

Editorial

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While we were preparing the previous issue (Vol. 8, No. 3) on competencies for educational and vocational guidance practitioners, two more manuscripts on the competence topic were submitted for publication. This proves just how much interest there is for the subject in our field of research and it also shows that the publication of the results of the IAEVG world-wide survey was long overdue. So we are very pleased to be able to include these two articles in the current issue of the journal.

Bryan Hiebert, the present IAEVG president, in his article “Raising the profile of career guidance: Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner (EVGP)”, reflects on how IAEVG can contribute towards improving the quality of career development services. He refers in this perspective to the credentialing process that was recently set in motion by the association. One of the basic assumptions in this credentialing process deserves special attention. Career guidance is seen as much broader than pure work/career related interventions. It should be extended to every decision in a person’s life that has an impact on the career or work-role. This *holistic*—or should we say *wholistic* as proposed by the author—approach considerably expands the demands that are put on guidance practitioners. This first article on competencies in this issue is something of an extension of what was presented in the special competencies monograph. What all these contributions have in common is that they see the competency concept as rather clear and defined in the career context. Competencies are used as a basis for assessing the quality of guidance support and for defining the standards by which practitioners should abide.

The second article on this topic is of a very different nature. The well underpinned article by Ron Sultana, of the University of Malta, on “Competence and competence frameworks in career guidance: Complex and contested concepts” will certainly raise a fair amount of discussion. The author opens a debate on the

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concepts and their relevance for the development of competence/competency frameworks in career guidance and human resource development. The author is convinced of the complexity of the concepts and points out that they have been contested over time. He even starts his conclusion with the reflection that “the use of a competence approach to improve career guidance services is not unproblematic”. At the same time, however, he gives some important recommendation to those who make use of competency-based approaches. We hope that this contribution will encourage many readers to reflect on the topic of competence and on the conversion of competence into standards for good practice.

The third article in this issue is a very atypical contribution in the field of career counselling by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, of the Danish School of Education, and Norm Amundson, of the University of British Columbia. The article on “Residing in silence and wonder: Career counselling from the perspective of being” to some extent relates counselling sessions to spiritual experiences as described by some medieval and modern mystics. There can be serious doubt whether experience of this kind actually occurs during career counselling sessions. In particular, because there is no reference to concrete research results to underpin their point of view. Even more controversial is the suggestion that is made in relation to the qualifications required from career counsellors. The authors argue that there is a need to go beyond the traditional counselling qualifications and that an “ability to wonder” should be the “fifth element”. Many of our practitioners are working within very rational and logical based approaches where “true reasoning”, as forwarded by Frank Parsons, is still at the centre of the process. We are convinced that the idea of philosophical counselling, as presented in this article, may be controversial, which is precisely why the article, after much hesitation and discussion, was finally accepted. We believe the contribution will trigger further discussion on how important the “ability to wonder” is for counsellors. Can this really be regarded as a new qualification for career counsellors or is this just an expression of mysticism? We hope our readers will feel the need to react and join the discussion.

The fourth article, by Hung-Bin Sheu, of the Arizona State University, and Robert Lent, of the University of Maryland, on “A social cognitive perspective on well-being in educational and work Settings: Cross-cultural considerations” gives an overview of two models and considers research conducted in a social cognitive perspective in relation to well-being. In particular, the implications for cross-cultural counselling practice may interest a number of our readers. This article is the first one to appear in this journal that resulted from a selection of papers presented at the IV Vocational Development Conference—1st Virtual Conference at the University of Minho in Braga, Portugal from 27 to 29 February 2009. The selection was made by our colleague Maria do Céu Taveira, who organised the conference at her university. Other contributions from this selection will follow in future issues.

The present issue of the journal is clearly unusual. But we are confident it is an issue that will stimulate our readers to reflect on some of the viewpoints presented and one that may convince them to participate in further discussions. We look forward to receiving your contribution.