

## Administering narrative career counselling in a diverse setting: trimming the sails to the wind

Kobus Maree, Liesel Ebersöhn and Maisha Molepo

kobus.maree@up.ac.za

*The purpose of this article<sup>1</sup> was to investigate the extent to which a postmodern,<sup>2</sup> narrative approach to career counselling can be utilized to address complexities in career counselling settings characterized by diversity. We also contemplated whether the inclusion of multiple approaches towards the data collection for assisting clients in career choices is indeed possible. Our expectation was that this article could contribute to advancing our theory base in career counselling to one which is more inclusive, holistic, and contextual. We reconsidered assumptions possibly separating existing career counselling practices in SA from theory because, in our view, using the framework of a constructivist and postmodern approach also links practice and theory with societal 'realities'. We invite future research to explore and explain the theoretical associations we have established by constructing a resonant career theory. We also encourage documentation of the exploration of our premises in clinical cases. Lastly, we propose the revision of training programmes to answer to diversity particulars so that theory–practice integration can be strengthened, and we support transformation processes focused on recruiting students representative of SA diversity to study in the field of educational psychology, focusing on career counselling, and to equip them with the skills to deal with larger and smaller groups satisfactorily.*

### Introduction

The purpose of this article was to contemplate the use of narrative career counselling to address multilayered challenges signified by diversity. The aim was not to ponder on these many challenges. Rather the hope was to propose one counselling mode giving recognition to social groups belonging to the middle and low ends of society's power gamut — especially as played out in the domain of career psychology.

In career psychology, as in other research and academic domains, many professionals have lately "redirected themselves to be more pluralistic in responding effectively to a wider array of stakeholder groups in society" (Greenwood & Levin, 2000:91). Reasons for this change of direction have been part of the psychological discourse of the last few years and have therefore focused on multiple publications. One reason for such a manifest reassigning relates to the apparent inability of traditionally western counselling approaches to address marginalized groups in a relevant way. Another reason concerns limitations in the training of career psychologists. Many 'qualified' career psychologists are encumbered and dissatisfied by the limitations in their training. Training focused on western tenets of career counselling appears to render many professionals ill-equipped to deal with diversity aspects, such as power, obligations, ethics and responsibility, let alone translate these epistemological reflections into practical strategies and

---

1 It would probably be best not to use the word "article" in this context, but, instead, to refer to a think-piece based on our extensive practical experience (which is explicated in the contribution).

2 In line with current thinking, the term or label of postmodern is used in this article to refer to "approaches (e.g. narrative, contextual, constructive) that emphasize the importance of understanding our careers as they are lived" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002:87).

counselling methods. In the foreground of these deliberations is the need to afford power and agency to marginalized groups to "see and speak about what is seen as well as what is hidden from scrutiny" (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000:109) in the career counselling process.

The theoretical assumption underpinning this article was that narrative career counselling is one way of addressing intricacy related to diverse settings in career counselling. The argument is not to view narrative career counselling as the only conclusive approach in dealing with such complexities, but rather to propose its value as deserving some contemplation in this regard.

In this article we also build on our empirical research in terms of ongoing qualitative case studies initiated in 2002. Six South African communities<sup>3</sup> participate as cases to explore educational psychological interventions with children (ranging from career guidance, learning support to enhance learners' mathematical achievement, emotional intelligence intervention, as well as memory box making in terms of psychosocial support in the context of HIV&AIDS). Owing to the randomly changing number of community members, participants were selected by means of non-probability, judgemental sampling. The number of participating children differed over time as children were placed in care, or moved to other communities to stay with family members. Data were collected by means of simple and participatory observations, as well as informal individual interviews with children, parents and caregivers, educators, as well as community leaders including faith-based leaders, clinic nurses and social workers. Other sources of data, such as visual data (obtained from photographs, digicam recordings), field notes and audio data, were collected and collated to enrich the database. Two-day field visits to each community occurred every five months from inception of the research in 2002.

