



A Book Review of "Career Guidance For Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism" edited by Tristram Hooley, Ronald G. Sultana and Rie Thomsen

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3 **Career Guidance For Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism**, Edited by Tristram
4 Hooley, Ronald G. Sultana and Rie Thomsen, London, Routledge, 2018, 276 pp., ISBN 978-
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9 Career Guidance for Social Justice, Contesting Neoliberalism is an edited collection of work
10 produced by Tristram Hooley, Ronald Sultana and Rie Thomsen. All three are professors in
11 Careers Education at their various institutions and have an extensive record of writing on
12 social justice issues. This is the first in a two-volume set on the subject published by
13 Routledge. What unites a series of diverse chapters is a focus on how career guidance can
14 be understood as both embedded in a wider socio-political context but also has the potential
15 to engage in these same socio-political realities. In many ways, this volume can be best
16 understood as part of a wider project, supported by the editors in particular, to develop social
17 justice as a significant lens through which career guidance can be examined. This can be
18 understood as an extension of earlier work by the editors but also as a response to the
19 increasingly political, radical and turbulent times we are currently living through.
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23 The volume sets out three interconnecting horizons, career guidance, social justice and
24 neoliberalism. The details of these horizons are often left for the individual chapter authors to
25 interoperate for themselves. Firstly, there is a focus on career guidance which is presented
26 both as an educational practice and as a political goal concerned with how individuals and
27 communities manage their educational, vocational and wider social lives. Secondly, there is
28 a focus on social justice, which, though it is presented variously throughout the volume, is
29 generally seen as involving an emancipatory frame where oppressive and unjust practices
30 that individuals, communities and societies experience are recognised and opposed. Thirdly,
31 and finally, the volume focuses on Neoliberalism as being the dominant condition under
32 which oppression and inequality develop in late modern society. Neoliberalism, is seen as
33 when problems that occur in society, such as unemployment, insecurity and lack of
34 opportunity, should be resolved at an individual level and that society as a whole, and the
35 state in particular, should not interfere. Across these three horizons, the collection develops
36 an understanding of how Neoliberalism has re-shaped career guidance and how career
37 guidance through engaging with social justice can challenge this new hegemony.
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43 The first section of the book focuses on understanding the context of Neoliberalism. The
44 section introduces a number of different perspectives on how Neoliberalism interacts with life
45 in a late modern world. Irving's chapter picks up on how Neoliberalism has influenced policy
46 discourse using examples from New Zealand to show how Neoliberalism has changed what
47 is seen as 'educationally good' where government policy increasingly asserts ideological
48 control over education. Alexander looks at the interactions with our understanding of
49 geography with a particular focus on problematizing mobility and its relationship to
50 geographically local communities where individuals are increasingly encouraged to be
51 mobile at the expense of more local understandings of being. Buchanan considers the
52 relationship between social-media and a Neoliberal frame with particular emphasis of how
53 social media requires new forms of emotional labour to support itself where feminist ideas
54 show how unpaid labour is increasingly needed to participate in modern labour markets.
55 Finally, in this section, Hooley considers how problems related to the future of work and the
56 rise of automation could be considered from Neoliberal and social justice perspectives,
57 arguing that automation is not necessarily bad but we must decide if we will let it serve
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3 Neoliberal ends or ends defined by social justice. The strength of the section is the breadth
4 of issues it discusses and the range of theoretical tools which authors use to investigate the
5 relationship between Neoliberalism and social justice: Buchanan's use of feminist theories of
6 work to consider what forms of labour social media requires and Alexander's use of 'spatial
7 justice' to critique our notions of mobility are particularly strong in this regard. The section
8 does an excellent job of introducing the reader to the shared terrain which the book
9 continues to make use of and serves as a good introduction to the conceptual themes in the
10 collection.
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14 The second section is entitled 'building theories for change' and moves on from the range of
15 ways Neoliberalism has been conceptualised towards exploring theories which discuss how
16 social justice can be enacted and how they can be applied to career guidance. In this section
17 we variously hear about a range of different theories which discuss the potential for social
18 change in a Neoliberal context. Rice's chapter kicks off by introducing us to how Fraser's
19 work could be applied to career guidance and especially Fraser's concept of 'recognitive
20 justice'. This is followed up by excellent chapters from Olle looking a Freudian-Marxist
21 perspective on radical refusal with a focus of how combining these two apparently
22 contradictory theories opens up new understandings of what it means to reject Neoliberal
23 ideology and practice. Next, Billon's chapter looking at the implications of Giddens's
24 structuration theory for career guidance and especially how it can resolve dualisms, such as
25 structure and agency, that may appear to make social justice difficult as a project. These
26 chapters move on from mainly focussing on Neoliberalism to mainly looking at social justice
27 more specifically and the various ways that it could be thought about or moved towards in
28 practice. Career guidance is sometimes accused of being stuck in shallow traditions related
29 to humanistic psychology and policy discourse so the variety of ideas on show within this
30 section will be invigorating for researchers, practitioners and students alike.
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36 The third and final section looks at practice research in relation to the themes of the book. In
37 doing so it considers how research can be conducted that either investigates career
38 guidance or makes use of career guidance as its theoretical basis. The chapter by Polsen,
39 Skovhus and Thomsen looks at research circles as a research methodology initially
40 developed through some of Thomsen's earlier work but now developed theoretically into a
41 research methodology. The chapter by Reid and West looks at Auto/ Biographical research
42 to the same ends and finally Bengtsson looks at the potential of the theories of Foucault and
43 Rancière to underpin research which explores and critiques career guidance practice. This is
44 then further supplemented by the chapter from Vierira, Dionisio and Pappamikail who
45 present the findings from research exploring career guidance in schools in Portugal. This
46 project examined the range of different sources of information used by students, identifying a
47 tendency to overlook career guidance but instead focus on family and other social positions
48 which were more likely to be affected by inequality. Furthermore they addressed the place of
49 merit in understanding how schooling and career-related outcomes are understood and the
50 place of wider social theories for problematizing this relationship. It is a strength of the
51 collection to include this section regarding research methodology, something which could
52 easily have been overlooked but adds to the variety and appeal of the collection.
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58 The unique focus on this book lies in its ability to bring together the three horizons we noted
59 above and the variety of its chapters. A lot of ground is covered but the collection feels
60 united by these horizons so you never feel lost between the chapters. This collection does

