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BRIEF CAREER COUNSELING AS A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY TO FOSTER PLANNED HAPPENSTANCE SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing uncertainty in the contemporary career landscape requires university students to develop adaptive competencies, particularly Planned Happenstance Skills (PHS), to respond effectively to unplanned career opportunities. However, higher education practices often emphasize linear career planning rather than preparing students to navigate uncertainty.

This paper proposes Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy to foster Planned Happenstance Skills in higher education. Adopting a conceptual approach, this study integrates perspectives from Planned Happenstance Theory and career counseling to develop a structured model. The analysis identifies three core mechanisms, namely exploration, reflection, and action, through which Brief Career Counseling facilitates the development of key competencies, including curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking.

The proposed model positions Planned Happenstance Skills as an integrated adaptive competency system that contributes to students' career adaptability. Furthermore, the model introduces a dynamic and iterative relationship between counseling processes and adaptive outcomes, emphasizing continuous learning in uncertain career environments.

This study contributes to the field by reframing career counseling as a pedagogical strategy rather than a supplementary support service. The findings provide a conceptual foundation for integrating counseling-based interventions into higher education learning design to support adaptive career development.

Keywords: Brief Career Counseling; Planned Happenstance Skills; Career Adaptability; Pedagogical Strategy; Higher Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of the global workforce in the era of disruption has significantly increased uncertainty in career pathways. Contemporary labor markets exhibit instability, nonlinearity, and unpredictable opportunities, making traditional career-planning approaches increasingly inadequate. (Hirschi, 2018). In higher education, career development practices still tend to emphasize linear progression, stability, and long-term planning, which may not adequately prepare students to navigate complex, uncertain career trajectories.

Higher education institutions, therefore, need to equip students with adaptive competencies that enable them to respond effectively to uncertainty. One of the most relevant constructs in this context is Planned Happenstance Skills (PHS), which emphasizes individuals' capacity to recognize, create, and utilize unexpected opportunities in career development (Mitchell et al., 1999; Krumboltz, 2009). Planned Happenstance Theory posits that unpredictable events are inevitable and can be transformed into meaningful career opportunities when individuals possess specific adaptive skills. These skills, namely curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking, have been consistently identified as key dimensions supporting adaptive career behavior.

Recent studies further indicate that such adaptive competencies are closely related to career adaptability and student engagement in higher education contexts. Individuals with higher levels of career adaptability tend to demonstrate stronger academic engagement, clearer career orientation, and greater capacity to respond to changing environments (Di Maggio et al., 2020). Moreover, empirical findings suggest that Planned Happenstance Skills are not fixed traits, but researchers have shown that structured interventions, particularly counseling-based approaches, can develop these skills.

Despite this theoretical and empirical support, the integration of Planned Happenstance Skills into higher education learning practices remains limited. Higher education institutions often position career counseling services as supplementary support systems rather than embedding them within pedagogical processes (Brown & Lent, 2019). This positioning creates a gap between students' developmental needs and the pedagogical practices implemented in higher education institutions.

In response to this gap, there is a need to reconceptualize career counseling not merely as a psychological service, but as a pedagogical strategy that higher education institutions can integrate into learning design. Brief Career Counseling, characterized by its short-term, solution-focused, and strength-based approach, offers a promising framework for facilitating adaptive competencies within educational settings (Amundson, 2009). Its structured yet flexible nature makes it particularly suitable for integration into higher education contexts.

Therefore, this paper proposes Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy to foster Planned Happenstance Skills among university students. By integrating perspectives from

career counseling and higher education pedagogy, this study seeks to provide a conceptual framework that bridges the gap between counseling practices and learning design, and to contribute to the development of adaptive career competencies in the era of uncertainty.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual paper approach, focusing on theory development and model conceptualization rather than empirical investigation. Conceptual research aims to advance knowledge by integrating and synthesizing existing theories to generate new frameworks or perspectives (Jaakkola, 2020; Hirschheim, 2008).

This study employs a systematic process of theoretical synthesis to identify, analyze, and integrate relevant concepts from multiple domains, including career counseling, career development theory, and higher education pedagogy. This approach enables the development of a coherent framework that connects Brief Career Counseling with Planned Happenstance Skills within a pedagogical context.

The analytical procedure consists of four main stages:

1. Identification of key constructs
   This stage involves examining core concepts related to Planned Happenstance Skills, particularly their dimensions, including curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking (Mitchell et al., 1999; Krumboltz, 2009).

2. Theoretical integration
   Relevant theories from career counseling and higher education are analyzed to establish conceptual linkages between counseling interventions and learning processes. This stage emphasizes how counseling principles can inform pedagogical strategies.

3. Conceptual mapping
   This study systematically maps the relationships between Brief Career Counseling processes and the development of Planned Happenstance Skills to identify underlying mechanisms, including exploration, reflection, and action.

4. Conceptual model development
   This study proposes a conceptual model to illustrate how Brief Career Counseling can function as a pedagogical strategy to foster adaptive competencies in higher education.