The main research question directing this article was: To what extent can a narrative approach to career counselling be utilized to address complexities in career counselling settings characterized by diversity (Watson & MacMahon, 2004)? This question also alluded to contemplating whether or not the inclusion of multiple approaches towards the data collection for assisting clients in career choices is possible.

The expectation was that this article could contribute to "advanc(ing) our theory base in career counselling to one that is more holistic, contextual, and multicultural" (Savickas, 2003: 89; Walsh & Savickas, 1996).

As background to these questions we briefly explicate some of the cumulative challenges career counsellors may face in diverse career counselling settings.

## **Background**

From the literature it is clear that a configuration of interrelated factors co-determines successful counselling in a diverse context. A number of rather complex socio-cultural factors need to be considered during counselling in diverse settings (Cronbach, 1990). These include the importance of sensitivity to the dilemmas generally encountered when individuals from educationally, environmentally or culturally marginalized groups participate in assessment. By this, we use the term "marginalized" not only in terms of a "western" perspective, but also in terms of multiple "African" perspectives, because we deem it an erroneous belief to think in terms of a homogenic so-called "African perspective".

---

3 The communities are located in four South African provinces: two rural communities in Limpopo, two urban communities in Gauteng, and one rural community each in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga.

At the same time the glacier effect of ever-changing socio-cultural conditions should be borne in mind. According to Cronbach (1990) faulty inferences occur especially when researchers assume that socio-cultural situations are static rather than dynamic.

Holdstock (in Tlali, 1999:35) maintains that a root for some of the struggles experienced by South African psychology is to be found in "therapists' cultural ignorance and their isolation from the rich diversity of African indigenous methods of healing". This could inevitably lead to compound marginalisation. Higgs, Higgs and Venter (2003) eloquently argue in favour of the integration of indigenous knowledge systems in SA higher education. We concur that such an exploration could be beneficial in interrogating existing Eurocentric career counselling approaches and practices.

Career counselling in South Africa (SA) is still characterised by and large by relatively privileged counsellors facilitating career counselling with those whose experiences have been marginalized. As such the danger exists that counsellor modes may carry the potential to silence clients during career facilitation. In addition to this, the bulk of psychometric assessment instruments still widely in use in SA are based on western principles, and are therefore not representative of the manifold groups indicative of South Africans.

The scenario is further encumbered by the predicament already starting at school level. As such "the vast educational, psychological, [career counselling] and social needs of the non-privileged majority are minimally provided for ... the average ratio [educational psychologist: number of students] for black education is 1:30 000, whereas for whites it is 1:2 750" (Kriegler, 1993:65).

Economic disparities emphasize diversity lines in accessing career counselling services. Even in 2005 career counselling in SA is available primarily to people who are able to afford this (expensive) service (Nicholas, Pretorius & Naidoo, 1999:7). In schools education departments have virtually done away with the practice of psychological assessment, thereby denying learners in the economic sidelines access to this previously free service.

A number of concepts that form part of the current discussion are subsequently elucidated.

## **Concept elucidation**

### **A narrative approach**

A narrative approach implies that both problems and difficulties are embedded in texts, words and stories, representing lived experience, which only exists in language in stories (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Joffe, 1999). Using narratives is a natural way in which the inherent structure of personal experience is expressed (Barresi & Juckes, 1997). A client is regarded as the expert on him/herself, and authors on his/her own story, whereas the counsellor assumes a 'not-knowing' position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Joffe, 1999). Christensen and Johnston (2003) explain that clients share stories they are attempting to enact in the world of work, even if the narrative does not necessarily construct real events but rather clients' idiosyncratic versions. This includes an indication of what clients need to know about themselves (Young, Valach & Collin, 1996). The narrative approach can create a space carrying rich and revealing signature information to support career counselling in clients.

