



Exploring the challenges and opportunities of combining personal, educational and career guidance in a holistic model in Ireland

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Overview

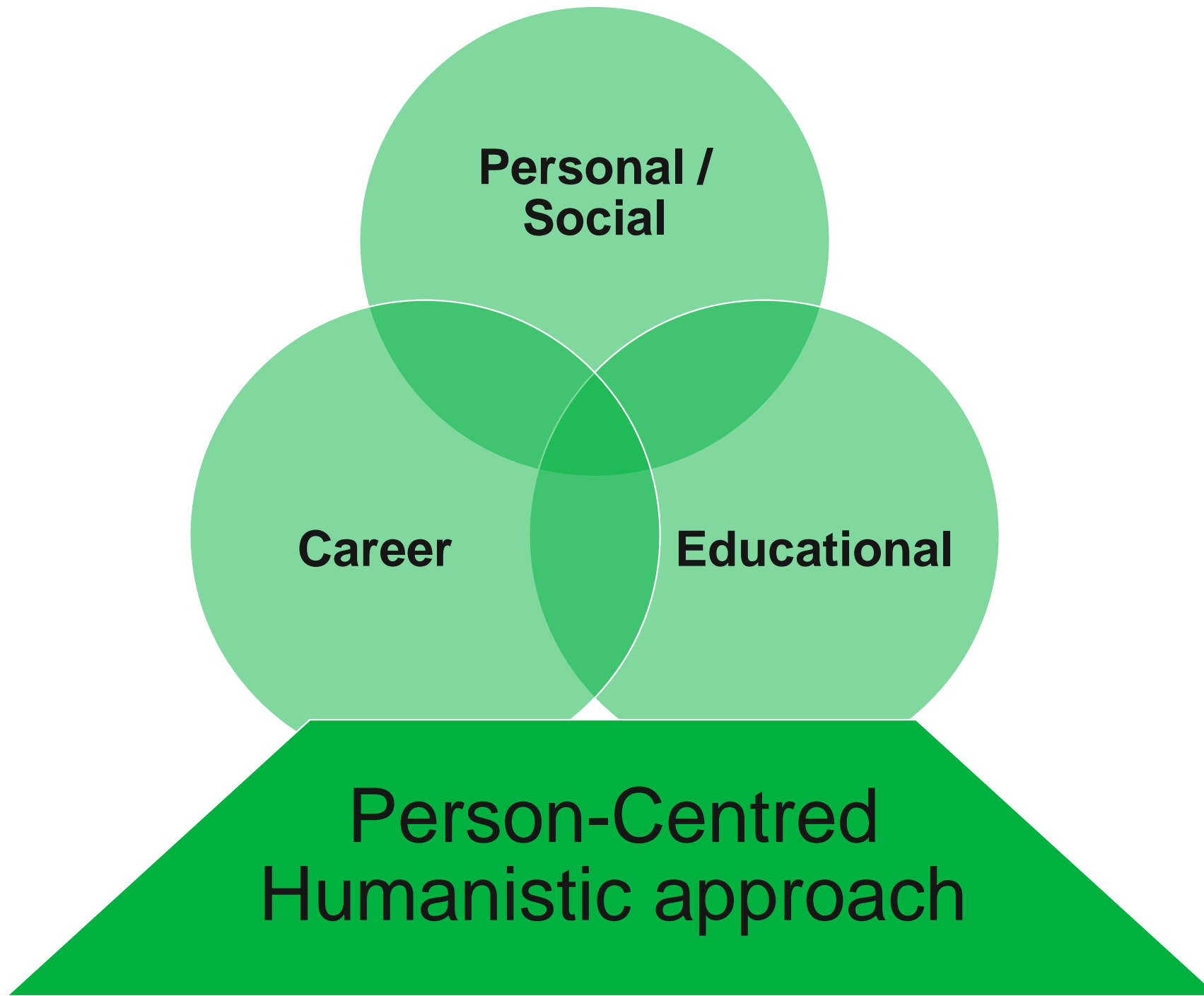
Policy background of guidance provision in Ireland

