Editorial

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This Journal's issue 13(3) is a special issue on 'Group Career Guidance and Counselling'.

The articles introduce career-oriented applications and models of group counselling, reflect on the outcomes and impacts of group counselling, and evaluate the cultural and institutional contexts of group counselling. The issue has been jointly guest-edited by Professor William Borgen from University of British Columbia and Professor Marjatta Vanhalakka-Ruoho from University of Eastern Finland.

The practical premises of this special issue arose from the notion that group guidance and counselling are quite narrowly used as career guidance practices at schools, in educational institutions and in workplaces. Also, group guidance and counselling have not been widely studied in the field of career guidance and counselling research.

The articles in the special issue introduce various contexts and cultural settings of group guidance and counselling. Group counselling and its practices are studied and developed in the contexts of young people, students in higher education, employees in their workplace and unemployed people who have been laid off. The aim of the special issue is to emphasize the importance of diverse contexts, different models and various theoretical perspectives.

Jane Westergaard, in her article *Group work: pleasure or pain? An effective guidance activity or a poor substitute for one-to-one interventions with young people?*, defines the concept of personal learning and development (PLD) group

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work as a guidance activity for young people in both career counselling and youth support practice.

Merja Koivuluhta's and Helena Puhakka's study, *Dialogical approach applied in group counselling: Case study*, utilizes structured group counselling and a dialogical approach in developing counselling groups for students beginning computer science studies.

Leena Penttinen and Mikko Vesisenaho, in their article *Career repertoires of IT students: A Group counselling case study in higher education*, report a study intended to develop group counselling for IT students to promote the students' agency concerning their future careers. In this article, group counselling discussions were approached from a discourse-analytic perspective.

Marjatta Vanhalakka-Ruoho and Ritva Ruponen, in their article *What do the participants gain? Group counselling to enhance agency at work*, introduce a study which was carried out in an IT enterprise. The task was to study structured group counselling as a space for enhancing participants' agency at work.

Timo Spangar's and Anita Keskinen's article, *"Stop and go": In search of new ecology and dynamics in group counselling for employees in transition*, describes a group counselling intervention developed for employees in transition. The article explores the ecology and the dynamics of the SG process, including the simultaneous presence of societal, social ('meso') and the individual in assessing the group counselling process.

Four of the articles were created within a Finnish research project titled 'Group counselling in encountering uncertainty and changes. Navigating forward'. The project has been both a research and a developmental project. Group counselling and its practices were studied and developed in the contexts of schools, educational institutions, workplaces and lay-off situations. The purpose of the research project was to study how group guidance and counselling and its practices act as cultural and relational tools to promote agency and the career construction of the participants.

The research project is based on flexible applications of the structured group counselling model developed in Canada (Borgen et al., 1989; Westwood et al., 1994). Although the contents of the structured group counselling model were planned for groups in employment counselling settings, its concepts can be applied in a variety of contexts—e.g. for student guidance at schools and in other educational institutions, in higher education and in workplaces.

The issue cultivates the interplay of different models and theoretical approaches. Jane Westergaard applies learning theory to PLD group work in her article *Group work: pleasure or pain? An effective guidance activity or a poor substitute for one-to-one interventions with young people?* This article brings out the viewpoints of the practitioners applying PLD group work and the FAAST-model. Two of the articles have dialogical, developmental approaches: *Dialogical approach applied in group counselling: Case study* (Koivuluhta and Puhakka) and *Group counselling in enhancing agency at work: The case of IT-professionals* (Vanhalakka-Ruoho and Ruponen). The focus is on the development of individual agency: What does the individual gain? From this viewpoint basic questions are: What kind of resources do the participants gain during group counselling processes? How do the resources of

group counselling enhance the developmental changes of the participants? What kind of courses of development do the participants create in the context of group counselling?

Two of the articles apply a more discursive, socio-cultural approach: *Career repertoires of IT students: A group counselling case study in higher education* (Penttinen and Vesisenaho) and “*Stop and go*”—*Spaces and dynamics in re-engaging with working life* (Keskinen and Spangar). The focus of interest is on group discussions that facilitate co-constructing meanings about career, and co-creating a sense of agency. The basic questions are: How are the individual and the group processes negotiated? What kinds of repertoires are constructed in group counselling situations and relationships? What kinds of connections are created between the individual’s psychological resources, his/her social networks and relationships and the cultural and societal ‘necessities’?

We hope that this special issue contributes to your own professional development, stimulates the use of career group counselling and informs further research in this area. The articles also may promote the consideration of a greater range of theoretical perspectives related to career guidance and counselling as we anticipate a paradigm shift from methodology focused on life-planning to approaches centred on relating and connecting.

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