The narrative approach links up with postmodernism (or going beyond the modern era), a body of knowledge that originated in opposition to ideas of certainty, predictability, universal truth and empirical inquiry (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Joffe, 1999; Savickas, 1993). Postmodernism implies that the universe cannot be understood objectively and that reality exists in the

assumptions of the observer. From this perspective individuals are treated as meaning-making persons, instead of being objectified and pictured as points on a so-called normal curve. In essence: postmodernism has significantly contributed to the discovery of patterns of meaning in psychology research. Savickas has the following to say in this regard: "What exists for individuals is purpose, not positions on a normal curve" (Savickas, 1993:213). Furthermore, subjects tend to systematically and idiosyncratically disrupt patterns in an attempt to negotiate meaning(s), which, although not necessarily static, evolve as the "meaning expectations" of the subject change within ever-changing, non-static, fluid contexts.

Foucault (1981) contends that power can be found everywhere. During the (first part of) the previous century, "the institutionalized norms, standards and expectations which have been generated by an increasing body of expert knowledge serve as a measure against which people are continually incited to evaluate themselves" (Soal & Kottler, 1996:123). When people accept these power discourses as the sole "truth", they are by default simply plotted on a normal curve, and, ironically, agree as it were to play an active role in their own suppression (Foucault, 1980). From our vantage point, this means that the brutal power of a positivist, modern approach to career counselling provides a rationale for disempowerment of clients (i.e. meaning-making, personal growth and personal agency are stifled). Postmodernism and poststructuralism, however, challenge the modern notion (still prevailing in psychology in South Africa) that "science and technology are benign and that we are on the linear road to improvement ... discourse analysis has saved psychology from the brutality of experimental methods" (Burman, 1996:136-137). Allow us to explain.

Both the narrative approach and postmodernism tie in with constructivism. According to MacMahon, Patton and Watson (2003:195), "meaning making is fundamental to constructivism". In constructivist assessment and counselling (Patton & MacMahon, 1999; MacMahon & Patton, 2002), specific attention is paid to tracing the connections between clients' experiences and various elements from their respective system of influences, and this includes the past, present and future. Social constructionism is based on knowledge as a social construct, language as a social phenomenon and the individual as a rational person. In short, humans are social beings who live in the domain of language. Inherent in every social system are values and norms that facilitate relationships and existence (Gergen, 1985; McLean, 1997). The self and the concept of 'truth' are viewed as a manifestation of human interaction, which is constructed by communication (language) and relationship systems or discourse. This approach ties in with a qualitative approach to counselling, which involves "non-standardized and non-qualitatively based appraisal measures" (Goldman in Okocha, 1998:151). This term is used by Goldman to refer to informal assessment strategies, which may, for instance, include (auto-)biographies, interviews, games (e.g. card sorts, lifelines), simulations, and metaphors, that may be described as "figure[s] of speech in which special qualities of one concept or entity are applied to another to provide clearer meaning or to add color to the presentation" (Inkson, 2002:98).

### Diversity

Diversity in this article relates particularly to signature differences (and likewise, similarities) between counsellor and client, as well as client and counselling approach and techniques. A core assumption of the article is that career psychology deals with subjective experiences and that these envelop "different implications for differently situated" (Fine *et al.*, 2000:108)

persons in the counselling context.

Awareness and monitoring of the possibility of 'othering' in the context of studying diversity constitutes an essential precept of this article. We concur with Gibson, Swartz and Sandenbergh (2002) that the prevalence of the hierarchical (counsellor–client) nature of the counselling relationship is acknowledged, yet not applauded.

The thesis of the article argues against narrow nationalistic or essentialist definitions of gender, language or skin colour (Dyson, 1993). Furthermore this article is not a platform to present tensions between "historically oppressed groups as 'victims' and 'damaged' or as 'resilient' and 'strong'" (Weis & Fine, 1996:17). Rather awareness of diversity issues in career counselling constitutes ethical cognisance of "the situatedness of power relations associated with gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, race and nationality" (Christians, 2000:142). Diversity (in its many forms) assumes acute consequences for career counselling in its connectedness to daily life, identity, and social movements, as well as for the ways in which most groups tend to 'other'. Multiple studies have been done to contemplate diversity in the context of career counselling (Chung, 2001; Lent, 2001; Santos, Ferreira & Chaves, 2001). Malia and Loubser (2003) relate cognisance of indigenous knowledge systems with emancipation. We concur to the extent that integration of indigenous knowledge could promote agency (both in theory and practice) of marginalized groups, thus linking with our premise of applying a narrative approach in career counselling.

