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Career guidance for social justice,
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In recent years, interest in the role that career guidance can play in supporting social justice has steadily been increasing. This upsurge of interest has resulted in the development of a range of models, theories, publications and interventions designed to enhance engagement with this approach (see Hooley et al., 2018; Casanova et al., 2019). As the social justice approach to career guidance begins to be better understood, researchers and practitioners organise conferences, seminars and workshops to disseminate its ideas. This community-building process can be labelled as a change-oriented scholarly social movement.

¹ The unexpected news of the sudden death of Professor Ronald Sultana arrived on 24 November 2024, while this issue was being prepared. As Professor Jean Guichrad wrote: „Ronald, marked by the analyzes of Pierre Bourdieu, as was Professor Yrjö Paavo Häyrynen of the University of Joensuu (Finland), wondered, like the latter, about the contribution of ordinary interventions supporting career decision-making to the reproduction of economic and social inequalities. Furthermore, sensitive to the Mediterranean origin of Western civilization (Greco-Latin culture, Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions) and aware of the terrible crisis of the Anthropocene that it has generated (a crisis manifested, among others, by various current armed conflicts, and thousands of migrants who died crossing this sea of the origins), he worked to find ways to contribute to its resolution. The death of Ronald, for me, is the loss of a friend to whom I felt very close. It is the sorrow of knowing that I won't never again be able to exchange ideas in an atmosphere of warm trust, with this brilliant spirit". This is a great loss for our entire scientific community.

Such pursuits have notably been undertaken by the editors of the *Career Guidance for Social Justice* blog (<https://careerguidancesocialjustice.wordpress.com/>). For example, they launched a webinar series devoted to discussing social justice and career guidance. The first of these webinars was held on 11 March 2022. It was competently moderated by Raza Abbas and featured Tristram Hooley, Ronald Sultana, Marcelo Afonso Ribeiro and Anna Bilon-Piórko. The audience mostly consisted of practitioners and researchers from around the world.

Global Injustice

The panellists were based in a variety of geographical locations and had a shared interest in the idea of career guidance contributing to social justice. Despite their common preoccupation, their perspectives, proposals and analyses of injustice varied as they were shaped by their different biographies and socio-cultural contexts. Nevertheless, they all agreed that the global economy, together with its social consequences, had generated an array of phenomena clearly observable across the world.

The panellists emphasised that, amidst the complexity of our world, it was possible to identify the most important issues that career guidance practitioners and researchers faced and needed to address. These included:

- ◆ **the fragility of the global political economy.** In their attempts to live their lives, individuals are currently experiencing a range of problems and challenges. Social inequality is likely to continue exacerbating, and the number of people living and working in precarity can also be expected to increase, leading to a rise in the number of socially excluded individuals;
- ◆ **the climate crisis.** People are already grappling with the effects of the climate crisis on their lives and work. In all probability, climate-related issues will intensify, and this is likely to have a major impact on the world of work and the experience of careering;
- ◆ **a crisis of democracy.** Many countries are witnessing a surge of authoritarianism and undemocratic government. This crisis calls for new approaches to democratic participation and raises big questions for education. To address this, we need fresh and relevant theoretical perspectives that can inform policy, practice and research;
- ◆ **the continuing importance of neoliberalism.** The neoliberal ideology continues to inform policy making, and the way that it individualises people provides the context for careering. As a response to this, individuals must oppose productivism and defend their fundamental human rights.

Many of these issues affect different communities in different ways and to various degrees, depending on where they are located in the national and global dynamics of power. This also means that any model or conceptualisation of career

guidance must remain vigilant and avoid imposing theories and practices from the Global North on the rest of the world and or adopting them as ‘the point of reference’ by default. Rather, we need to be sensitive to the specificity of contexts and generate understandings of situations and needs, as well as responses to them, in a grounded manner. Social justice is also about epistemic justice (Bengtsson, 2022; Silva et al., 2016).

Can Career Guidance Help?

