Maturity Model (eMM; Marshall, 2010) which provides a framework for organisations to assess their e-Learning, and the Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP) Capability Maturity Model (Thorpe & Howlett, 2020), which provides a framework for Libraries to assess their evidence-based practice maturity. Any discussion regarding a maturity model of integrated career and learning support within higher education should be considered in conjunction with the Student Engagement, Success, and Retention Maturity Model (SESR-MM; Nelson et al., 2014). Although the SESR-MM primarily aims to improve student engagement, success, and retention in higher education, there are still overlapping strategies, benefits, and criteria when it comes to integrating career and learning support. The Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services intends to provide a guide to evaluate progress towards offering the two discrete specialised career and learning services in a seamless way for students. The goal is to provide an employability service that provides students with individualised support that seamlessly connects them with complimentary skill and

knowledge development via the career and learning services. The model is divided into four stages: Sporadic, Beginning, Developing, and Established. It is possible that some collaborative efforts may fall into multiple stages of the framework as progress is made towards an Established model of integration. The stages and related activities are explained in detail below.

Stage 1. Sporadic: No formal integration, any collaborative activity is ad hoc, often initiated by individual practitioners collaborating, rather than via formal processes. No systems or processes are in place to formally support collaboration. No formal or organisational evaluation of the collaborative activities are undertaken.

Stage 2. Beginning: Inter-referrals, with professionals from each service cross-referring students, with some ad hoc collaborative activity. Each service has some awareness of the other and what they offer to students. Each service draws from their own theories and perspectives when developing activities and services. Systems or processes may not be designed for collaboration or referrals. Ad hoc collaborative activities may or may not be evaluated.

Stage 3. Developing: Professionals from each service collaborate on some activities, pilot programs and activities are developed. Intent to collaborate is discussed, however annual planning is undertaken for each service independently. Formal inter-referral processes are developed. There is a developing understanding of the services provided to students by the other team, allowing for nuanced referral recommendations. Some consideration of the theories and perspectives of both services are considered when developing joint activities. Systems and processes are in place to allow collaboration. Collaborative activities are delivered under the banner of one team and this lead team undertakes the majority of the planning and evaluation of activities.

Stage 4. Established: Formal collaboration occurs between teams, which may be supported by an official integrated framework and systems and processes that are documented to encourage collaboration, deliver joint events, workshops, and classes. Formal inter-referral processes are established with specialists providing separate individual appointment services for students. Services continue to offer independent activities and events where applicable; however, some form of collaboration or cross-referral is present in most activities. Each team is aware of the suite of services provided by the other team. Theories and perspectives of both services are considered when developing collaborative activities. Evaluation of joint activities is conducted in a collaborative way. As collaboration matures there is evidence of intentional and informed activities for students that incorporate content from each service.

Table 1 illustrates how the different stages of the model may be experienced by students and how in an environment where collaboration is established the student will receive a holistic approach to their graduate employability development. In this Established stage the careers and learning services are providing an integrative collaborative service. The Established stage is proposed as the ideal service delivery model to 'bridge the gap' between career and learning support services in the development of students' dispositional employability. This allows for a holistic approach to supporting students in developing their individual personal qualities, attitudes, and behaviours that are indispensable for navigating the complexities of the professional landscape. The Case Study scenario for this discussion involves a student attending a learning advisor appointment due to falling behind in their studies. The table provides an explanation of how the student experience may change as the level of collaboration and integration between career and learning services matures.

Table 1: The Student Experience at Each Stage of the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services

Maturity Model Stage	Student Experience	Case Study Example (Appointment with Learning Service)
Sporadic	The student self identifies a gap in their skills or knowledge and attends the service that they believe can assist them. They receive advice and guidance on that self-identified topic. No referral is offered.	The appointment focuses on self-regulated learning strategies, missing the underlying lack of career motivation that is impacting the students' study progress. Activities and resources available to students focus only on information from the author service.
Beginning	The student identifies a gap in their skills or knowledge and receives advice from the service about how another service may be helpful to them. There is no streamlined process to facilitate cross-referral, and the student must independently seek access to the second service.	The Learning Advisor discusses self-regulated learning strategies and recommends that the student also make an appointment with the careers service. Activities and resources available to students will focus on the information from the author service with some links to complementary career and learning advice.
Developing	The student attends a service and receives nuanced referral advice that contextualises the other service and how it will assist them in addressing their needs. This involves a hand over of the student to the other service via a formal referral process.	The Learning Advisor discusses self-regulated learning strategies and recommends and facilitates a careers service appointment to discuss their career goals and chosen area of study. Activities and resources available to students incorporate some information about the complementary career and learning advice.
Established	The student's needs are considered holistically, with seamless access to graduate development opportunities provided by both services. This applies regardless of which service the student initially contacts.	The Learning Advisor discusses strategies for self-regulated learning and how career motivation, proactivity, and identity impact study progress. The advisor recommends and facilitates appointments with the careers service. Activities and resources available to students incorporate contextualised and complementary career and learning advice.

