

# Editorial

Peter Plant, one of NICEC's international fellows, has edited a new collection of articles that provides an insight into Nordic and in particular Danish career guidance and counselling issues<sup>1</sup>. He has organised 13 chapters around four key themes: Nordic practice and research in guidance; influences on choice and the implications for the way guidance practitioners do their work; the potential of ICT in career guidance and reflections on career guidance theory and practice.

What is fascinating, although not entirely unexpected, is the sense of shared understanding and mutual concerns of Anglo-Saxon and Nordic academics and practitioners that emerges from reading the book. How to harness parental influence and meet the needs of youth with no formal education are just two examples of the themes covered in the book that are of concern not just to Nordic guidance professionals but to all of us in Europe and further afield as well. Themes running through the book such as uncertainty about the concept of career guidance and the role of the guidance professional also resonate. What I liked about reading how the Nordic countries are tackling these contemporary issues is the intellectual rigour they bring to the task. The questions they ask and the frameworks they use provide a refreshing perspective on new ways in career guidance.

Facing up to challenging new contexts is very much the overriding concern of this edition of the NICEC journal. We pick up the threads of two themes of recent journals. In issue no. 16 (Winter 2006) we published the first part of Ian King's series on the career transitions of staff in professional service firms (PSFs). In the second part he considers the applicability of a range of established career development theories and models to the PSF sector; and begins to identify those which may be most relevant to PSFs in 'developing best practice when facilitating professionals' transitions.

We also re-visit higher education careers advisory services (HECAS) which was the theme of issue no. 17 (Spring 2007). James Williams examines some of the challenges facing HECAS as they organise their response to various Government initiatives and especially the 'widening participation' agenda. He highlights the tensions that can arise when trying to establish and develop collaborative working arrangements both internally (e.g. with academic departments) and externally (e.g. with employers, Connexions services, Aimhigher partnerships). Internally, HECAS are heading towards more integrated guidance, but 'pre-entry' guidance (linked to access) does not seem to be as important as 'on-course' guidance (linked to retention) or 'exit' guidance (linked to progression).

Continuing with the theme of the challenges now facing HECAS, Gill Cappuccini explores the issue of how services should respond to the needs of international students. She raises some important ethical dilemmas as well as practical ones relating to resources and professional role identities. The case is made that ad hoc responses are not sufficient and that HECAS need to respond in a holistic way that takes into account the needs of both international and home students.

Finally in this issue, Jonathan Reeve examines how far a case study approach can elucidate John Holland's ideas about how vocational personality types develop. Holland identified a range of variables that could potentially modify the main predictions arising from his theory including age, gender, ethnicity, geography, social class, physical assets or liabilities, educational level attained, intelligence and influence. Reeve raises a number of questions to stimulate further research in this somewhat neglected area in the UK. It would be particularly interesting to explore how person-environment fit approaches can be used in conjunction with approaches based on Bourdieu's ideas about habitus and cultural capital.

**Anthony Barnes**  
Editor

<sup>1</sup> Plant, P. (Ed.) (2007). *Ways – On Career Guidance*. Copenhagen: Danish University of Education Press.