The panellists stressed that all the geopolitical issues discussed above were closely related to individuals’ lives and careers. Therefore, they deserved in-depth consideration and careful attention in career guidance settings, even though career guidance must not be regarded as a panacea for all the problems the world.

Career guidance draws on ideas and notions about work, career and ways in which one can manage one’s work, learning, and life in a journey of complex transitions and changes. Traditional theories do not seem capable of facing up to the challenges and changes in contemporary career construction, because they are focused on adaptive strategies, which do not provide individuals and groups with means to challenge oppression or generate social repositioning. We can understand society from the point of view of the haves and have-nots, and, all too often, the traditional theories used by career guidance only help the haves and ignore the have-nots. If we are to re-imagine career guidance, we will have to revise these assumptions and develop new types of theory and practice that can address the economic, environmental and democratic crises and support people in careering their way through and beyond neoliberalism.

As aptly noted, ‘[c]areer is all around us and there is no escape from it, because it describes the coming together of our life, our learning, and our work’ (McCash et al., 2021, pp. 8–9). Career is part of everybody’s life, and everybody deserves and should have the right to have a career. To encourage people to see that they have a career and that it fosters the potential for agency in their lives is a social justice claim in itself. However, to address this claim, we need to be able to offer lifelong career guidance to everybody, regardless of who they are.

Our guidance practices should be underpinned by the recognition of interconnectedness between career development and the dynamics of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, social, family and community values and religious background. Given this, the five signposts proposed by Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen (2021) are basic recommendations for our practices as they show that career guidance can incorporate building critical consciousness, naming oppression, questioning what is normal, encouraging people to work together and working at a range of levels.

There is a globally growing body of social justice-informed career guidance. During the webinar, the panellists described some of the relevant examples and highlighted their social justice-orientation. Such initiatives take place on various levels, including:

- ◆ **the theoretical level**, where publications and initiatives devoted to social justice, decent work, social class, gender and other dynamics of oppression proliferate. Critical discourse has already been introduced into the field of career guidance, and researchers are quite capable of drawing on it to support new theories and practice (Thomsen et al., 2022). The efforts to build communities and launch collective actions are also observable, which is crucial for the development of theoretical foundations for new, socially just practices. We also see increasing worldwide attempts to engage with career guidance theories as articulated in the centres of the Global North, but in a critical manner that is sensitive to and mindful of the context that we can refer to as the Global South (Ribeiro et al., 2015).
- ◆ **the educational level**, where considerable attention has been given to the development of career learning, career curriculums and career education around the world. Some countries (such as Norway, England and Malta) have introduced a new set of tenets into career guidance in order to foster critical awareness in school students and encourage them to decode and understand the way power circulates in the world of work.
- ◆ **the political level**, where widespread efforts have been implemented to widen access to career guidance services and design consistent and progressive career guidance policies;
- ◆ **the social level**, where some practices (for example, in Brazil) are intended to support community learning and development by tapping into the existing social resources.

All the panellists agreed that the ‘big issues,’ such as social justice, are of paramount importance to the career guidance field since they can be a source of inspiration and motivation for changes in theory and practice. Nevertheless, career guidance in several countries still needs advocacy and professionalisation, which must advance along with the development of research and theory. Reflexive explorations of the ‘big issues’ can fuel learning about doing, which, for its part, can support practising guidance differently.

The webinar ended with a short discussion on the panellists’ hopes and anticipations for the following five years. The panellists agreed that, despite several worrying global issues, such as the lack of peace in the world, the persistence of the pandemic and the economic crisis, there were also a range of positive and hopeful developments. In our field, the latter are exemplified, for example, by the development of the movement for social justice in career guidance. The panellists argued that a crucial concern would be to maintain our efforts for advancing social justice

and to build communities of researchers and practitioners committed to this approach to career guidance.

Those wishing to find out about and/or engage with this perspective are invited to sign up to the *Career Guidance for Social Justice* blog at <https://careerguidancesocialjustice.wordpress.com/>

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