In the narrative approach the combined etic-emic approach is used in an effort to reconcile dichotomy. Whereas emic refers to culture-specific measures, etic refers to cross-cultural matters.

We will now concentrate briefly on possible assets in an African context that need to be mobilized in order to facilitate adequate career counselling.

### **Assets in an African context that can be capitalised on**

A proud African asset is the ability to tell stories. It is common practice to have a family gathering after supper in order to listen to stories told by elders with the younger folk also participating in the jokes and discussions. The tendency is to share whatever is eaten, enjoyed and experienced as sorrow. Such a practice may constitute one of the ways in which a storied approach to career counselling (see next section) may be introduced. Each client may be requested to tell his/her story in a group context while the counsellor facilitates the direction of these stories. This phenomenon may be explored by counsellors as a means through which clients can reveal their experiences in order to build on and map out their future.

Many African experiences have been expressed through cultural singing. Stories of battles, soil filling and other ways of living have been expressed and developed through horns and drums and singing and recitation. A storied approach to career counselling may also develop through engaging the client in a relaxed mood of singing or dancing.

Adequate language usage should help to ensure that individuals express themselves adequately and meaningfully in terms of their feelings and the interests they may wish to pursue in their careers (Herr, 1997). Code-switching should be exploited as a means of optimizing communication in the counselling situation. Clients should be afforded the opportunity to choose and utilize a language that will make them feel unthreatened and at ease when sharing their stories. In order to supply enough vernacular-speaking psychologists, implications for selection, recruitment and training of future psychologists need to be scrutinised.

Research on the identification of appropriate assessment instruments in a diverse context is in its infancy and needs to be broadened considerably. A case in point: The collage. In clinical cases we have found that educationally marginalized clients struggle to engage and express themselves in this narrative mode. Drawing, on the other hand, seems to tap into acquired educational expertise based on prior experience culminating in a confident mode of self-expression, and lends itself exceptionally well to clients taking up agency to 'write' their life stories.

### **Possible value of a narrative approach to career counselling in a diverse context**

Chen (2001:318) proposes the following guidelines or "helping strategies" for career development professionals that take on special significance in a diverse setting (Chen, 2001:326-328).

1. The need to facilitate subjectivity. Career counsellors need to engage clients in becoming subjectively involved in the career counselling process, with a special emphasis on the question: "What do these results mean to me?"
2. Clients need to develop a personal intention, i.e. personal goals, objectives and outcomes. In order to do this, clients first have to internalise the meaning of their personal life career journey experiences.
3. Clients and counsellors need to develop a keen understanding of the career counselling or development context. For this to occur, counsellors should keep in mind the need to remind themselves consistently to put clients' narratives into perspective (i.e. interpret and perceive clients' expressions in "the very experiential context in which such meaning exists" (Chen, 2001:327). Furthermore counsellors need to help clients in clarifying and making sense of the context during counselling.
4. Counsellors need to support clients in making sense of their experiences, i.e. promoting and facilitating a sense of flexibility and creativity in their perception of meaning. Amundson (in Chen, 2001) stresses the fact that clients can reconstruct the meaning of events.
5. Counsellors need to help clients construct meanings for planning the future. In this sense, the career counselling process becomes a possible opportunity for "active engagement" (Amundson, in Chen, 2001).

