



*Lonneke Korenromp and Tamar Pagrach Lonneke Korenromp and Tamar Pagrach (to the left) at the EFMD conference.
Photo: Ann-Mari Haram*

How to navigate in new landscapes

The theme of this year's EFMD Career Services Conference was "Reshaping Careers – Navigating the Landscape of the Future". Career counsellors at universities and colleges in and outside Europe meet annually to discuss current topics, and this year the topic was artificial intelligence (AI).

Stella Kristine Angove, Coach and Career Guide, NHH Career Center

Whether and to what extent we should use artificial intelligence in career counselling was a key question at the conference, which was held in Toulouse, France, 22-24 November. The topic was particularly viewed in relation to the encounter with students from Generation Z, who - according to the prevailing definition - among other things, are characterised as being born and raised with the internet, have a strong desire for meaning in their lives and a high degree of freedom at work, in addition to skepticism towards authorities.

The topics that were highlighted included whether we should use artificial intelligence in our work, what the advantage of this is, and how we can stay updated and relevant in the field. And what will the consequences of increased use of artificial intelligence in career counselling be? Can artificial intelligence replace guidance from a human?

Introduction to ChatGPT

On the first day of the conference, a presentation by Kevin Carillo and Guilain Praseuth, both at Toulouse Business School Education, gave the conference attendees a very thorough and easily understandable introduction to the possibilities and limitations of ChatGPT. They highlighted, among other things, the importance of being aware of the students' personal information when using artificial intelligence. The presentation was an eye-opener for many of the conference participants, myself included.

First and foremost, Carillo emphasised the necessity of being conscious of the meaning of the word "intelligence", as there are countless different ways of defining intelligence. In the case of artificial intelligence it can learn, reason, make a decision, plan, solve problems, maximise utility, and find meaning.

But the answers that artificial intelligence, for example ChatGPT, can give us are based on statistical probability calculations which have their limitations, and we will therefore never attain a "perfect answer". ChatGPT is not always updated with the latest information, and only operates on the basis of a very limited number of data sets. It is especially important to have ethical awareness if you ask ChatGPT questions about right and wrong: the answer from ChatGPT is always dependent on the information that has been fed into the tool.

Use of artificial intelligence in career counselling today

There was a very varying degree of experience with artificial intelligence among the career counsellors at the conference, and how much each one had used such tools. Some examples of tools that were mentioned, and that are being used, are among others vmock, Graduatesfirst, Abintegro Interview 360, Jobalytics, and Career Bot 3000 from LinkedIn.

Lonneke Korenromp and Tamar Pagrach are Head of Career Services & Alumni Relations Career Coach/Trainer respectively at the School of Business and Economics, at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Like the NHH Career Center, they have identified the tool Career Set as a service for their students. Career Set is a programme that through artificial intelligence can give feedback to students on their CVs and suggestions for improvements on their choice of words, for instance. For about a year, they have offered Career Set to their students, and say they have been surprised by the quality of the advice and recommendations the tool provides, and how well they match the kind of feedback they themselves would give to students.

The use of Career Set at Vrije Universiteit has resulted in a lower number of hours spent on administrative CV guidance (discussions on format, design, sequence, wording, use of images, etc.). "We have had more time to discuss students' deeper questions about their career choices and personal development," says Lonneke Korenromp. Pagrach, on the other hand, says that the students have given positive feedback on the use of the tool.

Students confirm the need for humans in guidance

Students' knowledge and use of artificial intelligence also came into focus at the conference, and reference was made, amongst others, to the Institute of Student Employers and Arctic Shores in the UK, which have researched young people's knowledge of and attitudes to artificial intelligence. In this context, the role of the career counsellor was debated. The question was asked whether the career counsellor should teach the student about both the opportunities and limitations of artificial intelligence, and invite to critical thinking surrounding the use of these tools.

In the conference's panel discussion with students and business, it was discussed how students of Generation Z use artificial intelligence in the job application process and how companies use artificial intelligence to process applications. Similar to the experiences of the conference participants at large, the companies have different attitudes and are at different stages when it comes to utilising artificial intelligence in recruitment. The two students who participated in the panel discussion underlined one thing that deviates from one of the main features of the prevailing definition of Generation Z, namely their skepticism towards authorities. Both students taking part in the panel discussion had been to career guidance at TBS, and asked that artificial intelligence not be replaced by the offer of communicating with a counsellor. It can be a supplement, but never a replacement since they wish to reflect together with another person. Applause broke out when the students said this, as several career counsellors in the room had expressed concern earlier that Generation Z would not want to communicate with them because they could be perceived as representing an authority.

New – and old – questions

On the last day of the conference, I was left with many new questions about how we as career counsellors can best contribute to the student's reflection and self-development through the use of artificial intelligence. Perhaps the use of artificial intelligence for "administrative" career counselling can provide more time for deeper guidance and coaching. What will it require from us, and also from the students, to keep up with the technological development? At the same time, I feel the importance of the main question that I always carry with me, namely what I can do to best ensure that I contribute to the student's reflection and self-development. Maybe part of the solution can be to adopt a continuously learning attitude, and to be curious about the new knowledge that artificial intelligence represents. This can be one way for us to have an increased sense of security and calm in an uncertain situation with new tools that we have not yet seen the full effect of.

And if you're wondering whether this article was written with the help of Chat GPT, I can confirm that it was not, but perhaps this will be the next challenge for me, so that I can learn more about the opportunities and limitations that artificial intelligence represents for career counsellors.