This methodological approach emphasizes logical consistency, theoretical grounding, and conceptual clarity. Rather than testing hypotheses, the study aims to provide a structured framework that can serve as a foundation for future empirical research and practical implementation.

3. RESULTS

The conceptual analysis generates an integrated model of Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy to foster Planned Happenstance Skills (PHS) in higher education. This section presents the results in three main components: conceptual synthesis, skill development mechanisms, and pedagogical integration.

3.1 Conceptual Synthesis of Planned Happenstance Skills Development

The analysis confirms that Planned Happenstance Skills represent a set of adaptive competencies that enable individuals to transform unexpected events into meaningful career opportunities. These skills, namely curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking, have been consistently validated across different cultural and educational contexts (Kim et al., 2014; Sica et al., 2022).

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that these skills are not static traits; structured interventions can facilitate their development. Empirical studies have demonstrated that students with initially low levels of Planned Happenstance Skills can significantly improve after participating in solution-focused counseling interventions. This finding reinforces the theoretical assumption that counseling processes can function as mechanisms for developing adaptive career competencies.

3.2 Mechanisms of Skill Development through Brief Career Counseling

The conceptual model identifies three core processes within Brief Career Counseling that contribute to the development of Planned Happenstance Skills:

1. Exploration
   This process guides students to explore past experiences, unexpected events, and emerging opportunities. This process primarily strengthens curiosity and openness to new possibilities.

2. Reflection
   Through structured reflection, students reinterpret experiences and construct positive meaning from uncertainty. This process supports the development of optimism and cognitive flexibility.

3. Action
   Students are encouraged to take proactive steps toward potential opportunities. This stage encourages students to take proactive steps toward potential opportunities.

These processes align with the principles of solution-focused and strength-based counseling approaches, which emphasize individuals' capacity to generate solutions and adapt to changing circumstances (Amundson, 2009). The integration of these processes demonstrates that Brief Career Counseling can systematically facilitate the development of adaptive competencies.

These processes align with prior findings that Planned Happenstance Skills are associated with adaptive career behaviors and identity development (Ahn et al., 2015). These findings indicate that Brief Career Counseling does not merely support career decision-making but actively functions as a mechanism for developing adaptive competencies.

3.3 Pedagogical Integration Model

The findings highlight a conceptual reorientation, positioning Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy rather than a supplementary support service within higher education. The proposed model suggests three modes of integration: curriculum-embedded approaches, structured intervention modules, and co-curricular integration.

1. Curriculum-embedded approach
   Counseling principles are incorporated into course design to support experiential and reflective learning.

2. Structured intervention modules
   Brief counseling sessions function as part of academic or career development programs.

3. Co-curricular integration
   Programs integrate counseling-based activities into workshops, mentoring programs, or student development initiatives.

This integration aligns learning processes with career development outcomes, particularly by fostering adaptability in uncertain environments.

3.4 Model Proposition

Based on the synthesis, this study proposes that Brief Career Counseling operates as a structured pedagogical mechanism that facilitates exploration, reflection, and action processes. These processes systematically develop Planned Happenstance Skills as an integrated adaptive competency system, thereby enhancing students' career adaptability in navigating uncertain career environments.

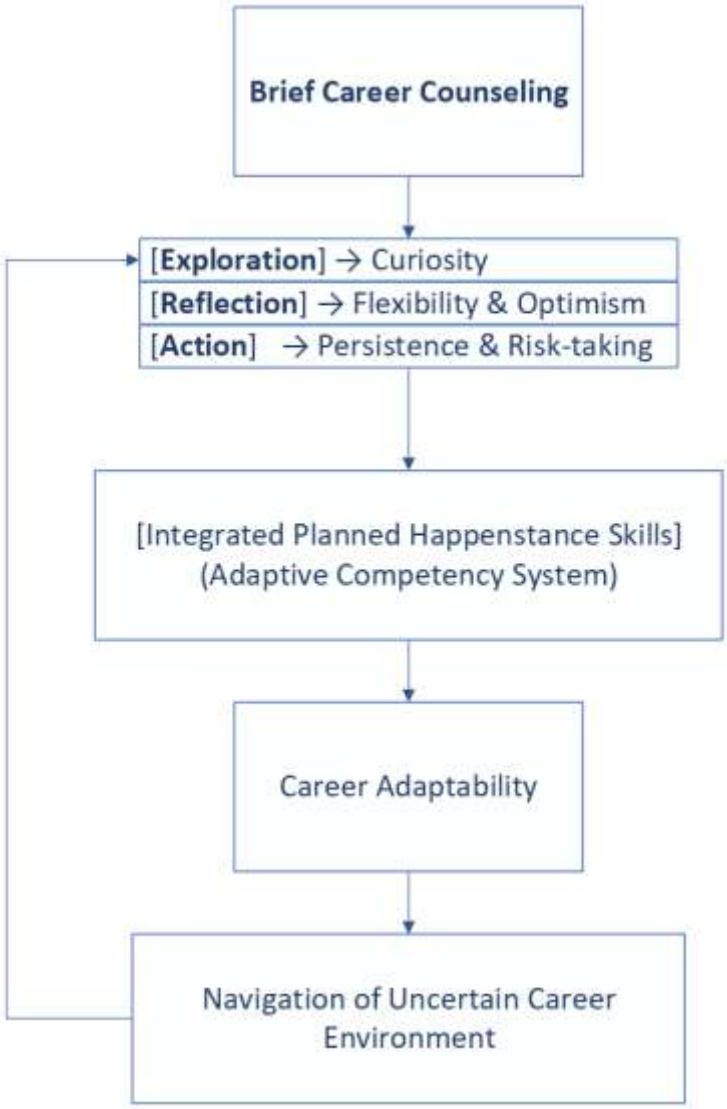
The proposed model not only illustrates the sequence of intervention processes but also specifies the relationship between counseling mechanisms and the development of specific Planned Happenstance Skills.

