Editorial
Missing Links in a Changing World of Work

Sonali Nag

> When we consider the scope of the challenge to prepare for the future of work, it is important to understand that many children currently in primary school will work in jobs as adults that do not even exist today... [they] will require specific skills—a combination of technological know-how, problem-solving, and critical thinking as well as soft skills such as perseverance, collaboration, and empathy.
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> *Jim Yong Kim,*
> *Foreword to the 2019 World Development Report*

"The Changing Nature of Work" is the title of the recently published World Development Report, 2019The report drives home the centrality of the toiling individual to the world of work and captures what many readers of this journal may have already been aware of: digital technology, social media, business, commerce, health, education, social protection and social inclusion are all inextricably linked. Together they bring change that is both sociological in ramification as well as deeply psychological. In order to prepare for the ongoing changes, governments are asked to prioritise foundational learning and a social net for all (see box below).

What Can Governments Do?

- Investing in human capital, particularly early childhood education, to develop high-order cognitive and sociobehavioral skills in addition to foundational skills.
- Enhancing social protection. A solid guaranteed social minimum and strengthened social insurance, complemented by reforms in labor market rules in some emerging economies, would achieve this goal.
- Creating fiscal space for public financing of human capital development and social protection.

Excerpt from 2019 World Development Report

However, reading this important report, what stands out is the limited coverage given to guidance and counselling. Careers services not finding a mention in the matrix of interventions flags just how low the profile of this vital area still is. Why is there so little focus on career guidance and livelihood planning within policy making on work-force development and employment, especially when "prepared people" is an essential requirement? I would argue that one reason is the glaring absence of research on "what works" that is comparable in quality to the type of evidence-base available today in, for example, early childhood education, literacy and foster care. While the interventions scholarship on guidance and livelihood planning has a burgeoning descriptive literature there are too few methodologically robust qualitative or quantitative studies. A global research agenda to systematically study the outcomes of interventions in guidance and livelihood planning is needed. What helps clarify individuals' aspirations? How do aspirations underpin decision making? Can reciprocal connections be made between aspirations, decision making, well-being and performance? Such a research programme will need to go beyond points of visible impact such as reduced drop-out and improved productivity. The developing science of measurement for hard-to-capture indices like self-efficacy, boredom and enjoyment, career beliefs, and adaptability will be important for this endeavour, as also cultural sensitivity.

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I introduce the papers in this volume of IJCLP within the context of this 2019 World Development Report. Shreshta, Regmi, Aravind and Arulmani present the adaptation and assessment of a community-schools intervention in the Himalayan country of Nepal. This guidance intervention held *localisation* as its guiding principle. The outcomes reported are promising, and yet the authors ask for a more robust assessment of the intervention. This is prudent given that too often career guidance interventions gain popularity without a parallel building up of an evidence-base of what works for whom and at what point in their career development process.

Defocusing from the larger community but still firmly focussed on the systems of support and influence that surround the child, Oomen discusses an intervention in the Netherlands that focuses upon the *parent*. While embracing the inputs of the parent (and wider family) has been an idea that has held sway with theoreticians and practitioners in collectivist communities, it is interesting to note a similar thrust in a more individualistic society.

A third paper in this volume also has clear implications for practitioners: Bomford and Hambly introduce the reader to their book on Creative Career Coaching. Their thesis that traditional Western approaches to career decision may not serve the purpose in an increasingly *multicultural* world, is of particular importance.

Moreno da Fonseca and Chatzichristou present the perspective of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) on what 'the correct setup' might look like in a locally-responsive, modern day careers service. The authors outline the choice-making issues related to *labour market information*, and how information technology has been harnessed by the European Commission's digital platform, Skills Panorama.

At the heart of any form of engagement with work lies the worker's *wellbeing*, an issue addressed by Easton and van Laar. The authors give us an update on the psychometric and cross-cultural data being built around their Work Related Quality of Work Life questionnaire (WRQoL). The questionnaire is designed to assess the experience of strain and stress at work both for the purposes of intervention planning and as a research tool to assess efficacy of interventions.

Sultana sends out a clarion call to accommodate the philosophies, knowledge and wisdom inherent in the *global south*. In doing so, this paper suggests that recording ideas from multiple contexts has the potential to "prise open spaces for critical reflection" and thus reframe guidance and counselling services.

A final paper, unique in its thrust and foundational in the ideas it promotes, is by Kversøy and Kversøy. If *diversity* were a cornerstone of a career guidance service, then sensitivity to the contributions of everyone across the attainments spectrum — including individuals with intellectual disabilities — follows naturally. The paper narrates the lived experience of one family and demonstrates for us how this can be done.

What are the missing links in the Changing World of Work that papers in this volume throw light upon? All papers value the local but, importantly, show that localisation efforts come in various shades. Sultana provides the theoretical underpinnings for this perspective and Moreno da Fonseca and Chatzichristou an example of a scaled-up programme yet underlining the importance of remaining locally relevant. Easton and Van Laar provide a measurement tool and examine this through the lens of local relevance. Shreshta et al., Kversøy and Kversøy, and Oomen provide practitioner examples on how the young can be supported to become more prepared for the world of work they will enter. The contributions appear simple yet potentially of enduring pedagogical value: embed daily life in student worksheets to prompt self-discovery and connections with the ambient world of work (Shreshta et al.), include important others in the child's life to provide collective wisdom in decision making (Oomen), and begin smart projects that exploit the democratising power of today's technology-driven world of commerce, business and public services (Kversøy & Kversøy). Together, the papers have a lot to contribute, especially for countries like India where apathetic governance, unhindered ambition and absent monitoring of guidance and livelihood planning services place the child born in 2019 at risk of reaching only a fraction of his or her full potential twenty years hence, in the world of work of 2039.