



Threshold Concepts in Careers and Employability Learning

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Threshold concepts are learning experiences through which a learner adopts a new, more expert identity and position. Meyer and Land (2005) characterise threshold concepts as transformative, irreversible, integrative, troublesome, and bounded to a discipline. Threshold concepts should not be considered as distinct, certain, or final, but rather as liminal spaces in which the learner oscillates between statuses of learner and expert knowing and being. Threshold concept theory frames the learner's movement through the liminal space of a threshold concept as a "shift in the learner's subjectivity, a repositioning of the self" (Myer & Land, 2005, p. 374).

Threshold concept theory has been applied to hundreds of disciplinary and professional fields and has been extensively studied in higher education teaching and learning research (Flanagan, n.d.). Although threshold concepts theory has been linked to employability, as examples of required disciplinary skills, it has not yet been applied to careers and employability learning (CEL) itself, despite clear conceptual alignment with constructivist and narrative approaches to CEL. In particular, threshold concept theory can be aligned with the "boundary experience" learning discussed in Law's (1996) and Meijers and Lengelle's (2015) work on career learning.

In this presentation, I will outline the nature of threshold concepts, their application to research in education and professional learning. I will then argue that threshold concepts can serve an important role as areas where transformative CEL experiences should be targeted and that threshold concept theory can inform how such learning experiences are designed and delivered. I will raise the question of what some threshold concepts in CEL might be and highlight career writing (Lengelle & Meijers, 2015) as an example of an approach to CEL that threshold concept theory could benefit significantly.