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3 an excellent job of appealing to a wide range of potential readers. There is enough
4 theoretical gravitas and strength of writing to engage lecturers and researchers alike whilst
5 still being accessible and pertinent enough for students and practitioners. The works real
6 strength is its ability to present something timely and important to the sector without slipping
7 into becoming grandiose or self-important. There is a feeling throughout the chapters that
8 what is being discussed is new, pertinent to the future of career guidance and a worthy read
9 for everyone across the sector.
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13 In terms of other specific strengths, the collection should be particularly commended for its
14 variety; both in terms of the backgrounds and cultures of its writers and in terms of its subject
15 matter. There can be a temptation that edited collections either become repetitive or
16 inconsistent in terms of quality but the editors have done an excellent job in creating a wide
17 variety of different perspectives which still feel unified and equal in terms of quality. Secondly
18 there is a genuine feeling of vibrancy to the collection. The move towards more sociological
19 and political understandings of career guidance adds something genuinely interesting and
20 new to discussions inside the sector.
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24 In terms of weaknesses, most arise out of the nature of the book. There is more of a focus
25 on theory than practice, though hopefully this will be remedied by the second volume in the
26 series. At times, the practitioner may find themselves engaged by new ideas but lacking a
27 clear roadmap to implementation. Similarly, at times, the diversity obscures differences
28 between chapters. A book which discusses theorists as diverse as Freud, Marx, Giddens,
29 Sen and Terranova is on one level to be applauded for diversity and pluralism but does
30 make it difficult for the reader to spot tensions within the collection and consider how these
31 could be resolved. Finally, the single focus on Neoliberalism does mean that the book does
32 not significantly touch on other structures or forms of oppression outside of this frame such
33 as misogyny or forms of conservatism found in more traditional societies. Added to this the
34 chapters do not always explore how Neoliberalism is a phenomenon with historical routes
35 inside modernity and capitalism in particular. This in some ways does limit the scope of the
36 book. All of the above do mainly represent the limitations of an edited collection and the
37 editorial decisions that are necessitated by this sort of work, but it is still worth the reader
38 being aware.
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43 In conclusion *Career Guidance for Social Justice, Contesting Neoliberalism* represents a
44 timely, vibrant and engaging collection which is not just well written and engaging but also of
45 considerable importance for the career guidance sector and its development. It offers an
46 important contribution to the intellectual debate about career guidance from an academic
47 perspective and contextualises this in a timely manner through broader sociological and
48 political themes.
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