

Book reviews

Creative Career Coaching: Theory into practice by Liane Hambly and Ciara Bomford, Abingdon/New York, Routledge, 2019, £24.99 (paperback) ISBN-13: 978-1-138-54359-1; £24.99 (e-book) ISBN-13: 978-1-351-00642-2.

The Career Coaching Toolkit by Julia Yates, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, £22.56 (paperback) ISBN-978-1-138-05730-2; £21.43 (e-book) ISBN-978-1-315-16492-2.

Reviewed by Dr Michelle Stewart, NICEC Fellow.

Creative Career Coaching: Theory into practice

Hambly and Bomford respectfully recognise the beneficial work undertaken by career development professionals and acknowledge the high level of skills and distinct body of knowledge on which this contribution is founded. Concurrently, they share their own considerable experience and knowledge to enable reflective practitioners to explore and develop new ways of working that are highly relevant to today's world of uncertainty.

Written in a straightforwardly accessible style, *Creative Career Coaching's* thoughtful consideration of creativity and innovation alongside more traditional approaches, provides a valuable resource for both career development students undertaking initial training and the experienced careers practitioner seeking to enhance their skills and explore new ways of working.

The book is divided into 4 sections, with each chapter starting with a concise overview and ending with references. The first section sets the scene and provides a brief review of career theory, before offering some illuminating insights from neuropsychology pertinent to career coaching. The next two sections are structured around managing career interventions and addressing themes common

to these interactions. The final section offers useful thoughts and insights to support the well-being of career practitioners themselves. The use of headings and sub headings structure the content enabling the reader to dip in and out of the book with ease, especially where links to earlier (or later) consideration of the same topic are included. However, to fully understand the aim of the book and terminology, time should be taken to read the preface.

Adopting a practical skills-based approach the book clearly sets out how to undertake effective career interventions with clients, extending in places to consider special needs and mental health issues. Focusing on the creative career coaching model it considers both process and the content, systematically leading the reader through the different stages and attending to the required skills. Especially useful personally were the chapter on digital coaching and the considerations around information provision, including LMI (opportunity awareness). Throughout, the book introduces creative activities and current theoretical models with certain ones more fully explained than others. It is further enhanced by figures, tables, activities and case studies, with some integral to the text and others supplementary.

In drawing the book to a close, Hambly and Bomford state that 'to be able to give our best to our clients, we also need to give our best to ourselves, using our skills and knowledge to nourish ourselves, develop communities of practice and take pride in our work' (p.221). This book is testament of their having done this and I count myself privileged to be one of many who will draw on its insight and creativity to further develop my own professional practice.

Career Coaching Toolkit

In addition to being valuable in its own right, the *Career Coaching Toolkit* usefully complements the work of Hambly and Bomford. Yates' book uniquely enables career practitioners to apply a range of different approaches to client interventions that draw on recent and emerging theory. After a clearly written

introduction which includes a discerning reflection on the issue of boundaries, each chapter is structured around one of eleven career dilemmas that will be familiar to many, such as ‘What do I want from a job?’. To support the client in addressing the identified dilemma Yates skilfully guides the career practitioner through three possible techniques, respectively accompanied by a ‘Why it works’ box which outlines the underlying process and a second box setting out the research evidence base. In all there are over 30 different techniques, each offering a meaningful addition to the practitioner’s tool-box for use in one-to-ones and some in group settings. Following a considered review of some multi-purpose tools in the penultimate chapter (e.g. mind maps), the focus turns to reflect on issues around ethical practice and offers words of reassurance steeped in experience that considerably address potential concerns of practitioners seeking to develop their practice.

The book is thoughtfully and insightfully written, revealing a real understanding of the desire among career practitioners to support others in resolving career dilemmas of the 21st century. Not all the tools and techniques will appeal to everyone but those with the courage to try techniques that appeal will find themselves indebted to Yates for sharing her experiences of what works and bringing this eclectic mix of tools, techniques and approaches together.