The critical alignment between learning and career support services stands as a pivotal factor in fostering a seamless transition for students. This alignment, rooted in collaboration and open communication, creates a holistic support system that nurtures intellectual growth and equips students with the dispositional attributes crucial for success in their professional endeavours.

A key component of the proposed model is the recognition of the deep expertise of career development practitioners and learning advisors. In the neo-liberal university environment there can be a tendency to dismiss the value of the professional expertise of third space staff (Veles et al., 2019). The MM-ICLS does not recommend merging professional teams, nor does it include an expectation that a single employee will be an expert in both career development and learning advising. Rather, it proposes a framework for collaborative work, drawing on the expertise of each profession when appropriate to provide high quality services for students. The framework promotes an environment where systems and processes support career development practitioners and learning advisors to bring each other into (and out of) the services and resources for students in a flexible and seamless manner. The model also does not endorse open plan work environments, where staff work within a shared space. While possibly providing reduced real-estate costs, open-plan offices lead to lower performance levels, lower employee satisfaction, and reduced employee health (Gerlitz & Hülsbeck, 2023). A mature model will encourage practitioner dispositional employability and lead to high quality service for students.

Knowledge Sharing and Management

A mature service delivery model requires staff to understand the services, abilities, and resources offered by each profession well enough to draw on that expertise when it will meet the needs of the student, learning objectives, or activity. Knowledge management in organisations is complex (Søndergaard et al., 2007) and while it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an extensive knowledge management plan to accompany the MM-ICLS has provided key points for consideration. Organisational factors such as organisational culture, resource allocations, hierarchical structures, professional development and training, level of employee trust, leadership of individual teams, and complimentary or contradictory team goals and priorities all impact knowledge management (Søndergaard et al., 2007). While systems, technologies, and processes can support knowledge management, the process of sharing information is an inter-human process. A key component of successful knowledge management is the empowerment of staff, providing them with the resources, access, and authority to engage in knowledge sharing (Søndergaard et al., 2007). It is important to note that co-location of services is not required for efficient and effective knowledge sharing. Søndergaard et al. (2007) found that high levels of employee trust in the organisation, their team, organisational leadership, and in the expertise of the knowledge holders, was a critical factor in facilitating effective knowledge management.

The combination of professional training and qualifications plus experience in the profession lead to career development practitioners and learning advisors amassing extensive knowledge and depth of understanding in their respective domains. It is unreasonable to expect that this knowledge and understanding can be provided in its entirety to staff in other teams or professions as part of a knowledge management process. However, there are a number of factors that support these professionals in sharing knowledge that enables a mature service delivery. As third space professionals, working across multiple organisational areas and spaces, career development practitioners and learning advisors are experienced in knowledge management and sharing (Veles et al., 2019). This in combination with appropriate team leadership that supports the dispositional employability of staff, a shared goal and priority of providing quality services to students, and an environment of trust will create the necessary setting for effective knowledge management required for a mature service delivery.

Recommendations for Future Initiatives

This conceptual paper has explored the importance of dispositional employability and the dynamic interplay between 'third space' university career and learning support services in enhancing graduate employability. It has highlighted the significance of a collaborative approach to student support that bridges the gap between academic learning and career readiness. Investigations of

literature in the field has led this paper's authors to propose a conceptual model that encourages collaborative peer support and capacity building for staff, and congruent student support that will strengthen the dispositional employability of graduates and empower student success.

The Established stage of the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services (MM-ICLS) is recommended as the ideal situation for connecting university career and learning support services. This model can help develop students' dispositional employability and guide institutions towards providing seamless access to graduate employability development opportunities. It has been developed based on the authors' professional experiences across multiple universities and learning organisations. However, further research is recommended to investigate how the framework represents the interplay between career and learning services at Australian universities. This will ensure the model is informed by current best practices and further developed with additional examples of practice at each of the maturity stages.

A final recommendation is for future initiatives and research that investigates dispositional employability of third space professionals within higher education. Conducting research on the implications of dispositional employability for university graduates career success and the role of third space staff in providing learning and career support is crucial for shaping a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between personal traits and professional outcomes.

Conclusion

In exploring the intricate interplay between university career and learning support services, the Maturity Model of Integrated Career and Learning Services (MM-ICLS) framework has been proposed to encourage universities to both respect and capitalise on the deep expertise of career and learning support staff in the provision of high-quality services that support student success and retention. Adaptability, resilience, proactivity, motivation, and a sense of identity, are essential for graduate and third space staff dispositional employability. This conceptual paper has explored and offered a comprehensive understanding of how third space staff in university career and learning support services can improve their dispositional employability and via collaborating also 'bridge the gap' in assisting graduates enhance theirs.

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