

# Listening to new voices in the career development field

This issue of the NICEC journal presents the work of a number of 'early career researchers'. The term 'early career researcher' can be a difficult one in a field such as career development where relatively few people begin to research until they are already well into their own careers. Many of our authors have a history as practitioners of various kinds, which provides context and inspiration for their decision to begin to undertake research and publish. However, all of the lead contributors to this issue represent new voices that are beginning to shape the career development field through their research and writing.

By explicitly giving space to new voices in the field NICEC aims both to support the growth of the individuals participating in the issue and to showcase new ideas, theories and approaches. The current historical moment is characterised by technological change, political instability, global inequality and of course Covid-19. Everywhere we look our world is changing and the possibilities for career and for the provision of career education and guidance are changing with it. Because of this it is vital that we continue to search for new theories and listen to new voices in the field.

The editors for this issue came together through the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC). We are Danish, English, Finnish and South African and sometimes resident in Norway and Switzerland as well as the above countries. The issue was therefore an exercise in international collaboration. It has its origins somewhere amidst summer school debates about career theory and research methods in the heat of the island of Malta during the 6th ECADOC summer school. But it developed further in Copenhagen at the *Critical perspectives on agency and social justice in transition and career development* conference organised by the Nordic Network on Transitions, Career and Guidance (NoRNet). As the editorial team was finalised we shifted from working at the periphery of European conferences and began to collaborate online. By the time the editing was beginning in earnest we were

confined to our houses by Covid-19 and learning to work together through Zoom and other online tools.

We invited papers from new researchers in the field on *any* subject related to career development. We welcomed submissions from different research traditions (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods and conceptual) and invited contributors to explore career and career education and guidance across the life-course. We were overwhelmed by interest and were able to select the most interesting and high-quality submissions that we received. Submissions were selected based on any of the following criteria: 1) the innovativeness of the research presented; 2) evidence of collaboration either at national or international level; and 3) whether the research addressed issues of diversity and inclusivity.

Before we introduce the articles in this issue, we will briefly provide some words about the ECADOC programme and the challenges of being an early career researcher in the field of career guidance and counselling.

## The European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC)<sup>1</sup>

ECADOC brings together doctoral candidates working on career and career guidance from higher education institutions across Europe and beyond. This initiative embeds early career researchers in a supportive research community and encourages them to develop high quality and ethically sound career and guidance related research in Europe and across the world.

ECADOC was co-funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme from October 2013 to November 2016. The vision was to set up a sustainable European Doctoral Programme

<sup>1</sup> For more information on ECADOC please visit <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it/ecadoc/>

specialising in career guidance and counselling research. ECADOC network members and alumni come from more than 30 European countries and beyond. The initiative is backed by all of the main organisations supporting career guidance research internationally including the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC), the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the network of career counseling and guidance programs at higher education institution in the Nordic and Baltic countries (VALA), the Nordic network for Research on Transitions, Career and Guidance (NoRNet) and Euroguidance. These bodies and a range of national organisational and research groups help to recruit participants to the programme each year.

ECADOC's core activity is the organisation of an annual summer school that brings together researchers from across Europe and beyond. The summer school typically takes the form of a one-week doctoral course containing lectures, workshops and an innovative approach to mentored peer learning called 'collective academic supervision' (Nordentoft, Thomsen, & Wichmann-Hansen, 2013). The summer schools include opportunities for PhD candidates to work with internationally renowned career guidance researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, as well as the editors of several journals. The summer school creates an opportunity for the organising committees to offer focused lectures on specific research themes, methods and ethics in career research in collaboration with the leading international scholars in the community. ECADOC has also offered a space where participants have been able to 'find each other' and connect around their mutual research themes and interests, resulting in fruitful discussions and joint international research projects.

Following the end of European Commission funding for ECADOC, the network of European higher education institutions engaged in the programme continued to organise the yearly ECADOC Doctoral summer school on a voluntary basis. Even Covid could not put a stop to the network with the organising team at Jönköping University in Sweden, led by Dr. Ingela Bergmo-Prvulovic, transforming the 2020 ECADOC summer school into an online event. Although researchers were unable to come together in Sweden, they were able to continue to exchange information and ideas and

build a community between early stage researchers and more experienced scholars. This exchange and network building lies at the heart of ECADOC and all scholars are encouraged reach out to each other for collaboration, support and feedback in order to advance our field of research as a community of scholars. ECADOC 2021 will be hosted by Napier University in Edinburgh and led by NICEC's own Dr. Pete Robertson.

