Editorial
Work and Human Cognition
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Work has been central to human existence all through its evolution from prehistoric times. During its Neanderthal origins nearly 40,000 years ago, this most essential of human preoccupations, was primarily linked to survival. With the passage of time, the meanings and purposes attributed to work have been transformed by philosophies and revolutions. The last two decades however, have seen unprecedented ferment in the world of work. Information and Communication Technologies have virtualised work locations leading to the delinearisation and desynchronisation of time and space (Trachtenberg, Streumer, & van Zolingen, 2002). Today, work requirements commonly take the worker beyond the execution of specific sets of duties, during a set work shift, at a specific location. This has created fresh patterns of engagement with the world of work moving the individual increasingly further away from an immediate connection with meeting the demands of daily survival. Producing food, clothing, and shelter are no longer direct preoccupations of the modern worker. It is in such contexts that the notion of *career* as a form of work has made its appearance. Accordingly a person can *choose* an occupation, prepare for it, and excel at it. In this sense, work has become a vehicle *for* something else: the garnering of material wealth, the realisation of personal potentials, the enhancement of social status. By contrast, even today, work in large sections of developing world economies is characterized by preindustrial features, where work *is* the marshalling of resources to secure survival necessities. Furthermore, contemporary forces of economic development have tended to push traditional occupations and livelihoods to the background. Such occupations are considered irrelevant in an industrialised, market economy. Every culture has had its own ways of inducting its young into the work force. The value of this wisdom has eroded. Age old ways of working in harmony with the environment are placed at a lower level of prestige and status. Migration to the city from the village is the dream of many a rural young person. Yet, when they manage to arrive in the city, the pressures of survival often do not allow them to realise their dreams. Associated with this issue is the migration of professionals to other countries. Also associated with the issue of migration is the phenomenon of refugee populations and the last year has left us with distressing images of families forced to search for new homes and new work environments. In addition today, against the background of globalisation and the dynamics of the free market, we are seeing job migration from developed to developing economies. There is massive job loss in certain economies and unprecedented increase in opportunities in other economies. Approaches to understanding these escalations, changes, and stagnations have largely been from the view point of the discipline of economics. Comments on how the processes of human *cognition* interface with and influence the processes of human *development* are few and far between. Learning more about how human beings' use and generation of knowledge influences their engagement with the changing world of work could inform the development of intervention models to help the modern worker navigate these shifting scenes. It is well known that processes underlying human cognition are significantly mediated by cultural and social factors (e.g., Tomasello, 2000). Cultural factors and economic trends reciprocally influence each other creating varied social cognitive environments within which the dramas of work,

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livelihood, and career play. The seven papers carried in this the fourth issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning (IJCLP) comment on and provide insights into some of these changing dynamics.

Shahinaz Khalil presents career guidance as educational innovation in Egypt. Career guidance is one of the four components of the Employment Promotion Project (EPP) being implemented in Egypt and aims at helping students make effective transitions. It is pertinent to note the priority accorded to career guidance within the context of an employment project. Here, career guidance is a full project component and not merely a token afterthought. Of particular interest in Khalil's paper is her description of the attempt being made in Egypt to integrate an internationally funded programme into the country's national strategies. She points to the importance of addressing culturally mediated influences on the career decision making process and aligning the formulation of career guidance services to *already* existing notions of work, occupation, and career.

Staying on the theme of national programmes, Sachin Kumar examines India's National Career Service. India has lagged far behind other nations in the value it has placed on career guidance. The recent policy that the National Career Service (NCS) which will replace the National Employment Service (NES) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, is a long awaited advancement in the development of career guidance in India. As per the policy formulation, provisions have been made for structural changes, funding, support, staffing, and capacity building. Financing has been conceptualised as a joint responsibility of the State and Central governments. As a first step in operationalising this policy 100 model career centres (MCC) are to be established of which the funding for 37 centres has been approved with the target of having them operational by the end of 2015. Kumar's evaluation of the initiative points to a key lacuna, namely, the capacity building of employment officers in skills for career counselling and the development of career guidance material. As of now, most of the teaching-learning material has been taken from sources that are not relevant to Indian needs (e.g., US Department of Labour/Employment and Training Administration system). Feedback from participants who attended the first training rounds have pointed to a lack of comprehension and scepticism about the relevance of the tools. While the policy is very welcome and timely, as Kumar points out, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link and in the case of NCS, there are quite a few weak links needing attention. The hope remains that over the coming years these links would be strengthened and as the author has titled his paper, that this is a dream that will come true.

