

Introduction to the Special Issue: Global Perspectives on Vocational Guidance

Raoul Van Esbroeck
Edwin L. Herr
Mark L. Savickas

This special issue of *The Career Development Quarterly* presents the outcomes from an international symposium, titled International Perspectives on Career Development, jointly sponsored by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance and the National Career Development Association. The articles in this special issue discuss international perspectives on and comparative approaches to educational and vocational guidance that differentiate career development practices in different nations. In addition to the articles in this issue, a selection of papers presented at the symposium has been jointly published in a thematic issue of the *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 5(2).

This special issue of *The Career Development Quarterly* (CDQ), together with the jointly published thematic issue of the *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* (IJEVG), presents the outcomes from an international symposium, titled International Perspectives on Career Development. The symposium was organized by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance and the National Career Development Association, and took place on June 29–30, 2004, in San Francisco under the leadership of Raoul Van Esbroeck and Edwin L. Herr.

The symposium focused on educational and vocational guidance and career development from international perspectives. The goal of the symposium was to bring together a group of international specialists in the field of career development. The participants were scholars and professional practitioners who were among the leaders in academia, professional organizations, and public institutions from 46 countries. In general, they discussed international and comparative approaches to public policies, theoretical models, resource commitments, service-delivery strategies, and intervention outcomes that differentiate career development practices in different nations. In particular, the participants explored four broad issues:

Raoul Van Esbroeck, Faculteit Psychologie en Educatiewetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Edwin L. Herr, Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology, The Pennsylvania State University; Mark L. Savickas, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine. Correspondence concerning this introduction should be addressed to Mark L. Savickas, NEOUCOM, 4209 State Route 44, Rootstown, OH 44272-0095 (e-mail: ms@neoucom.edu).

- The extent to which career counseling and related interventions are now worldwide phenomena
- The indigenous national approaches to the rationale and delivery of career development practices
- The roles of career counselors under different public policy initiatives and systems of accountability
- The emerging views of the preparation of career counselors in relation to international qualification standards

These broad issues were considered in three keynote speeches and a roundtable discussion for which the participants convened as a whole. However, the majority of the symposium was devoted to work groups that intensely examined specific topics. To facilitate in-depth discussion and understanding of each topic, the participants worked in seven separate discussion groups. Each participant remained in the same discussion group throughout the conference. The discussion topic for each group was introduced by the chair of the group. The chair then moderated a discussion, prompted by a set of papers that selected participants had prepared in advance. There were two types of papers presented in each group. One type consisted of papers chosen from submissions to an open call for papers; the other type was invited papers. Authors of invited papers addressed a set of questions prepared for their group by the organizers of the symposium. The following paragraphs present the guiding questions for the seven sets of invited papers and moderated group discussions.

Group 1: Career Theory in an International Perspective

Chair: Jean Guichard, France

Some career theories receive worldwide recognition and are often used in different cultural environments. The question is to what extent is this advisable? Can they be applied as such or do they need major adaptations? In addition to these theories, there exist a large number of less known theoretical models that are used locally. Where do they originate? What are their indigenous roots? Are these applicable in other settings?

Group 2: Techniques and Assessment

Chair: Mark B. Watson, South Africa

A large number of tests and questionnaires that measure interests, maturity, personality, decisiveness, and so on are used in career counseling and guidance. Some of these tests have been translated into different languages and adapted for use in other cultures. Some are even used worldwide. The question remains, as in relation to theories, what can be used and what should not be used? What are the pitfalls and hurdles in making these materials ready for use outside the environment for which they were designed? What about lesser known instruments that are only locally used? What cross-cultural and cross-national research may be needed to answer some of these questions?

Group 3: Techniques and Interventions

Chair: Rich Feller, United States

In career development and education, a large number of intervention methods and techniques are used. Some of these techniques receive world-wide recognition and are adapted for use in different countries. Other, sometimes extremely interesting, intervention techniques are only used in a limited linguistic or geographical area. The questions are once again, Can career intervention techniques be used cross-culturally? What is needed to make them applicable? What are the difficulties in doing so and how does one proceed on this? The answer to these questions requires some cross-cultural and cross-national reflection.

Group 4: The Implementation of Technology in Career Guidance Around the World

Cochairs: JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey and James P. Sampson Jr., United States

The importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in educational vocational guidance is beyond any doubt. Although there are still questions about the quality of ICT services and the outcomes, the advantages of such processes are obvious. A major question, however, becomes to what extent is ICT creating new difficulties and inequalities? Is ICT suitable for use with all clients or only with selected clients? Does ICT create yet another division between the haves and have-nots? This division is not necessarily related to being underprivileged but can also be related to cultural, philosophical, and psychological issues.

Group 5: The Structure and Organization of Programs of Career Development in Different Nations

Chair: Sunny Hansen, United States

There are large differences in the ways that career development provisions are made available among countries and regions. These structures for the provision of career development services have a considerable influence on what the guidance practitioner can do and how it must be done. The impact on the efficiency and outcome of certain techniques and methodologies is related to these structures and the policies, legislation, or other factors that shape such structures. Developing a comprehensive view of the structures in which programs of career development function may increase international understanding of why guidance methodology is often different across settings and nations.

Group 6: Public Policy and Career Development

Chair: Peter Plant, Denmark

In recent years, the attention paid to policy issues has been growing. Career guidance practitioners and researchers are becoming more aware

of the influence of international, national, or regional policy makers on their roles and activities. At the same time, policy makers are recognizing career development services as important instruments for achieving their goals in relation to education, work, and employment issues. Major review projects supported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union, and World Bank resulted from this growing awareness. What are the results from these analyses and the impact of these findings for further developments in career guidance?

Group 7: International Competencies for Career Practitioners

Chair: Bryan Hiebert, Canada

The quality of career counseling and guidance support is receiving major attention. At national as well as at the international level, efforts are being made to define the needed competencies for those involved in guidance practice. It is not an easy task to identify such competencies because of the differences in goals, structure, and organization of career guidance support systems as well as the diversity in staff involved in career counseling and guidance. Are national qualification standards applicable in other regions? Is a worldwide qualification standard a reality or an illusion?

This Special Issue of *CDQ*

The results of the first five discussion groups, along with an article based on one keynote address and a summary of a plenary roundtable, are presented herein. The special issue concludes with a summary of these summaries that identifies and discusses the main themes that emerged from the participants' perspectives on, thoughts about, and worries over the internationalization of educational and vocational guidance around the world. To complete the presentation of the outcomes of the international symposium, a selection of papers from the symposium have been published in a companion volume to this special issue, namely Volume 5, Number 2 of the *IJEVG*.