According to Hickson and Christie (1989) the outcome of any therapeutic intervention depends, to an extent, on the combined influence of the values of the client, the therapist, and the cultural milieu in which they find themselves. Nell, Bodibe and others (in Tlali, 1999), and Hickson, Christie & Shmukler (1990) argue conclusively that a sound understanding of clients' world views is essential, since this helps counsellors to understand themselves and their clients, makes explicit both parties' values, beliefs, suppositions, and attributions, facilitates mutually accepted and agreed-on therapeutic goals and processes, and helps counsellors to access clients' subjective realities. The potential impact of cultural forces/influences and of the acculturation process (including the influence of the environment on clients — such as the effect of urbanization on socio-cultural factors like the language they use), as well as the impact of lifestyle and levels of education should be considered when any measuring strategy is considered, designed and developed.

Owing to the problem of inadequate facilities most learners are used to being taught or spoken to in groups and the individual approach is kept to a minimum. Counsellors often find it difficult to speak to individual clients as the latter are not used to face-to-face types of interview or dialogue. It makes sense to start dialogues by proceeding from a group or game

context in which clients may gradually become used to this concept. This may encourage clients to take counsellors into their confidence and become able to share their life experiences. Since life experiences are regarded as confidential<sup>4</sup> learners are not allowed to share experiences randomly with just anybody. More often than not a lengthy process is necessary to facilitate entry to the inner feelings of individuals in the African context.

Hickson, Biesheuvel, Turton & Buhrmann (in Tlali, 1999:36) argue that it has become inevitable to establish ethnopsychology (or indigenous psychology) in a South African context for the following reasons:

- Frequent communication breakdowns between client and counsellor
- Counsellors often make negative judgements on their clients
- Counsellors often harm their clients instead of helping them
- Both counsellor and client experience the counselling process as frustrating and anxiety-provoking
- Counsellors set inappropriate therapy and process goals

Learners whose language and culture differ from those of the test developer and counsellor often experience a number of linguistic and cultural problems if subjected to a cross-cultural career counselling situation, notably a language problem. Rural learners in particular find themselves for instance in a situation where they first have to understand the concepts or items in their own language and culture before they can respond to or internalize a situation. The next step would then be to equate or relate their understanding of the concept to what the counsellor wants. This is when major confusion often develops because an understanding of the item by the learner may be totally different from the euro-centric meaning of the concept as expected by the tester or the context in which and for which the tester had formulated the test. The context is therefore challenged by the syntax.

The language of the counsellor may indeed become one of the main prohibitive factors in facilitating career counselling. Ideally speaking career counsellors need to master the mother tongue of learners in the best possible and basic way. This will minimize some of the problems accompanying idiomatic expressions and other forms of expressions, which may bear a totally different meaning to their equivalent form in the language of the counsellor. Indeed if language is not taken seriously, distrust may jeopardise the well-intended intentions of counsellors.

To be able to function effectively in a diverse context, counsellors need to acquire at least the following skills (Hickson & Christie, 1989:167): understanding their own values and assumptions, as well as assumptions about human behaviour and becoming able to identify and accept differing values; becoming aware of generic characteristics of counselling, as well as its relation to matters such as class and culture; being willing to act on the basis of a critical analysis of their own conditioning, as well as that of their clients, and the socio-political system in which they find themselves; becoming culturally aware in order to understand the bases for world views and to accept world views that differ from theirs; being willing to be eclectic in administering counselling, as well as striving to create the widest possible array of micro-counselling skills, which may have relevance for the idiosyncratic lifestyles of individual

---

4 Sepedi: *ke khupamarama*

isiXhosa: *Ukuxelela umntu emfihlweni* (to tell someone in confidence), *Ukuthetha emfihlweni* (to say something in confidence)

isiZulu: *Ngi kutshela imfihlo* (I tell you in confidence).

clients. Diverse socio-cultural groups (societies) value different types of skills and expertise, with the result that members of distinct social groups do not develop along uniform lines (Curran, 1988).