Looking at the specifics of service delivery, Supreeth and Aravind present a case study from India of a school-based model for the delivery of career guidance services. This paper comes down to the nitty gritty of actually implementing an effective career guidance programme within a school's busy timetable. Of interest to the practitioner is the authors' description of the challenges that school career guidance counsellors face and the manner in which these difficulties can be resolved. Two important innovations are presented. The first is the idea of integrating the technique of *career assignments* into the school's existing system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). This saves time and allows career guidance to mesh with the overall fabric of the institution's pedagogical framework. A second important feature of this programme is the creation of space for parent involvement, by soliciting their involvement through careers days, parent workshops, and career reports. The authors also present outcomes of the programme through interviews with students who had gone through the intervention earlier.

Vijaykumar's paper through a pilot study, further develops the theme of the parent-child interface in the context of career decision making, focusing on students in Grade 9. From her data the author identifies four key orientations that characterised her student sample's career choices. A trend here is students' desire for freedom of choice, their primary challenge being parents' objections and expectations. By contrast, another trend in

the study's parent sample is the consistent indication that parents were willing and happy to allow their child the freedom to make career choices as per his/her wishes and desires. The author examines this apparent contradiction. She reports, for example, that while parents are willing to allow freedom, there are corollary expectations and unstated cultural frameworks that influence their perception of their child's choices. Given its largely collectivist environment, decisions in Indian households are typically adult-led. Hence from a broader perspective, the finding that parents are willing to allow freedom is in itself an important departure from the findings of other studies. This finding in Vijaykumar's paper could point to newly emerging patterns in parent-child relationships and could be an area for further research.

Albert, Porter, and Green present a fascinating account of how a tribal group in North East India identifies in members of its society, the orientation necessary to become a traditional healer. Methods of assessment and measurement have been the subject of extensive debate. Not only have these arguments centred around *how* to assess, controversy also surrounds the question of *what* to assess. Historically, both interest and aptitude have been integral to career counselling. However, as a result of changes in political stances, pedagogical philosophies, and a general rejection of the notion of trait, by the 1960s the value placed on the assessment of abilities and aptitudes declined and faded from favour. Today, the use of such approaches have become limited in Western forms of career counselling. Against this background, Albert, Porter, and Green's identification of the notion of *sap* is of great interest. Loosely translated as talent, gift, or skills, the tribal group the authors studied describe sap to be an *inborn potential* that is *inherited*. The authors point out that the term *sap* appeared to represent the abstract concept of an *intrinsic* ability. It seems from this study that a group unsullied, by and far removed from the debates surrounding interest and aptitude, selects and invites individuals into the profession of traditional healing based on their inherent *abilities*. And this is a method that is as old as the profession of traditional healing. Keeping the importance of accepting traditional ways of guidance in view this paper offers important and critical insights.

This issue's interview is with David Bluestein, professor at the department of counselling, developmental, and educational psychology, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, USA. Prof. Bluestein is renowned for his contributions to the psychology of working and his work has been recognised through numerous awards and distinctions all through his career. In this interview conducted by the co-editors of the IJCLP, Anuradha Bakshi and Gideon Arulmani, Prof. Bluestein tells us a bit about himself and what drew him to this field. The interview goes on to focus on Prof. Bluestein's views about developments in career psychology, inclusion, multiculturalism, testing and assessment, the notion of aptitude, and some of the most contemporary constructs that are influencing the research and practice of career psychology.

The nature and quality of human engagement with work lies at the heart both of personal and social wellbeing. Career guidance could be a vehicle to optimise this engagement. Yet, as conveyed by the papers and interview presented in this issue of the IJCLP, if career guidance is to be effective, peoples' ways of thinking must be acknowledged and service provision must align with felt needs.

References

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