

A life in careers: Celebrating the work of Professor A.G.Watts



Welcome to the October 2014 issue of the NICEC journal. This is a special issue to mark the work of Professor A.G. Watts (Tony) on the 'eve' of his retirement from the world of career education and counselling. The issue is, in fact, paying homage to Tony. In checking the meaning of the word in the OECD, I find 'formal public acknowledgement of feudal allegiance' – that's a bit strong maybe, but what follows is nearer my intended meaning; 'acknowledgement of superiority, dutiful reverence – to pay homage to a person and his qualities.' The breadth and depth of Tony's contribution is unmatched in the UK, Europe and internationally. To recognise this, it was important that this edition had both a national and global reach, so International Fellows of NICEC were invited to write for the journal. In addition Gideon Arulmani, also an International Fellow of NICEC, has worked with me to co-edit the content.



The intention was to reflect many, if not all, of the areas of 'careers work' that Tony has influenced over the years, from the birth of CRAC and NICEC and beyond. The result is a number of articles that do just that. Many of the invited authors wanted to know if it would be acceptable to contact Tony to confirm the content of their piece – and my response was yes, but we need to take care that we do not overburden him. However, as always, Tony was generous with his support and we have three contributions derived from interviews where Tony's knowledge has been used extensively.

We open with **Tony Watts'** own piece which provides a historical review of NICEC since its establishment in 1975. Tony takes us through the various stages of the life of NICEC and outlines the evolution that has led to its current form as a learned society. The second article is by **Ronald Sultana**. Ronald outlines the way career theory, practice and research can be informed by technocratic, hermeneutic, and emancipatory rationalities. He considers Tony Watts' analysis of the socio-political ideologies underpinning career guidance, showing how all approaches can engage with emancipatory forms of practice; thus calling for a fundamental commitment to

the promotion of social justice.

In the third article **Raimo Vuorinen** and **James Sampson** examine Tony's perspective regarding policy and practice in career guidance from a UK and global viewpoint. They synthesize key insights that Tony has gained in his career and then link these to current policy and practice initiatives. The method used to achieve the above goal included an interview with Tony and a literature review. They present 17 insights, with thoughts on implications for career guidance policy and practice. The next piece is written by **David Andrews**. David examines Tony's contribution to career education policy, theory and practice over many years; from his work with Bill Law on the DOTS framework to his promotion of the Blueprint in several countries in the present century.

The fifth article is presented by **Tristram Hooley**. Tristram uses a career case-study with Tony to explore the interface of an academic career with policy and practice. It resonates with Ronald's article in stating that for Tony, public engagement was driven by a social and political mission. Tristram says, 'Such engagement is shaped by both the institutional arrangements within which the academic is situated and the political and

organisational structures of the part of the world into which they try to intervene'. In the next piece, **Peter Plant** reminds us that, in the words of Lewin, 'There is nothing more practical than a good theory' and suggests that even more practical is a model, if it communicates well. Tony has been involved in creating a number of models, two of which are mentioned in this article. Peter discusses the current importance and implications of these models: their longevity and the influence they continue to have in the guidance field.

The penultimate offering is from **Helmut Zelloth**. Helmut has been inspired by Tony's pioneering work which explored the relationship between VET and career guidance. This relationship features traditionally ambiguous and not very clear-cut definitions. Helmut tells us that Tony's helpful distinction between career guidance 'prior to' and 'within' VET opened new perspectives for analysis. The article states that career guidance cannot serve just as an 'eye opener' to stimulate VET demand, but can also act as a 'change agent' to improve VET supply. Drawing on Tony's work, it is this potential for a reciprocal interaction between VET and career guidance that is the focus here. The **final piece** is a recorded conversation with Tony where I invited him to reflect 'on a life in careers'. It was deliberately open, without a list of questions or a prescribed structure. The intention was for Tony to look back on his many achievements in our field and to identify the ones that gave him particular pleasure. I also wanted him to look forward to the next stage in his own career/life pathway and to share some of his thoughts about a future away from his busy work schedule. What is clear is that there will be many other interests which will form an occupation (if not a career) in the time yet to come.

Through this issue of the journal, and the other events that are taking place this year, all the NICEC Fellows and Members, past and present, thank Tony for his vision, support and outstanding contribution to the sector. To conclude this editorial I am including an open letter sent by Lester Oakes, the President of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance – it says it all really.

Hazel Reid, Co-Editor with Gideon Arulmani

An open letter to Tony Watts

Dear Tony

On behalf of your colleagues in the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), I thank you for your immense contribution to the world of careers guidance.

When I think across a wide range of disciplines: scientific, political, academic, sporting or whatever, there are very few examples of someone playing such a unique and dominant role in their field over such a long period as you have in careers guidance. You have been a trail blazer in so many respects and in particular in your work in linking the worlds of policy, research and practice. In every sense of the word, you have been an authority in this field.

You have been a member of IAEVG for as long as anyone can recall, initially under the NICEC umbrella and since 2002 as an individual in your own right. You were a founding member of the Editorial Board of our journal, The International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IJEVG) and served continuously on the Editorial Board from its creation in 1999 to the present. You have contributed many articles that have been published in the journal. You have featured as a keynote speaker and presenter at numerous IAEVG conferences.

Your role within IAEVG has been only a small, but significant, part of your overall involvement in the field of careers guidance. Your contribution to our field of endeavour has been of such sustained significance that we may never see the likes of it again. The OECD review and the subsequent establishment of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) stand out for me as two initiatives that have had sustained and significant impact far beyond the boundaries of the traditional careers guidance field. I am in no doubt that neither of these initiatives would have eventuated without your vision, passion and commitment.

From your IAEVG colleagues, thank you. It's been our privilege to have had you within our ranks.

With warmest personal regards

Lester

Lester Oakes
President, IAEVG
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