

REAL CAREER PATHWAYS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Some reflections on how young people who mostly studied A-levels, or equivalent Level 3 programmes, went on to shape their careers via university, apprenticeships ... or neither!

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DESTINATIONS – A NEVER-ENDING MYSTERY!

Since 1982 I've been interested in what actually happens to young people after they leave school or college ... and increasingly 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years after they leave.

It's like an **extra window** onto the real world of careers.

And it's partly why, after 41 years in guidance, I still get a buzz when a young person says "I don't know what I want to do".

Today I want to briefly share a few of their ...

- career journeys ... interspersed with some
- pearls of wisdom ... and ending with a few of their thoughts on
- how career guidance helped

PEARLS OF WISDOM: TOM

Tom's doing a Degree Apprenticeship with a firm who manufacture seals. He makes O-rings and the company makes over a billion of them each year, all to the highest standard.

“It's quite hard to explain to young people why it's so satisfying, but once you get it, you get it!”



CAREER JOURNEYS 1

Yvette, with the 'formidable intellect'

Sat through my 75-minute A-level Choice talk and a 15-minute individual consultation on 8/11/1984 ... went on to become one of the 100 most powerful women in the UK

Helena

History at Royal Holloway; now Head of Digital & Communities at innocent drinks

Alice

2nd Officer with Holland America cruise line, via Fleetwood Nautical College

Lorin (denied education & spoke no English until age 13)

Her perilous journey from Syria; Law degree at Westminster Uni; KPMG; and how Teletubbies played a role

PEARLS OF WISDOM: LORIN

It would have been easy for me to give up when things were chaotic around me, but I told myself I needed to keep strong and carry on. 😊 Also I learned very young that I needed to be the one steering the ship in the way I wanted it to go.

Let your career path go where it wants and enjoy every moment. It does somehow work itself out. This is especially relevant to Law which can be seen as a very narrow road (i.e. qualifying as a solicitor or barrister), but I've learnt there are so many uses of a Law degree.

Now an assistant manager at KPMG, working in immigration law



Picture: The Independent

CAREER JOURNEYS 2

Matt

After A-levels, became a CBBC Continuity Presenter at 18

Joe

Apprenticeship at 16 with BAM (controversially!)

Chris

Business Studies & Social Science of Sport at Roehampton Uni; now Director of Football at Kick4Life (Lesotho Premier League) + lead role in developing women's football in a country where it hadn't been taken seriously before (and how YE helped)

Tolu (also MD of a YE company at 6th form)

International Business Management with Communications at Birmingham Uni; now Insights Manager (Advanced Advertising) at Sky Media, which is hard to explain ...

CAREER JOURNEYS 3

Emma

Maths at Warwick Uni; then Diplomat in Chicago; now CEO of her own triathlon travel company in California

Miranda

Theology at Nottingham Uni; now Senior Press Officer at the DWP

Esen

Accounting & Financial Management at Surrey Uni; now a Certified Scrum Master & UI/UX Consultant for an Agile project at CGI
(global provider of IT/business consulting services)

Marianne

Law at Cambridge Uni; now a Freelance Technical Writer & Product Owner (with extensive experience of Agile Scrum) + volunteering as a Pilot with “Please Take Me There”

CAREER JOURNEYS 4

Paul

Logistics at Aston Uni; now Global Head of Transportation for the Satair Group in Hamburg (previously based in Miami)

Harry

Maths at Portsmouth Uni; now Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Bioinformatics, working on the pharmacogenomics of irritable bowel disease at Exeter Uni School of Medicine

Andy

Geography at Royal Holloway; became a Senior Transport Planner; now has a Portfolio career (school pastor, community projects co-ordinator, founded a community Careers Café + has his own project/website/media support company)

Nick

German at Portsmouth Uni (with a year in Erfurt); now a Licensed Insolvency Practitioner & Company Director based in Norwich

PEARLS OF WISDOM: NICK/MARIANNE/MORGAN

Nick

Nobody at 18 ever said they want to be a Licensed Insolvency Practitioner.

Marianne

My Law degree gave me a set of tools that I keep adding to, with endless possibilities to turn my passion and curiosity towards.

Morgan (Economics & Politics at Loughborough Uni, then Retail Management Trainee with Aldi)

The game-changers for me were my passion for retail, my third year placement and being secretary of the university taekwondo club.

CAREER JOURNEYS 5

Katy

Drama at Hull Uni; now actor, director, improvised comedy performer, writer and teacher in UK/Europe/USA; Funny Women finalist

Anna

Fine Art with Art History at Aberystwyth Uni; now a Muralist (hospitals/schools/cruise ships/hotels/corporate/celebrities)

Amy

Level 3 Diploma in Tourism; then BA Tourism Management at Greenwich Uni; now a TV Producer – won a BAFTA for 2nd series of “Ambulance” in 2018

Nikki

**Level 3 Diploma in Tourism; then travel agent; started to dislike it after rising quickly to management level; then hospital Healthcare Assistant; then BSc Adult Nursing at Oxford Brookes in 2019
(subject to confirmation)**

PEARLS OF WISDOM: NIKKI

Working for the NHS is hard and sometimes people don't appreciate how hard. We're often rushed off our feet doing 12/13 hour days with next to no staff and little or no breaks. We often spend most of our time away from our own families working as a team to care for others. We see both the highest and lowest points in our patients and their families, making our job super emotional. It's intense and we struggle to get nurses.