ECADOC has also facilitated and enabled participants to build other forms of collaboration. These include joint conference symposia such as the early stage researchers' symposia that have taken place at the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance conference, collaborative publications like the *New perspectives on career counseling and guidance in Europe* book (Cohen-Scali, Nota, & Rossier, 2018) including Weber et al.'s (2018) development of a future research agenda for the field. This issue of the NICEC journal is the latest example of the kind of international, cross-disciplinary collaboration that ECADOC seeks to foster.

We encourage early career researchers to seek out information about ECADOC and how to participate in summer schools and be part of the international and diverse academic community. And we encourage experienced career researchers to actively look at the outcomes of ECADOC and engage in the discussion on the topics raised by early career researchers. We also encourage more established researchers to offer to host a future summer school.

## Early career researchers in the careers field

Being an early career researcher comes with quite a few career-related issues. The working conditions for early career researchers are often characterised by precarious employment with few opportunities for advancement (Courtois, & O'Keefe, 2015; Herschberg, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2018). This general problem is exacerbated for researchers working in a small, interdisciplinary field like careers where the number of full-time and permanent academic roles is very limited.

Many careers researchers find themselves in broader academic groups like lifelong learning, education, work-life studies, sociology, or psychology with only a

few colleagues who share their interest in career and career guidance. In this situation it can be hard to find people to talk to about your work and your research interests. The ECADOC network has sought to address this by forming an international community of like-minded individuals in the careers field. It provides participants with social and professional connections and solidarity and gives them close colleagues with the same academic preoccupation and theoretical field. These relationships endure beyond the immediate interaction of the summer school and lead to people becoming close colleagues, sparring partners, collaborators and constructive critics even when they live in different countries. This is a huge strength for the coming generation of career researchers that this network has been built already very early in their career.

ECADOC has shown that the number of doctoral students in the field is higher than ever and growing continuously. This is something that we celebrate as it contributes to a vibrant research culture and increases the capacity for research, evaluation, and the development of new theory. But, simultaneously, for those individuals pursuing a research career within the field it raises the question of how it is possible to create a successful career which enables them to make use of their skills and knowledge whilst also securing decent pay and conditions. For some this is about thinking about how they can forge a research career path outside of the traditional setting of universities and research institutions. In this sense, ECADOC can also be one potential networking platform to enable unconventional career steps or moves.

## About this issue

As stated earlier, for this issue of the NICEC Journal we invited papers from new researchers on any subject related to career development. In the following section, we will give a short introduction and some insights into the articles making up this issue. They are presented in their order of appearance. They represent different research traditions, look into various phenomena and concepts within career development, and come from various geographical locations across the globe. The articles selected for publication reflect some of the most topical issues in the field: how career guidance could reach out to people in disadvantaged and marginal positions; how we could think through ‘social

justice lenses’ in career guidance; how changes in the labour market structures could affect young people’s entries to working life and how families, communities and broader cultural contexts come to frame the enactment of careers for different individuals.

In the first article, **Anouk J. Albien** takes on the important question of how career development interventions can lead to lasting changes. In her article, she explores how life-design career counselling supports change in a group of disadvantaged South African adolescents. Drawing on a qualitative post-intervention evaluation of the adolescents’ participation in the intervention, she shows how it elicited long-term changes in career development and facilitated reflective processes. She ends the article by discussing the implications of this for both research and practice.

Next, **Jeanine van Halteren** reflects critically on guidance interventions for the marginalised. She presents findings from her small-scale exploratory study into the lives and careers of survivors of contemporary slavery. Through the analyses of various data produced in the project, such as field notes, interviews and visual data van Halteren arrives at C.A.R.E. – connection, engagement, acknowledgment and respect – as key elements in delivering meaningful and context-sensitive support into the lives and careers of people considered ‘marginal’.

