

## **Regionalisation of Career Development Practice**

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## Regionalisation of Career Development Practice

Australian achievements in the career development industry in recent years are monumental. Most notably, the standards for the profession of *career development practitioner* have been established through the cooperation of the professional associations that constitute the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA). With the progressive implementation of the *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners* (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2009) will come further challenges and enrichments in the field with regard to systems of education, training and continuous learning; its scope of practice in terms of how it can contribute to private and public good; and its underpinning research and development programs that inform, evaluate, and stimulate new advances in career development practice. Indeed, there is more work that needs doing to further establish the value of the profession of career development practitioner.

Looking forward to the challenges of the future, we in the field should also look back to understand our past challenges and achievements. For sure, career development practice in Australia has a documented history that extends back to the 1920s (De Giovanni, 2009; Morgan & Hart, 1977). Also, we should look sideways and around; we should look to our friends and neighbours in this region of the globe. Indeed, an overview of the region was recently provided in a special issue on career counselling in the *Asian Journal of Counselling* (McMahon & Yuen, 2009) that featured papers from Australia, India, Japan, South Africa, and Taiwan. Whilst each nation in the region advances according to its unique needs and context, there is reason to conceptualise those nations as part of a dynamic of *regionalisation*.

Regionalisation of career development practice is given a sense of proportion when one considers the movement of thousands of students, workers, and migrants through the nations within the vast span of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Within the mix of nations are diverse traditions of career development practices. Given that our nations' economies are inter-dependent, it is worth contemplating what might be gained if we concentrate our efforts on a vision of sharing practices to learn from one another's unique strengths and achievements; and, moreover, by doing so, engage in processes of co-constructing practices that transfer as seamlessly as the people transiting from one nation to another for their study, work, and new life abroad. This vision transcends the challenge of translating a practice derived in one nation into the practice frameworks of another nation (e.g., converting a psychometric test from one language to another). Whilst translation of practice is laudable, regionalisation implies more: it means the joint construction of practices that address what is common in the needs of the people of different nations that are economically inter-dependent; it means minimising differences through co-constructions that are based upon that which is common. For example, what is common to the career development needs of a person relocating from the Maldives to study for a degree in Malaysia, to one departing Australia for China? Replace the words "study for a degree" with "work in a manufacturing plant" and the question is as equally thought-provoking. Translating practices may get us only so far in understanding and meeting the needs of those persons. Co-constructed practices suited to career development practice in an internationalised region may offer a whole lot more.

This notion of regionalisation of career development practice has implications for public policy and for professional training and regulation. Contemplate the idea of a professional regulation and license system that extends across the region. What would be the underpinning professional standards, education and training requirements for a profession of career development practitioner in this region? Given our experience with the development of professional standards, Australia is in a position to contribute to the profession's advancement in the region (Cheung, 2009; McIlveen, 2009). For example, there may be quite useful insights to be drawn from CICA's experience of the process of designing and implementing policy and procedures for the endorsement of university degrees that stand as qualifications for the profession. Other countries considering a similar approach to professionalisation may be interested in our experiences. However, regionalisation requires the melding of models that minimise the differences and exploit the unique strengths of

each. It is not simply a matter of transnationally exporting Australian models into another context. It is vital that all nations' perspectives be invited and considered in terms of their being a source of pragmatic wisdom that is heeded in regional dialogue.

The impetus for a regional approach is evident in the formation of the Pacific Careers Network at the 2009 International Symposium for Career Development and Public Policy that was held in Wellington, New Zealand. As the economic and social ties among Australia and the other nations within our region become tighter, and governments and industry bodies exploit means by which to exchange labour and educational products, attention should be given to ensuring that the career development profession has an active position in that trade. How might we pragmatically explore this idea of regionalisation of the profession? What is the potential scope for business models, practices, research programs, and theories that transcend difference, yet paradoxically thrive upon the wealth in diversity?

To answer those questions, perhaps it might be useful to contemplate a word used at the beginning of this article: *cooperation*. That intention and action are inherent in the word *cooperation* needs no embellishment from me. The responsibility for its meaning made true rests with all of us in the field. Yet, leadership in cooperation is certainly required; and we should ask what leadership role might CICA play in developing greater cooperation toward regionalisation? For sure, it has been the force of cooperation that has empowered CICA to lead on our behalf, particularly in domestic relations with government and industry bodies. Ultimately, however, it will be incumbent on all members of the profession in this country to choose how we participate in regionalisation.

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