Editorial
Sensitivity to Specific Contexts and Specific Individuals
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Work and career are construed and experienced in *specific* contexts by *specific* individuals. Contexts are neither abstract nor generic. Contexts are real, diverse, and multi-level. For example, at any socio-geographic location, there are multiple, interconnected levels of the economy which shape the work context (i.e., the local, regional, national, and global economies). Likewise, the community/communities and culture(s) at local, regional, national, and global levels help create the work context. Moreover, specific individuals experience the "same" work context differentially based on, for example, age, gender, religion, privilege or deprivation, minority or majority status, education, and presence or absence of a disability. It stands to reason, therefore, that a knowledge base founded on Western theory and research cannot have universal application. Nomothetic approaches used in one culture, cannot yield generally-applicable laws across varied contexts and diverse individuals. It is important to be sensitive to the specific contextual and intrapersonal interdependencies that guide a particular person's work and career. This second issue of the *Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning* is devoted to such an aim.

In the first paper in this issue, Watson brings our attention to the need for contextualising career theory. He asserts that there is a special need to redefine career psychology in a developing world context. As a South African, sensitive to his local/national context(s), he has proposed that in order to reconstruct we must first deconstruct career psychology in a developing world context such as South Africa. Blind adoption has to give way to contextual adaption of career theories and counselling models. The developing world context is not necessarily postindustrial; ergo, a theory which assumes participation in a postindustrial society (e.g., Savickas's career construction theory) cannot explain the work and career experiences/orientations of individuals in a developing world context. For example, India unlike its Western counterparts is an agrarian economy; furthermore, a substantial proportion of the population is engaged in the unorganised work sector. Dialogues that are relevant include the promotion of decent work (cf. http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm). Watson also illustrates how Western and developing world contexts differ on individualism and collectivism, the language of *I* and the language of *we*, which lead to a differential experience of individuation versus co-constructed identity. Furthermore, Watson has, in fact, questioned whether the term *career* is necessarily relevant to a developing world context unless it is adapted into a more inclusive definition covering the informal work sector and describing survival orientations rather than upwardly-mobile achievements or self-actualisation.

Kumar, in the second paper in this issue, outlines the resources, strategies, and structures for establishing career services in developing countries with a special example of India. He uses a framework recommended by the International Labour Organization (ILO) for developing career guidance systems in low- and middle-income countries. Congruent with Watson's observations, Kumar also notes that poverty, unemployment, precarity, unskilled/informal sector work, and social exclusion because of class/caste (or religion,

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ethnicity or gender) are disproportionately high in developing world contexts. For a regrettably substantial proportion of the population in developing world contexts, the concept of occupational *choice* would therefore be alien. Other than a status report of career services in India, Kumar also briefly discusses how a career services system can be established in an economically developing country. Creating a labour market information base, training career professionals, and making and implementing well-coordinated policies are some of the recommendations he highlights.

Sangma and Arulmani share findings from their survey of high school students in rural and urban areas of the East Khasi Hill district of Meghalaya in North East India. They examined the career preparation status, career belief patterns, and academic achievement motivation of these high school students. The social, community, and cultural contexts in Meghalaya are distinctively different from many other contexts in India. The population is largely constituted of multiple indigenous groups who are acknowledged by the Indian government as *scheduled tribes*. Society is matrilineal, grouped into clans with close knit families, and the youngest daughter is traditionally the inheritor. The economy is agrarian, along with industries such as tourism. The drop-out rates from middle school level are the highest in North East India. Drugs and insurgency are other problems. Against this backdrop, Sangma and Arulmani report that high school students from the East Khasi Hills region have low career preparation status, very negative career beliefs, and low academic motivation. Small yet statistically significant differences were also obtained between boys and girls, and between high school students from urban versus rural areas. For example, girls from both rural and urban areas had higher achievement motivation than boys in their region.

In the last paper in this issue, the focus is on contextualising career assessment for children with learning disabilities. Aravind and Nag cite World Health Organisation (WHO) trend estimates which indicate that the incidence of disability is higher in developing rather than economically developed countries. Aravind and Nag propose two complementary frameworks which can be used for career assessment with children who have learning disabilities: a profile identifying the child's potentials, and another identifying the child's learning skills. In particular, they emphasise the necessity of seeking information from non-competitive settings which can allow the identification of strengths beyond academics, as well as the need to use assessment methods that take into account the test-taking difficulties that accompany a learning disability.

This issue reflects our commitment to serving real people. All four papers represent voices attuned to specific contexts and specific individuals. As we build such sensitivity, we will be able to make career services and related theory more down-to-earth and simultaneously achieve a loftier aim. In other words, we will increase practicality and relevance, and at the same time, move towards fulfilling our social justice goals.