



Editorial

Agility to thoughtfully negotiate change: Ideas for guidance and counselling **Sonali Nag ***

The field of career guidance and counselling continues to be in a churn with many places globally having scant regard for the service, and others facing new challenges. This special issue captures the full range of ways the field is responding. Papers range from a focus on vulnerable populations (Aleghfeli and Nag; Pranambika & Vimala) to tool development (Schulstok et al., Miranda and Arulmani), personal reflections (Liu), and importantly, implications for theory and practice (all papers). Together, the papers cover ethnographic, interpretive, survey, vignette and mixed methods approaches, and engage with a range of theoretical concepts and frameworks, and philosophical positions. Inherent in three papers (Schulstok et al., Miranda and Arulmani, and Pranambika and Vimala) is the iterative nature of development of assessment tools and teaching materials.

Yosef Khalifa Aleghfeli and **Sonali Nag** draw attention to the experiences of refugee children and youth and their orientations to careers and livelihood planning. Focusing on a small group of unaccompanied and separated children and youth, their reported experiences are compared to refugee children and youth who have the security of being with their parents. The study captures their experience settling into the host country, Greece, at points of transition in their education-to-career journey. The analyses on their navigation and negotiations within a new context is a first attempt to uncover the 'underpinnings of smooth or choppy enculturation'. A lesson for career practitioners, case workers and counsellors is the urgent need 'to foster cultural safety, belonging, and experience of success' to set this vulnerable group firmly on the road to meaningful career development.

Torild Schulstok, **Roger Kjærgård**, **Jill Hanson**, and **Tristram Hooley** report theoretical learnings from a pilot 'construct revalidation' study of a self-report questionnaire. The tool is focussed on career decision making using the complex idea of a 'calling'. Acknowledging the need for contextualised use of questionnaires, the attempt is to understand how well the tool crosses national borders from the United States to Norway. It appears that the tool doesn't work as originally intended because of a different view of career choice making. The discussion engages with the roots of essential concepts for Norway's career theorising as, for example, in religion and spirituality, people's rights and the welfare state, and the very local social code, you shall not believe that you are someone significant in the community (Law of Jante).

Rayan Miranda and **Gideon Arulmani** present the rationale and steps to the development of a vignette based tool to capture parenting styles with a particular focus on the home career learning environment (HCLE). The focus is on the orientation to career development within the family, and the vignette approach is seen as a promising 'channel through which parents can express their opinions based on their lived experience'. Field notes, and material from student workshops and parent meetings inform the theme generation, and the focus areas for the tool. The discussion suggests that the tool has the potential to identify the predominant parenting style a parent may adopt at home. Importantly, the tool for the first

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links what and how parents approach key issues around career preparation and decision making within an upper socio-economic status context.

P. Selva Pranambika and Vimala A. present the essential and urgent need for local language career guidance resources, especially career exploration tools that may be used within rural school settings. The effort is unique for not stopping after compilation of local information and instead proceeding to pilot the material for format, comprehensibility and usability across the middle and high school years. The task is set out against a backdrop of 'pervasive challenges of uneven access, inconsistent information quality, and fragmented delivery systems in career guidance'. The materials appear at a time when the policy implementation climate in the research site (Tamil Nadu, India) is conducive, especially with the introduction of the "Naan Mudhalvan" (Me First) programme in schools with a stated focus on career guidance and skill development.

Xiangjun Liu brings a fresh perspective to thinking about work life. Introducing philosophical constructs rare in conferences and publications within the guidance and counselling fraternity, Liu uses thematic analysis and the grounded theory method to analyse ethnographic and focus group data, and unpack the day-to-day application of principles from Confucianism, a revered philosophy in China and beyond. One idea that stands out is that of diligence, the role of 'single-minded endeavour and persistent practice', captured in the beautiful imagery of grinding an iron pestle into a needle. There is indeed much in local idioms! This essay demonstrates the value of returning to cultural roots to understand how and why people negotiate their work life.

A pattern across the papers is that where the report is on primary data, the samples were convenience samples. While all authors acknowledge the limits of such studies, the pattern of samples in this volume mirrors the skew in the field more generally; random sampling is an important objective but not seen often yet.

In reading through this volume what also comes through is the theme of culture, cross-cultural differences, and the need to engage with what is encapsulated with each culture. In addition, the five papers introduce the rich language associated with the idea of a work life. These include the ideas of a calling, purpose, volition, virtue, wisdom and giftedness, as well as those of educational resilience, social orientation, home career learning environment, and self-directed learning. Together, this issue urges readers to reflect on what in our individual and collective vocabularies enrich our view of our own work life and those we work with. Importantly, the papers suggest that words and terminology, like career and livelihood skills and expertise, pick up new meanings as they travel through space and time. It is the agility to thoughtfully negotiate through the change that matters.