

Supporting your young person to make positive career choices – a student’s perspective – Ruby Turner



When I was thinking of applying for university in sixth form, there was a lot of pressure to choose a course that would lead me to my 'dream job'. I didn't really have an idea of what I wanted to do as a career. I knew I wanted to work around people rather than computers and I had chosen humanities and social science subjects for my A levels, so this removed a lot of maths and science options from my choices.

I decided to study Sociology with Social Policy at university. Not only would this leave my options wide open in terms of careers, but it was my favourite subject at A level and I was able to choose to specialise in my favourite topic I had studied so far. I was really looking forward to going to university to study a subject I was really interested in for three years.

Whilst at university, studying a course that I loved, I was able to think about the sort of areas I liked the most. I'm really interested in the sociology of education, so I decided to focus my final year dissertation

on this topic. I carried out my own research into the effects of people's school experiences on their lives which furthered my interest in education, exploring how important a positive experience of school is and how much it impacts later life decisions. It also really highlighted the barriers different groups of people face when making decisions about Higher Education or career progression.

By the time I had completed my degree, I still didn't really have a specific career in mind. I was looking to stay in Sheffield where I went to university, but I needed a job. I signed up to the university's careers service emails and was sent job adverts daily for me to look through to find something I liked. Eventually, a job at the university in the Student Recruitment teams was advertised and I applied and got the job. This job involved travelling around the country delivering presentations about the University of Sheffield to students. It was a perfect first job for me – working at the university which was familiar to me and where many of my friends were still studying, developing skills such as public speaking, and also being relevant to my interest in education.

After a year of working at the University of Sheffield, my current role at HEPP was advertised. This seemed like the perfect next step – a similar presenting role as my previous job, but with more of a focus on underrepresented groups and those who wouldn't have thought university is an option for them (as I researched through my dissertation).

Without university, I wouldn't have been able to experience these job roles that I have really enjoyed. Not only have they been 'graduate jobs' specifically for those who have finished university but, through my studies I was able to identify areas of life I am really passionate about and find jobs that fit with these interests.

Overall, my university experience was so valuable despite going into it without a career plan. By focusing on what I enjoyed I loved my three years of university and was able to slowly get an idea of what job I'd like to do based on opportunities that came up.

If university is where your young person wants to go, choosing a course based solely on what they are most interested in is still a great reason to go. University offers so many opportunities such as volunteering, societies, trips abroad, and student support that can help with employability - making the most of the career support and completing a dissertation based on my interests really helped me to start making decisions about my future. It is most important that university is enjoyed and studying a subject that is interesting to the individual is really key to that.

