

Overview of this issue

Welcome to the October 2022 edition of the NICEC Journal and thank you to everyone who contributed to this eclectic collection of engaging and informative articles by both experienced and new writers. Thank you also to you, our reader for your continuing support and constructive feedback as we develop and adapt our career education and counselling work in the post-COVID-19 era.

The journal opens with the winning article of the Bill Law Award 2022: a valuable opportunity for new writers to hone the skills of academic research writing. Winner **Cordelia Wise** explores the nature of retirement in a career context by examining the experiences of people aged over 55 who define themselves as choosing to be 'semi-retired'. The article provides new insight into a life stage phase and the importance of choice, agency and divided emotions in defining career.

In contrast, **Tom Staunton** adopts a critical realist position to investigate the assumption that better use of Labour Market Information (LMI) improves career practice which can in turn better support individuals in their futures. His critique raises some intriguing questions as he explores how we approach and define LMI and its role in the career decision-making process, emphasising the need for a stronger theoretical underpinning to inform our understanding.

Susan Meldrum explores how individual and group work models of career development practice could be adapted and redesigned to be more effective in empowering people to overcome barriers and inequalities. Her inclusion of two illustrations usefully enables us to envisage how her well-regarded conceptual thinking might be applied to develop professional practice.

Holly McLoughlin picks up the issues around group guidance and brings the UK career development practitioner voice to the debate concerning the development of innovative ideas in practice. Her research reveals how practitioners decision-making around innovation involved 'constructing empowerment' - an intentional process of gaining access to necessary resources and 'power with' others to meet institutional targets and act in the best interests of university citizens' - and its centrality in overcoming potential barriers.

Continuing the theme of social justice and emancipation, **Petra Røise's** article contributes to a further

development of Bill Law's Community Interaction Theory by highlighting its emancipatory potential. Building on career education programmes in lower secondary schools in Norway, in particular integrating career learning through work placement activities, Petra explores career education's unique liberating possibilities.

Cristiana Orlando, IES Research Fellow, analyses data from research conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) to explore the impact of the pandemic on young people's experience of careers support. Her article investigates the experiences of young people across the four UK nations and highlights three key ways in which access to careers support can be improved. While it could be argued there are few surprises among feedback from the young people regarding access to career services during the pandemic, this work is important because it gives young people a voice and opportunity for their first-hand experiences to inform developments in policy and practice.

Similarly, underpinned by a shared belief that it is beholden on leaders, teachers and managers to listen to the voices of minoritized colleagues, students and clients, **Gill Frigerio, Lassie Chen, Marni McArthur and Nishi Mehta** write about their collaborative research project. This article explores the experiences of UKME students on one institution's career development courses and at work, in relation to their race and culture, and outlines the challenges that relate to curriculum and pedagogic practices in professional development programmes.

Nomita Nair draws on the developing concept of 'career crafting' to explore the emergence of new gig working routes in the legal industry. Her work offers a discussion framework for career professionals to help clients reconcile tensions between traditional career paths and their personal sense of self. Highly relevant to flexible ways of work emerging post-COVID-19 is her analysis of research participants de-constructing their traditional mindset and re-constructing attitudes towards a different way of working and the legitimacy of their own roles in a broader social context.

Michelle Stewart, Editor
