

Editorial

Jérôme Rossier

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Our *Journal's* second issue of volume 12 contains 4 very different contributions. The first contribution presents an overview of how quality assurance approaches are usually conceived. Most institutions nowadays have to assess the quality of their services, but this practice has also some weaknesses, which are very well discussed in this article. The second contribution presents a content analysis of 11 journals over 20 years in order to have an idea of the relative importance of qualitative research in our field, a remarkable contribution. The last two contributions are empirical studies. The first uses a qualitative approach to study midcareer transitions in a Macedonian post-socialist cultural context, and the last presents a study of the relationship between character strengths and vocational interest, suggesting that positive psychology might have some applications in our field.

In the first contribution, “Quality assurance and evidence in career guidance in Europe: Counting what is measured or measuring what counts?” Peter Plant presents an overview of the practice of quality assurance in Europe. Policy-makers usually devise these processes in order to monitor the quality of the services provided. However, the reliability of these indicators depends crucially on the quality of the measures. In a study some years ago, we observed that the correlation between career counseling effectiveness –in terms of decrease in career-decision-making difficulties and the satisfaction of the client was low ($r = .28$; Rossier & Massoudi, 2010). For this reason, taking into account only the satisfaction of the users was insufficient for assessing the quality of career guidance services. Indeed, as clearly written by Peter Plant, “Evaluating the impact of career guidance is complex and non-linear.” Moreover, long-term impacts of career guidance have to be more systematically assessed. This contribution certainly represents a stimulating thought about quality assurance for everyone that has encountered or has to implement these types of new public management policies and procedures.

J. Rossier (✉)
Institute of Psychology, University of Lausanne, Anthropole-3127, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
e-mail: jerome.rossier@unil.ch

In the second contribution, “Qualitative research in career development: Content analysis from 1990 to 2009,” Graham B. Stead, Justin C. Perry, Linda M. Munka, Heather R. Bonnett, Abbey P. Shiban, and Esther Care present an analysis of the content of 11 journals of our field during 20 years, in order to determine the relative importance of qualitative research over these years. Overall, only 6.3 % of the articles used a qualitative method. It is a little disappointing that this proportion has remained stable across time. The proportion of qualitative articles in the *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* is similar to the overall proportion. It is interesting to note that in the list of authors and universities of qualitative research contributors, Europe is noticeably absent. In order to increase the methodological pluralism in our field, efforts should be made to increase the proportion of empirical contributions using a qualitative approach. The authors also claim that the quality of qualitative research should be improved in order to increase the impact of this type of research method. For example, about 40 % of the contributions using a qualitative approach would benefit from a clearer and more complete description of the method used, and inter-rater reliability also might be more systematically calculated and presented. At the end of their contribution, the authors make several recommendations. One of these is to train PhD students more systematically to use these methodologies, which are especially useful for studying the uniqueness of some phenomenological constellations or the complexity of some processes.

In the third, “Picking up the pieces: Themes in Macedonian midcareer transitions,” Paul Sudnik presents a study of midcareer transitions in a post-socialist context that has undergone major changes in the last 20 years with massive privatization programs. This social transformation induced major changes in the world of work, with more job insecurity, unemployment, and non-chosen work transitions in Macedonia. These transformations have an impact on the way people think and understand the notion of career. The author used a series of open-ended interview questions with Macedonian midcareer transitioners and identified four main themes that characterized their transition: entrepreneurship, portfolio career, employability, and employment in a small firm. When confronted with the realities of their transition, they perceived the two first themes as rather unrealistic for concrete and contextual reasons. The author also illustrated that career transitions are very difficult for people in their 50s or 60s, and that societies should proactively fight ageism. Employment in a small firm was usually perceived as the most probable and realistic option. Through this contribution, the author also revealed that life-long-learning is very important in order to preserve a high level of employability. The changes in Macedonian society call for career counseling to become more important and more necessary for an increasing number of people that have to face a career transition in this specific cultural setting.

In the last contribution, “A multi-method approach to studying the relationship between character strengths and vocational interests in adolescents,” René T. Proyer, Nicole Sidler, Marco Weber, and Willibald Ruch studied the relationship between positive psychology variables and vocational interests for the very first time in the literature. According to sociocognitive career theories, vocational interests could also be considered, to some extent, as strengths and resources

because they may stimulate the development of vocational goals, relate to motivational processes, and inspire job performance when the person's interests and his or her work environment are in harmony with one another. Some of the authors' correlations were quite large, such as between intellectual strength and investigative and artistic interests. The realistic type is usually heterogeneous, explaining the absence of links with character strengths. One interesting aspect of this study is that the authors used a multi-method approach in order to assess vocational interest. Moreover, the links between character strengths and vocational interests varied according to the method used, with the *objective* test being less correlated with characters strengths. These differences might be attributed to method bias, where data gathered with questionnaires were more highly correlated, or the three methods used to assess interest might have measured slightly different aspects of these interests. Finally, further studies about the usefulness and the importance of positive psychology for educational and vocational guidance certainly should be conducted.

We hope that you will find a number of new and interesting insights in this issue and that it will contribute to your own professional development. We wish you pleasant reading in the hopes that this issue will stimulate your own thoughts and lead to other contributions to our *Journal*.

Reference

- Rossier, J., & Massoudi, K. (2010). L'efficacia delle attività di orientamento: L'importanza di prendere in considerazione gli aspetti relazionali e i fattori di mediazione. In L. Nota & S. Soresi (Eds.), *Sfide e nuovi orizzonti per l'orientamento: Metodologie e buone pratiche* (pp. 318–326). Florence: Giunti O. S. Organizzazioni Speciali.