# Exploring international school students' agency in their career planning

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#### Introduction

International schools differ from the local school context, which is interwoven in the national landscape, raising questions of how these young people position themselves in relation to their futures.

The project explores international students' agency in their career planning by considering aspirations, as well as who and what influences student career decision-making.

### Methods

A qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews. These were conducted online with six alumni from an international school in Germany. The researcher followed the steps for thematic analysis based on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006).

#### **Findings**

Following the thematic analysis, the researcher constructed three main themes and eight sub-themes from the data.

Positioning

- Horizons
- Self-understanding
- Belonging

The research showed that there is no 'universal' experience of international school.

How we theorise 'place' allows consideration of the context in which students experience choice or restraint; a space where belonging and becoming are intertwined (Alexander, 2022).

Open and Closed Doors

- Agentic nature of chance
- Challenges & barriers

International school students are agents of their own learning (Krumboltz, 2009), who take risks and recognise situations where they can act. Difficulties and barriers still exist for this group of young people. Values and expectations are embedded in language used (Sultana, 2022).

Career Capital

- Multicultural understanding
- Networks
- Kinship

Membership of an international community develops beneficial skills and connections. This continues to be foundational for these young people today. Despite an orientation towards global mobility, stability and spatial belonging have a role in future career decisionmaking.

#### Conclusions

International school students are not a homogeneous group. The development of their aspirations emerged over time as they reflected on and learned from decisions, created meaning, and considered their suitability for where they might fit in the future. Whilst sample size limits the wider conclusions in this research, these findings wish to contribute a strengthening of the support for careers education and the work of guidance practitioners in international schools.

## Literature cited

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