

Introduction to a special issue dedicated to Bill Law

Welcome to the autumn edition of the *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*. This is a very special issue. Earlier this year the Institute received the news that Bill Law, a founder and eminent fellow, had passed away at the age of 81. This issue is entirely dedicated to remembering and celebrating his leading role in NICEC, and his wide-reaching influence on career education and counselling. Within this issue there are articles from NICEC fellows (both current and emeritus) summarising and assessing Bill's contribution, whilst giving a personal account of working with him. It is also our pleasure to reprint articles written by Bill himself, so his voice comes through very clearly in this edition.

My first outing as lead editor for the journal has been a bittersweet responsibility. For NICEC fellows and members, Bill's passing was sad and unwelcome news. Yet the task of commemorating his work presented a chance to revisit some of Bill's familiar writings, and to find some hidden gems. It has given me an opportunity to work with some of NICEC's finest authors. Their appraisals strike a balance between informing us of Bill's contribution to career education and guidance, whilst also giving vivid and personal accounts of being his friend and colleague.

Such is the scope of Bill's contribution to our field, the question of what to leave out was rather harder than what to include. One of my own favourites is *Community Interaction Theory* (Law, 1981), which articulated the importance of levels of analysis in career thinking, and sought to explain how local social influences operate on young people in real life. This important influence on my own thinking merits a more extensive discussion than we have found space for in this issue. Nonetheless, the selection presented in this issue gives a sense of the

extensive reach of Bill's work, and plenty of leads for the interested reader to pursue.

Our first author, **Tony Watts**, provides a detailed outline of Bill's early work and involvement with NICEC. Tony collaborated with Bill on some of the most influential career-related publications to emerge from the UK. Bill's role as a trainer, as a theorist and an empirical researcher are highlighted, with reference to his many publications in the 20th century.

David Andrews moves the focus onto career education. Promoting career learning in schools was one of Bill's passions and a major theme of his working life. His prominent role in developing concepts for careers work in school and for the training of careers teachers/co-ordinators is explored here.

To extend and amplify David's points, **Peter Plant** provides a brief and personal perspective. A regular collaborator with Bill, he chooses to highlight Bill's talents as a communicator and the influence his ideas about career learning have had beyond the UK, notably in Scandinavia.

Hazel Reid moves the story on by focusing on Bill's contribution to career counselling, most particularly his embracing of narrative approaches. She weaves her own contact with Bill into an account of the emergence of a new, biographical way of thinking about career development. Here the turn to narrative counselling is evident.

Following logically on from Hazel's contribution, we reprint an extended article by Bill, kindly shared by Canterbury Christ Church University. Here **Bill Law** argues there are '*...too many lists, not enough stories*' in guidance practice. In this article,

we can see a number of features of Bill's work: his willingness to engage with new ideas and techniques, and his ability to impose structure on complexity. We can also see something of his cultural influences and his eclecticism: evolutionary psychologists and neuroscientists rub shoulders with film stars, writers and sociologists in this argument. Not previously published in this Journal, this important article merits wider attention. This is Bill's thinking in full flight.

Another facet to recognise is Bill's pioneering work on online guidance, and his early adoption of web-based platforms for communication and sharing career thinking. Indeed his innovative *Career Learning Café* (www.hihohiho.com) continues to be a useful resource. It is in the nature of progress that this material can date rapidly, so we reprint a relatively recent article from this publication, just five years old. Here **Bill Law** addresses the question '*On-line guidance: hit or myth?*' and links use of the internet to career education concepts and concerns. His willingness to ensure contemporary relevance for his work is evident.

We end with a selection of **Bill Law's** writing for this journal from his regular feature '*Points of Departure*', the title now taking on a new resonance. With his words put in context by **Lyn Barham**, here we see Bill's humour, creativity and intellectual curiosity deployed to thought provoking effect. The result is an uplifting reminder to celebrate Bill's life, his contribution to NICEC and to the world of careers.

I would like to extend special thanks to Maureen and Andrew Law, for supplying photographs of Bill and giving their permission for their inclusion in this publication. We hope this issue will be more than a commemoration, but also a valuable resource to future generations of career education and counselling practitioners and academics seeking to explore the work and ideas of Bill Law.

Pete Robertson, Editor

References

Law, B. (1981) Community interaction: a 'mid-range' focus for theories of career development in young adults. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 9, 2, 142-158.