The model also suggests a dynamic relationship between career adaptability and learning processes. Students who develop higher levels of adaptability are more likely to re-engage in exploration, reflection, and action cycles, indicating that the development of Planned Happenstance Skills is iterative rather than linear.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model illustrating the relationships between counseling processes, skill development, and adaptive career outcomes in uncertain environments.

This model extends existing perspectives by explicitly positioning counseling interventions within pedagogical design, rather than treating them as supplementary support services.

Figure 1.
Conceptual Model of Brief Career Counseling as a Pedagogical Strategy for Developing Planned Happenstance Skills and Career Adaptability



4. DISCUSSION

This study proposes Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy to foster Planned Happenstance Skills (PHS) in higher education, offering a conceptual shift away from traditional career development approaches toward adaptive, opportunity-oriented frameworks. The findings extend existing perspectives by demonstrating that higher

education institutions can systematically integrate counseling interventions into learning design to develop students' adaptive competencies in uncertain career environments.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reinforces the relevance of Planned Happenstance Theory in contemporary career development. The results confirm that career trajectories are increasingly shaped by unpredictable events and therefore require individuals to develop competencies to recognize and utilize emerging opportunities (Mitchell et al., 1999; Krumboltz, 2009). Identifying exploration, reflection, and action as core mechanisms provides a structured framework for explaining how intentional intervention processes facilitate the development of these competencies.

Furthermore, the findings align with career construction theory, which emphasizes adaptability as a key resource for managing career transitions and uncertainties (Savickas, 2013). Prior research has shown that career adaptability is associated with greater academic engagement, clearer career orientation, and improved responses to changing environments. The present model contributes to this discourse by positioning Planned Happenstance Skills as a foundational pathway for developing adaptability in higher education contexts.

A key contribution of this study is the redefinition of the role of career counseling within higher education. Rather than functioning solely as a supplementary support service, this study conceptualizes Brief Career Counseling as an embedded pedagogical mechanism that actively facilitates learning processes. This perspective bridges the gap between counseling and education by integrating affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of learning. As a result, this perspective repositions counseling as an integral component of instructional design, particularly in fostering experiential and reflective learning.

The proposed model also introduces a dynamic perspective on career development. The inclusion of iterative cycles between adaptability and learning processes suggests that the development of Planned Happenstance Skills is not linear but continuous. Students with higher levels of adaptability are more likely to re-engage in exploration and action, thereby strengthening their capacity to navigate future uncertainties. This dynamic view is consistent with contemporary understandings of lifelong learning and continuous career development.

In terms of practical implications, this study suggests that higher education institutions should reconsider how they embed career development within curricula. Integrating Brief Career Counseling into academic courses, structured programs, and co-curricular activities can provide students with opportunities to develop adaptive competencies in real-world contexts. This study encourages educators and counselors to design learning environments that facilitate exploration, reflection, and action, rather than focusing solely on career planning and decision-making.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. As a conceptual paper, the proposed model has not yet been empirically tested. The effectiveness of Brief Career

Counseling as a pedagogical strategy may vary depending on contextual factors such as institutional support, cultural background, and facilitator competence. Future research should validate the model through experimental or quasi-experimental designs and examine its applicability across diverse educational settings.

5. CONCLUSION

This study proposes Brief Career Counseling as a pedagogical strategy to foster Planned Happenstance Skills in higher education. The findings highlight that adaptive competencies, including curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking, can be systematically developed through structured counseling processes involving exploration, reflection, and action.

The proposed model emphasizes that Planned Happenstance Skills function as an integrated adaptive competency system that supports the development of career adaptability. Furthermore, the model introduces a dynamic, iterative perspective in which students continuously engage in learning processes to navigate uncertain career environments.

The main contribution of this study lies in repositioning career counseling as an integral component of pedagogical design rather than a supplementary service. This perspective provides a new direction for integrating counseling-based interventions into higher education practices.

Future research should empirically test the proposed model and examine its effectiveness across diverse educational contexts.

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