

# This issue: an 'open call' for papers

Welcome to this issue of the Journal of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling. Normally the content of the journal revolves around a broad theme of interest to our wide readership, both in the UK and internationally, but for this issue we decided to have an 'open call' for papers. This allows us to attract authors who wish to publish in the journal, but who may struggle to fit their article into a stated theme at a particular point in time. The content for this issue is therefore eclectic, and, although five of the eight articles are focussed on research in a UK context, the discussion and debate will be of interest elsewhere.

The first two articles focus on Higher Education. First, **Wendy Hirsh, Emma Pollard and Jane Artess** report on a major study concerning the changing graduate recruitment practices of UK employers. The work involved in-depth interviews with 76 employers and 30 'stakeholders' in graduate employment, including university careers services. The qualitative data were complemented by analysis of existing quantitative data on graduate employment and a wide-ranging literature review. The article reports on selected findings relevant to career development professionals, including: the challenges for employers of attracting appropriate applicants; employers' generic skill needs and views on employability; the changing reasons and criteria for targeting specific higher education institutions; and employers' increasingly strategic use of work experience in graduate recruitment.

Next, **Jonathan Cole and Tamsin Turner** describe the use of case studies for incorporating a focus on employability in a higher education setting. They discuss how a professional studies module for a class of third-year aerospace engineers, provides insight into industrial challenges while at the same time promoting career development. The module was delivered mainly by industrial speakers and involved practical tasks and workshops. The authors state that a more sustainable employability curriculum now supports students in all four years of the School's three degree programmes,

offering a structured development of skills and sector understanding. A notable increase in students obtaining sandwich year placements has also been observed.

The next two articles introduce us to new concepts for the sector. **Bill Law**, always at the forefront of new thinking, reminds us that people are changing the ways they manage career and that careers work cannot afford to miss the opportunity this presents. And that, he states, calls for new thinking for a changing, challenging and crowded world. Seeing career management as a process of 'holding on' and 'letting go' is part of that thinking. Ideas about what is valued and what is not, are set out as a search for new meaning in policy, professionalism and practice. In expanding the careers-work repertoire, the article positions clients and students as agents of change.

Next, **Julia Yates** asks us to consider the role of the unconscious in career decision making – often a neglected area in the concepts and theories that underpin careers work. Like Bill, Julia suggests that the complexity of career paths in the 21st century has led to a rise in the number of career changes in a typical working life. Effective career practitioners, she argues, should have a good understanding of the unconscious processes of career choice. Once considered best ignored, the potency and value of these processes, including 'gut instinct', is now recognised. Drawing from decision theory, cognitive neuroscience and behavioural economics, Julia summarises evidence of the most common and effective decision making strategies used in career choice, and considers the implications for practice.

The fifth article moves us to an international perspective. **Abasiubong Ettang and Anne Chant** report on an illustrative research case study conducted to examine existing career guidance interventions available to two young people in different secondary schools in Nigeria. The aim was to explore their perceptions in terms of the subjective usefulness of those interventions in an educational and labour market context within a growing economy. Analysis

indicated that as well as access to careers guidance being inconsistent, the experience of the participants was that the existing provision was not sufficient to support them to develop an appreciable degree of independence, and the career management skills required to meet the demands of the 21st century labour market in particular, and life in general.

We then move back to the UK and consider career learning in schools in Scotland. **Graham Allan** provides a comprehensive overview of past and present policy development and insight into future policy initiatives. The article reminds us that whilst career education has never been statutory in Scotland, it has nonetheless been subject to the ebb and flow of government policy. At times this has been helpful, generating funding, guidelines and advice. Graham argues, however, that government engagement has also been characterised by short-termism and, often, wasteful repetition. In Scotland, 'by 2015', there will be a model that is underpinned by several new policy initiatives, one which locates learning about life and work within the curriculum, and one which provides more robust quality assurance arrangements. Graham hopes this could be the makings of a concerted national effort to improve career learning, rather than yet another short-term initiative.

The penultimate article is a case study in Further Education in England. **Amy Woolley and Tristram Hooley** explore FE students' prior experiences of career education. Their research draws on and extends the limited literature that exists around career support in further education. They describe how a mixed methods case study was used to explore students' experience of careers work prior to attending college, and then they examine the implications of this for the college's provision of career support. Findings indicate that the majority of students had limited contact with careers workers prior to their arrival at the college and, in instances when they had contact, often had a negative preconception of this contact. The findings are discussed with reference to the college's career education provision and the wider implications for the sector.

Finally, **Claire Johnson and Siobhan Neary** discuss the enhancements to professionalism for the career development sector in England. Much has changed in

the career development sector since the launch of the Careers Profession Task Force report, 'Towards a Strong Careers Profession' in 2010 (discussed in a previous issue of the NICEC journal). The report made recommendations for enhancing the professionalism of the career sector including the establishment of an overarching professional body, new qualification levels and common professional standards. The Careers Profession Alliance (CPA) and then the Career Development Institute (CDI), launched in April 2013, have striven to facilitate the sector to be stronger and more cohesive by addressing these recommendations. The article explores what was needed, what has been achieved and the plans for the future.

Before closing this editorial, it is worth highlighting that the journal is now available online – details on how to subscribe are included on page 63.

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Hazel Reid, Editor

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