Findings from recent studies:

- a. Scoping review of the holistic model,
- b. Qualitative exploration of the 'dual-role'
- c. Measuring Professional Identity in Irish Guidance Counsellors



Challenges and Opportunities





Scoping Review of the origins and evolution of the holistic model

- Student Dissertation by **Norma O'Brien Horgan**, supervised by Dr. Petra Elftorp
- Arksey and O'Malley's **Scoping Review** framework was used
- **53 papers included**, although the holistic model was not the main focus in any of these

Mapping the developments of the holistic model

1960 – 1970:
Establishment
of the holistic
model

2005 – 2016:
Continued strong
support for the holistic
model nationally, but
international critique
emerging

1970 –
2005:
Cementing
the holistic
model

2016 – Now:
More emphasis on
careers from policy
makers, but strong
voices in support of the
holistic model

Origin - Psychology

- 1960: “educational and vocational guidance”
- 1963-64: the initiative was amended to include “counselling of emotionally disturbed students and the assessment of ‘educationally backward students’ by the psychologists” (Casey and Murray 2013, p.74).
- 1966: Teachers were released to attend two days a week for one year, to be professionally trained in vocational theories as well as developmental and educational psychology (Casey and Murray 2013).
- 6/10 modules were related to psychology with the remaining on vocational and career theories.

Why the 1960s? - Economics and Religion

- Key social and economic changes in the 1960s - growing economy, reduced emigration = more jobs and more people to support into jobs
- The majority of schools at that time operated under the patronage of Catholic religious orders - an informal system of pastoral support and personal counselling had been in operation for some time (Chamberlain 1983; Shiel and Lewis, 1993) and they were thus ready to accept this approach.
- Many of those who first trained to be school guidance counsellors were nuns and brothers

Economic and Social change - Cementing the holistic model

- 1990s was a period of economic uncertainty; job losses by parents and guardians caused emotional and personal difficulties for post-primary students, while their own future career prospects were also uncertain.
- Divorce was legalised in Ireland in 1995 - Family-related issues were reported by guidance counsellors as occupying more of their time than previously (Chamberlain 1995, p.23).
- Right to guidance written into the Education Act 1998



2005 onward: International critique influencing emphasis in national research and strategic frameworks

- OECD – 2005 onward have been critical to the holistic model, arguing that personal issues will not leave enough room for careers education and development
- Government commissioned large study (Indecon 2019) to focus only on career tools → informed national strategic framework, but holistic model remains frequently referenced

Dual role – Teacher *and* Guidance Counsellor

(Elftorp and Murphy, Forthcoming)

- Qualitative Interviews with 26 guidance counsellors/Teachers in Ireland

- A challenge to ‘master’ both

- Complementary roles:

“I became a better teacher since I qualified as a guidance counsellor”

Opportunities to build up relationship with students, well known in the school



Conflicting roles:

Tensions in the staff room – confidentiality, perceptions

Discipline v. person-centred and holistic approach

The school hallway dilemma: Class v. individual in crisis?