Career Guidance for Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism, edited by T. Hooley, R.G. Sultana and R. Thomsen, New York/Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, pp. 276, £93.50 (hardback) ISBN 978-1-138-087738-5; £20 (e-book) ISBN 978-1-315-11051-6.

Reviewed by Gill Frigerio, Associate Professor, University of Warwick and NICEC Fellow.

Whilst the origins of career guidance are associated with creating a fair and just society, our profession has needed reminding from time to time about the political nature of our work and the potential for us to be part of the problem of inequality, rather than solutions. The term ‘social justice’ has been used to

label these discussions by Barrie Irving, Nancy Arthur and others, in recent years. The publication reviewed here is now part of a wider project to position social justice front and centre of discussion of our work and has been unmissable at recent conferences, events and online discussions.

The authors are known to many for their wide concern with theory, policy and practice and are all Fellows of NICEC. Tristram Hooley holds both academic and policy focused positions and is known for his commitment to communicating with a practitioner audience through blogging, use of twitter and now a podcast. Rie Thomsen is a researcher of lifelong learning and guidance from Denmark known for her distinctive and imaginative approach to reflexive practice. Ronald Sultana, Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Malta, has a track record of reminding the dominant voices in our field to listen to perspectives from the Global South. It is dedicated to Bill Law, who would be delighted with it.

This edited volume is very much at the theory end of the authors’ range of outputs. As a collection of chapters from a truly global list of contributors it offers a series of in-depth and sometimes competing perspectives on if and how career guidance can be socially just. Following a full introductory chapter by all three editors, the text is divided into 3 sections: ‘Understanding the neoliberal context’, ‘Building theories for change’ and ‘Research for practice’. There are contributions from 22 authors from 10 different countries, although the Global South is only represented by Brazil.

The introduction locates the work in our times, opening with a quote from the US Presidential Inauguration of Donald Trump and provides an overview of key concepts such as social justice and neoliberalism, as well as their impact on careers work. The latter term needs some careful deconstructing, suffering as it does from some ‘conceptual sprawl’, but its influence in career guidance is identified through our overreliance on individualistic psychological methods as well as the configurations through which career guidance is organised and provided, and indeed internalised by practitioners and clients alike.

As might be expected from a text book which seeks to build theory, the book is densely packed with more

detailed consideration than some previously published overviews have been able to cover. This leads to some more nuanced positions emerging, for example Pouyard and Guichard advocate for active life design for sustainable and decent work, whereas previously I have heard 'life design' dismissed as evidence of the symbolic violence of neoliberalism through responsabilisation.

The book provides a thought-provoking deconstruction of the politics embedded in the humanistic and developmental tradition on which careers work has relied, and seeks to develop a new emancipatory stance which foregrounds learning. I found the book to be prophetic and particular chapters will add value to the reading lists of postgraduate professional courses. A careful reading could certainly stimulate practitioners to innovate and take a social justice lens to their practice and could be turned into activities, for example Buchanan's chapter on social media could be a basis for learners researching digital footprint and class. That said, the price tag means I suspect most readers will be accessing it through a university library.

The anchoring to neoliberalism and inclusion under Routledge's series banner of 'Education, Neoliberalism and Marxism' locates the work within a particular time of social change, something that career development theories have not necessarily taken into account adequately. One slight concern could be that this may date the work, or worse, provide scope for those with different political leanings to dismiss it. I hope not.

It is a shame that few practitioner voices feature in the book, perhaps reflecting their embedding within the very neoliberal contexts that can make it hard for practitioners to respond. The final section, research for practice, went some way to articulate how practitioners can be brought into research. As this speaks to my interests, I found the Danish authors chapter on research circles and Hazel Reid and Linden West's chapter on auto/biographical research to be the most impactful for me.

The second volume in the same series has now just been published and promises to look at differentiated experiences of career and practice responses. This first volume sets that up well, and the (re)conceptualization

of career as something that can be both learned and critiqued is very welcome. I await with interest an opportunity to review the second volume.