But sometimes you get days like today when you get one little thank you card, and it puts everything into perspective. A lovely gent in our care had passed away and I stopped for a minute and realised this is why I'm doing what I do. All this stress is totally worth it, even if it's just for the little things that you get back out of it, like knowing this family's last memory is a good one.

I'm more determined than ever to be a Nurse. It's tough, but we're making a difference. And to be kind, and to care enough to do that, is absolutely everything. 

CAREER JOURNEYS 6

Aqsa (was aiming for Medicine when I first met her in Year 12)

Took a gap year; then Liberal Arts at UC Amsterdam (taught in English); Year 1 Biology major; Year 3 graduated in Politics & Int Relations; then MSc in Economy Risk & Society at LSE; then GDL & now BPTC at City Uni; starts as **Pupil Barrister** (criminal law) in 9/2019

“Because of the liberal arts system, I've finally been able to figure out what I want to do in life, and what I'm passionate about.”

Aoife

Spanish with Catalan at Swansea Uni; now working freelance as a Trilingual Content Strategist (UX) based in Barcelona

Gemma

Aviation Technology & Pilot Studies at Leeds Uni to headlining with Radiohead, Foo Fighters & Kings of Leon

Becca

Communications at Cardiff Uni – why her career is on hold

PEARLS OF WISDOM: BECCA & NUHA

Becca

What advice would you give your 17 year old self?

- To talk to someone about how I was feeling with regards to my health and escalating OCD. Had I done so sooner, I may have been able to access support sooner and pursue the life I wanted.

What message would you give teachers/advisers?

- I think the most important thing is to listen. To listen without unconscious bias or an agenda. If you feel something is wrong, listen, ask questions (respectfully and without judgment), don't trivialise or mock and assure them they are not alone.

Nuha (Year 11 student, from North London in a group discussion about choosing A-levels, arguing that it's good to go against the grain)

- “We need a world of different textures, don't we?”

CAREER JOURNEYS 7

Dave

Physics at Oxford, then 20 years in Software Development; now a train driver for Southern and says *“I can’t believe I get paid for doing a job I love so much”*

Paul

Music graduate, self-employed Medieval Minstrel



Chris

Archivist for Sir Patrick Moore + Have I Got Tunes For You + cathedral gift shop – and why his story is inspirational



PEARLS OF WISDOM: HIGHER/DEGREE APPRENTICES

Higher/Degree Apprentices (Tax, Digital Technology Solutions, Financial Services) – Charlotte, Tom, Megan & Josh, Catherine and Harriet talk about choosing & applying for apprenticeships:

- There's so much more to Tax than you think.
- You need to be very driven.
- It's being confident about what you can do, but not over-confident.
- They want people who can take the lead but who also involve others in the group and can get the quieter people to speak up. They want you to seek other people's opinions. They call it 'inclusion' - if you get a low score for it, you won't get through.
- It's how you speak to people.



MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EDUCATION!

ADVICE FROM TUMY IN LESOTHO...

In Lesotho we have to fight for an education. We know how bad we need it, thus we appreciate every moment given to us to further our studies.

Tell as many young people as possible, as it will benefit them for the future. I hope they grow up to see the value of education, because some of us wouldn't mind taking their place.

Make them aware of how much education is as important as the air we breathe.

Tumy, Cashier at Econet Telecom in Buthe Buthe



EXAMPLES OF HOW CAREER GUIDANCE HELPED

- As I was making my mind up about my latest career 'pivot', I thought back to a conversation we had at college when I asked you what you thought I should do with my life. Your reply was "You can do whatever you want, there are no limits". So that's what I'm doing! *(Marianne)*
- I remember your careers advice at college fondly, as I didn't know what I wanted to do for a career at 16 (who does?) and you encouraged me to take a subject I enjoyed and was good at - which is great advice. *(Miranda)*
- You gave me the confidence to think unconventionally. *(Aqsa)*
- Your little bits of paper are like tickets to the future. *(Keira)*
- I always go out of 'ere benefittin.' *(can't recall his name!)*

FINALLY - SO WHAT?

I've got lots more of these career stories and they give me so much to draw on when trying to inspire young people in talks, group work and individual guidance.

One story alone can enrich your guidance by opening up new perspectives. As Aqsa said in a LinkedIn conversation we had last week, reflecting on the 8 years since we met in a corridor when she was in Year 12:

“Never did I think that becoming a barrister would be on the cards - I don't think I even knew what one was back then. Funny how it all turned out.”