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**About the Presenter:**

Jenny Bimrose is a Professorial Fellow at the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick, England. She has published extensively, taught, managed and researched in higher education in the area of careers guidance for over thirty years. Many of her research projects have concentrated on the theory and practice of career counselling and guidance and on gender. Ongoing research interests include: decision-making styles, career progression and the using ICT to support guidance practice.

Alan Brown is also a Professorial Fellow at the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick, England. His current research, which has a strong international focus, is around changing occupational identities, continuing vocational training, skill formation, organisational performance, networks and supporting online learning.

Jenny and Alan have completed a lot of work together on research that highlights the importance of careers guidance for people moving into and through labour markets around the world.

**Title of Paper:** **Mid-Career Progression and Development: The Role for Careers Guidance and Counseling**

**Abstract:**

Many individuals will experience a number of career transitions as a result of recent labour market changes, moving jobs and/ or employers several times during their working lives. Knowledge and understanding of these transitions provide powerful insights to the ways in which learning and qualifications can be used to support progression and development across the life-course. Key findings from a two year European research study

(2008-2010) into forms of individual career progression will be presented that focus on continuing vocational training (CVT) and the careers guidance support required by mid-career and older workers. The research focused on how careers are changing across Europe. It explored different paths taken to develop the knowledge and skills used in employment; how and why participants gained qualifications; why they changed jobs; and why they stayed in the same career. The first phase of the study involved a comprehensive literature review, with the second phase involving both an on-line survey of over a thousand participants in ten European countries and some follow-up interviews.

Findings suggest how many individuals had continued to develop their skills in the workplace without engaging in formal education or training and were confident that they possessed a set of skills that had a continuing value in the labour market. In contrast, acquiring mid-career qualifications were important in the individual development of others (particularly those with few qualifications and those individuals undertaking less demanding work). However, the whole relationship between learning, qualifications and employment was much more nuanced than the dominant European rhetoric of 'lifelong learning' suggests. Indeed, the patterns of skill development that emerged across the life-course show how much learning and development is episodic, interspersed with 'quieter' periods.

There are clear implications for careers guidance from this research. There may be positive value in encouraging mid-career change where labour markets need increasing numbers of older workers to remain engaged in the labour market. Individuals also need support to develop coherent career narratives of where they have been; what they are doing now and where they are going, as this can transform how they view their learning, careers and identities.