

## Reflections on Vocational Guidance on the Occasion of INETOP's 75 Birthday

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There are many similarities in the role of vocational guidance now and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, citizens of industrialized nations are trying to control their own work lives as economic and social forces again change all the rules, as industrialization had done 100 years ago. Today globalization and information technology are changing the structure of societies. Once again vocational guidance has an opportunity to help people cope as occupations and their social arrangement change dramatically.

The scientific project of vocational guidance and occupational psychology, led during the last 75 years by INETOP, has been intimately connected to the broad social changes that occurred during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and North America. At that time, the new epistemology of logical positivism swept across the cultural landscape and scholars in Europe and America valorized science as the royal road to knowledge for an industrial and urban age. Vocational guidance became a cultural project of helping people find work in a new era. It was to supply an authoritative and culturally approved mandate for matching people and positions. Vocational guidance's moral project was to help people adapt to city living. The field was called upon to generate models and methods that matched human nature to the needs of an industrial economy. It gave order to chaos and generated constructs that made the issues thinkable. The core of the discipline was methodological, and revolved around person-environment fit. It addressed the fit between individuals and a new society, especially those individuals who had moved to cities from farms and from other countries.

Vocational guidance has the potential to again be tremendously useful as the cultural context reverberates in a manner similar to the situation that brought forth the field of vocational guidance. The field arose in response to industrialization. Its birthdate was around 1908; not that different from Virginia Wolf's (1924) comment that "On or about December 1910, human character changed." Starting in 1910, more than half of all citizens in many countries lived in cities, and agricultural economies became overwhelmed by industrial economies. Helping immigrants and newcomers from the farms find work in the city became the mission of vocational guidance. Social workers became interested in "street kids" who lived in the cities and founded vocational guidance bureaus to help them find work. The counselors who worked in these bureaus quickly made a commitment to use the language and methods of science rather than those of religion. The problems of youth and work were redefined as scientific questions that could be solved by scientific methods, not as character flaws that could be redeemed by faith. This led to the establishment of applied psychology, a stepchild of experimental psychology. Vocational researchers constructed a specialized body of knowledge around Binet's test of intelligence and Parson's model of guidance (i.e., use true reasoning to match self to occupation). Like Edouard Toulouse, guidance workers across the globe sought to use the new field of psychotechnics to make their societies more rational and fair (equal).

The new occupations in the urban centers called for a new character, a new way of working to fit its new fields of work and incentives. The new human nature recognized by



Virginia Woolf was symbolized by a shift from character to personality. Character with its concern about ideals, morality, and duty was replaced by personality with its interest in self-expression and self-fulfillment. The goal of character was achieving selfhood through following moral standards while the goal of personality was achieving selfhood through realization of one's abilities. The traditional faculty psychology, epitomized by the first generation of social scientists such as Herbert Spencer, was swept away and focus shifted from essences to actions by concentrating on what people did and how they did it. Individuals were then the plastic stuff of society that needed to fit together. As a part of this movement, education changed from mental discipline and training the faculties to focus on guiding behavior to fit social processes. This led the way for modern psychology and its emphasis on social engineering.

Guidance workers, along with professional social workers, emerged as a new profession because the problems of the city overwhelmed amateurs and needed professional attention. New concepts were needed to professionalize the field. The construal of problems shifted from morality to science. Instead of viewing social problems as moral failures caused by illegitimacy and alcoholism, the new view was that social problems were to be investigated scientifically using the casework model. The cure was no longer the kindness of strangers and evangelicalism, it was diagnosis and treatment. Professional social workers became convinced that an important part of new industrial city was diversity of inhabitants, each requiring individualized diagnosis and treatment. As the science of personality replaced the culture of character, the tool for recognizing individual differences became science. Guidance workers focused on personality, the case study methods, and scientific knowledge. Much of the scientific knowledge that they used came from the psychology of individual differences, as pioneered by Stern in Germany and by Binet in France. The new field of psychotechnics blossomed in France under the leadership of Toulouse, Lahy, Pieron, and Laugier. The achievements of French psychologists were brought to the United States by Terman and those of the German psychologists were brought to the new world by Munsterberger. Across the world, vocational guidance workers soon focused their attention on individual differences in intelligence and interests. These two variables became central because the forces of urbanization preferred intelligence over moral conviction and self-promotion over self-sacrifice.

Today, the world is again changing dramatically as it moves from the industrial era to the information age. The models and methods of the last century need reinvigoration and innovation. As the models and methods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural era were replaced by models of the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial era, now the modern methods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century must be replaced by post-modern models and methods of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's information era. The post-modern philosophers of France (e.g., Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard) have provided the world with new ways of envisioning reality and societies. Rather than discovering knowledge about human nature and labor, we are beginning to understand how this knowledge is socially constructed. This shift from objectivity to perspectivity has begun, and will continue, to prompt important innovations in vocational guidance and our continuing moral project of helping individuals adapt to life in their communities by cooperating with and contributing to it. The new science of vocational guidance for now is beginning with a focus on identity, the social construction of the self, and managing transitions, and balancing life roles. I know that colleagues at INETOP and throughout France can be counted to develop these and other themes as they again lead the field of vocational

guidance into a new century.