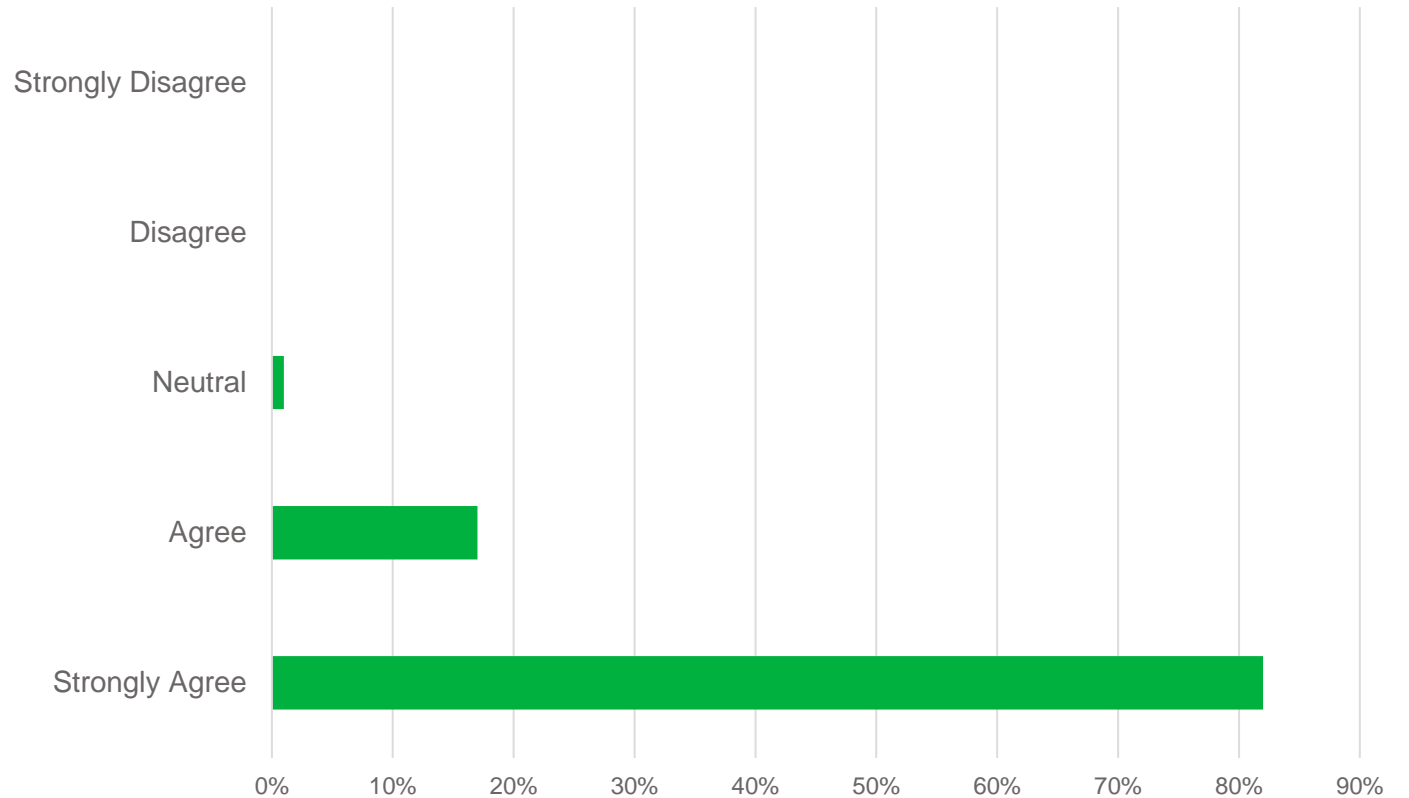
Professional Identity (PI)

- Measured through a survey (457 responses, of which 240 were from practitioners in post-primary schools)
- Defined as levels of: Engagement, Knowledge of the Profession, Attitudes and Values, and Alignment with Philosophy of the Profession (Woo and Henfield (2015))
 - surprisingly strong! (Elftorp *et al*, forthcoming)

Factors which impact on level of PI

1. Type of subject taught
2. Dual role
3. Years of experience
Qualifications
4. Proportion of the week in guidance

It is important to view students/clients holistically



Advantages/disadvantages of the holistic model

- Humanistic approach – careers and personal aspects as intertwined – because how can we possibly separate them?!
- Autonomy / making a difference ----- Burnout
- Different sides of the same coin!
- Organisation of guidance is highly dependent on the values and awareness of the school management/principal

What does the future hold?

- Decrease of Catholic influence?
- Continued pressure from international policy makers / lobbyists to place stronger emphasis on Career Management Skills and careers education.
- Counsellors (therapeutic) in schools may be introduced → Current debate: will this take the pressure off the guidance counsellor, or 'reduce' their role to careers teachers?
- How can we hold on to the holistic model? (It 'feels right', but should we?)
 - Challenge of trying to assess its value!

Thank you!

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