In their article, **Petra Elftorp and Lucy Hearne** bring another ‘marginal voice’ to the discussion on careers and career interventions, focusing on experiences of adults with dyslexia. The authors draw from Axel Honneth’s conceptions of recognition together with an interactionist and non-reductionist biopsychosocial (BPS) model of disability to examine adults’ experiences on dyslexia from a social justice point of view. Elftorp and Hearne analyse experiences of misrecognition and transformative experiences of recognition and offer some valuable implications for both individual and collective career guidance practices.

**Esther Galfalvi, Tristram Hooley and Siobhan Neary** explore whether young people use or expect to use the gig economy for their careers. The size of the so-called ‘gig’ economy, working mediated through online platforms such as Uber or Ebay, is increasing globally each year. Drawing on interviews with young people age 16-19, the authors discuss how young people in England perceive the gig economy

and whether they feel that it will be relevant to their careers, with a view to discussing if the gig economy should be included in careers education programmes or guidance.

**Mara Šimunović, Iva Šverko, and Toni Babarović** discuss how the recognition of parental career-specific behaviours as well as parents' understandings of the potential benefit of these behaviours could facilitate their children's career adaptability. Implications for special counselling interventions are provided for students who perceive that their parents are not providing enough career-related support. These address the gap that exists between parents and their children in understandings of the world-of-work.

The next article comes from **Emily Róisín Reid** who originally wrote it in response to the NICEC Bill Law Memorial Award. In the article Emily looks at how Law's (1981) Community Interaction Theory helps to explain the career journeys of medical students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. She argues that Law's perspective remains relevant to the endeavour of widening participation to higher education and suggests that guidance practitioners have an important role to play as applied psychologists and sociologists.

**Deborah Crook** presents an example of rights-based research in her article, where she addresses what kind of perspectives young people in northwest England have about enablers and barriers to continued education. She has applied participatory methods for young people to imagine steps towards future possible selves, including collaborative story-making with researchers. As an outcome, she questions models of aspiration-raising that prioritise particular trajectories, and emphasises the importance of inter-generational relationships, and especially the role and support of significant adults in the lives of young people.

The last article in this edition is an elaboration of a career counselling intervention within the Life Design paradigm applied in the collectivist cultural context of urban India. **Aparna Bhalla and Gill Frigerio** provide a critical engagement with different career counselling methods and their theoretical underpinnings through an exploration of them with two clients. They use a step-by-step method to assess their usefulness in this collectivistic context and what implications these findings could have in facilitating the career transitions and trajectories for Indian clients,

whose career needs are unique and culturally informed.

We hope that these articles provide proof of the ongoing innovativeness of our field. At the same time, we hope they will be a source of inspiration and offer an insight into the latest trends and ideas within career development research. Enjoy reading of these articles and listening to these new voices!

---

Anouk J. Albien, Bo Klindt Poulsen,  
Sanna Toivainen, Miika Kekki &  
Tristram Hooley, Editors

---

## References

- Cohen-Scali, V., Nota, L. and Rossier, J. (2018). *New perspectives on career counselling and guidance in Europe*. Springer: Cham.
- Courtois, A. D. M., & O'Keefe, T. (2015). Precarity in the ivory cage: Neoliberalism and casualisation of work in the Irish higher education sector. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 13(1), 43-66.
- Herschberg, C., Benschop, Y., & Van den Brink, M. (2018). Precarious postdocs: A comparative study on recruitment and selection of early-career researchers. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 34(4), 303-310. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2018.10.001>
- Law, B. (1981). Community interaction: a 'mid-range' focus for theories of career development in young adults, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 9(2), 142-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069888108258210>
- Nordentoft, H. M., Thomsen, R., & Wichmann-Hansen, G. (2013). Collective academic supervision: A model for participation and learning in higher education. *Higher Education*, 65(5), 581-593. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9564-x>
- Weber, P. C., Katsarov, J., Cohen-Scali, V., Mulvey, R., Nota, L., Rossier, J., & Thomsen, R. (2018). European research agenda for career guidance and counselling. In V. Cohen-Scali, L. Nota, & J. Rossier. (Eds.) *New perspectives on career counseling and guidance in Europe* (pp. 219-250). Springer: Cham.