



Editorial

Career Counselling and Livelihood Planning: Challenges and Opportunities

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Humankind has given itself the name *homo sapiens* implying that we as a species, through the exercise of intelligent action, undergirded by wisdom accumulated across generations, are capable of transcending a merely need-based engagement with our surroundings. In fact, by calling ourselves sapient we refer to ourselves as being wise, endowed with the ability to discern. It is this wisdom and intelligence that qualifies human beings' ongoing encounter with the environment. The human being is capable of directing effort, both intellectual and physical, toward constructions and fabrications, both material and non-material, that can endure for durations of time beyond the phase of the fabrication and the construction. This is the human activity called work. Human work in this sense transforms, adapts, forms and shapes. Hannah Arendt (1958) names *homo sapiens* in this garb, as *homo faber*—man the maker, the working man. This, of course, extends to the woman as well.

The meaning and purpose of work has changed over time. Shaped by the exigencies of the times, influenced by ideologies and tenets, transformed by revolutions, work today includes the notions of “livelihood” and “career”. The idea of a personal career is a relatively modern one, linked perhaps to the Industrial Revolution, when the labour market began to demand occupational specialisation. This led to the emergence of specialisations within disciplines (e.g., career psychology, labour economics, and sociology of work) which have guided theorising and model building in relation to career guidance and counselling. A critical point to be noted, however, is that most of the theories that undergird career counselling today have emerged in Western cultural contexts. The meaning attributed to work, livelihood and career varies across cultures and societies. Eastern philosophies present constructs that have a direct bearing upon the meaning and purpose of work, occupation and career. Central to the Indian orientation to existence is *dharma*, which refers to a code of responsibility. “Right living” is a principal value which calls for an engagement with life that is mutually supportive, nurturing and upholding rather than exploitative or manipulative. Work, therefore, is understood as a duty and a contribution. *Samsara* is a philosophic construct that describes an individual's existence as spanning lifetimes, beginning, developing, ending, and beginning once again. Development is not conceived as unidirectional, progressing from a start to a terminal point. Instead, development is seen as a constantly regenerating cycle that builds upon earlier development (Arulmani, 2011). *Karma Yoga*, qualifies the notion of *samsara* and exhorts the person to be vigorously engaged with life but without selfish intentions. Karma and *samsara* encourage action and uphold the self-mediation of circumstances. “Effort” is commended and the individual is persuaded to influence the future through deeds performed thoughtfully and consciously in the present (Arulmani, 2011). In the ancient Indian *ashrama* system, human development is conceptualised as occurring in stages, with each stage carrying clearly defined roles and responsibilities. During the early stages of one's life, the purpose of work is closely connected with the creation of wealth. Exerting effort to achieve personal gain is encouraged. As one grows older, and matures, vigorous engagement with work is expected to go on, but with a different intention. The purpose of work during the latter stages of one's life is to serve without motivations of personal gain. The philosophic scaffolding provided by the Indian approaches, therefore, give work a certain kind of meaning and purpose. Other cultures would imbue meaning to work in different ways.

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Those implementing interventions with roots in worldviews that differ from the perspectives of the community for whom the intervention is meant, could face challenges of relevance, community participation, and ultimately, programme effectiveness (Reese & Vera, 2007). There is an urgent need for models and methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to the culture and economies of these countries. Career guidance is rapidly emerging as a strongly felt need in non-Western contexts. There is a requirement to collate extensive descriptions and inferences from systematic research in multiple settings that can inform theoretical models and sensitive methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to different cultures and economies.

The Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning (IJCLP) is a peer-reviewed publication, established to support the development of culture-resonant theories, models and methods of career guidance and counselling, with a specific emphasis on developing world contexts. As discussed, all cultures have their own ways, grounded in tradition and experience, of engaging with the world of work. The need at hand is to draw upon these traditions and customs to create career guidance techniques and methods that would have contemporary relevance.

Career decision-making is influenced by a wide variety of cultural, economic and psychological forces. The first paper in this the first issue of the IJCLP presents a survey led by Anuradha Bakshi, that examined *influences on career choices* as perceived by youth in Mumbai, one of the largest cities in the world. Bakshi and her collaborators use their findings to discuss the influences of self vis-à-vis those of social class, gender, the family, and teachers. A striking finding is the minimal role played by professional career guidance services and implications this has for the practice of career guidance. Radha Parikh draws the reader's attention to the issues that surround the *career development of women*, providing an overview of the manner in which education, empowerment and legislation have, historically and more recently in the past 50 years or so, contributed to the Indian woman's personal and economic development. Writing from Germany, Jolanta Kavale examines the concept of "need". Her review paper shows the multi-layered nature of the construct of need and presents ideas of how *needs assessment in career guidance* could be optimised. In the next paper, Rachel Valles draws the reader's attention to the existential question of *purpose in life*. Her paper presents information from an intervention study aimed at helping high school students grapple with the purpose of their lives. An interesting finding from this work is the close association noted between the stated purpose in life and having career goals and objectives. Gideon Arulmani, in the final paper of this issue presents *cultural preparedness* as a theoretical framework within which to view the development and delivery of career guidance services. Focusing on career beliefs and their influence on orientations to work and career, he presents two career counselling techniques to work with clients' career beliefs.

The first *National Conference of the Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning* was held in November, 2011, in Shillong, Meghalaya. Hosted by the Meghalaya Association of Professional Counsellors (MAPC) and the Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU), the conference focused on the theme "Looking Within". There were excellent paper presentations on topics such as Traditional Livelihoods and Occupations, Entrepreneurship, Local and Global Economies, Influences on Career Development, and ICT and Career Guidance. Maribon Sangma, President of the MAPC and head of the conference organizing committee, presents a report on this important milestone in the history of the career guidance movement in India.

A particularly special feature of this inaugural issue of the IJCLP is brief contributions from the journal's international board of associate editors. The comments and observations of these leaders in the field are presented as *Tips for Career Counselors*.

We welcome you to the first issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning and look forward to your participation in forthcoming issues.

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