Clearly, meaning-making in relationships is a measure that should be exploited optimally to assess characteristics of personality (e.g. interests). Quantitative measurement, observation of behaviour and a qualitative analysis of test results should be combined to enable psychologists to enter the phenomenological world of the testee. Furthermore an urgent need exists for more innovative counselling methods (Amundson, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2004). The quest is for an approach that "enables rather than fits" (Savickas, 1993:211).

It is essential to note that the traditional approach to career counselling was developed at a time when career counsellors' main priority was to match people to the myriad of newly-available jobs. Parsons' theory, for instance, was developed during the transition from the so-called agricultural to the industrial society, giving rise to a mechanistic paradigm, which prized predictability and control (Mkhize, 2004). Our main aim in 2006 is to assist individuals in finding "escape routes" from marginalized status, in developing decision-making skills, being multi-skilled and occupying more than one job at a time, dealing with uncertainties of contract positions and fostering a positive attitude to deal with the rapid rate of change (which is a life-long process). This requires reframing of career counselling, collaboratively with the client, to help clients seize opportunities that come their way, as a joint socio-moral practice and a meaning-making process (Mkhize, 2004).

Chen (2001) indicates that individual psychology theorists (e.g. Adler), person-centred-theorists (e.g. Rogers), existential philosophers (e.g. Frankl) all contributed, directly or indirectly, to the growing notion of meaning-making in career psychology. The needs of the client come first with the sole view of empowering him/her to make his/her own decisions about the future. A narrative approach is adopted by which the client creates his/her own life story, with a view to creating a model story as close as possible to the ideal. This narrative comprises a consultative process of career counselling to all clients, irrespective of race, gender, age, or culture. The researcher is a co-worker, rather than the sole 'expert'. The entire process is co-operative, aimed at problem-solving, prevention, development and empowering the client to assume responsibility for his/her role in the process; putting his/her weaknesses and strengths into perspective (Savickas, 1993). Life stories enable counsellors to gauge the world views of clients and this is a critical facet of cross-cultural counselling. Hickson and Christie (1989) explain that western psychology has in the past been dominated by psycho-analytic, behaviourist, and humanist paradigms, and that each of these is based on an idiosyncratic world view (or 'cosmological foundation'), which, in turn, defines, explains, and predicts cause and effect, human behaviour, and psychopathology. World view is defined as the way in which people perceive their relationship to "nature institutions, other people and things" (Sue, in Hickson, Christie & Shmukler, 1990:171) and it co-determines the way in which persons think, make decisions, and define matters. Atkinson, Morten and Sue (in Hickson & Christie, 1989) explain that a person's world view includes a dynamic interaction between matters such as race, ethnicity, age, lifestage, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, social class, degree of acculturation, level of education, ordinal family position, marital status, and geographical situation. (We should probably add sexual preference.)

Postmodern resistance to the objective, positivist approach in career counselling should be viewed against the backdrop of modern science's claim to objectivity, rationality, universal

validity and certainty. Culture and language constitute the individual's symbolic world to which meaning and sense are ascribed (Savickas, 1993; Van Niekerk, 1996).

To exploit a narrative approach to career counselling, avoid the shortcomings of the traditional approach, and facilitate career counselling in a diverse context the counselling situation needs to shift from the almost exclusive use of diagnostic instruments to an approach that takes into consideration social and historical factors that relate to the career challenges that individuals face. In a diverse context it is especially crucial to acquire a sound knowledge of indigenous knowledge systems if a counsellor is to stand any chance of 'getting' through to clients (and clients 'getting' through to counsellors). Savickas (1993) believes that the heritage of the modern era, namely objective methods, can be implemented fruitfully in the postmodern counselling context. "To foster self-developers, we need to augment these objective constructs, not replace them" (Savickas, 1993:210). Counsellors are allowed the freedom to implement existing as well as new approaches and methods to lead their clients to active participation in the process of career counselling.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we mulled over the application of a narrative approach in career counselling to address some diverse complexities. We also reconsidered assumptions possibly separating existing career counselling practices in SA from theory. Existing theory and research in the domains of the narrative approach and diversity contexts were critically integrated. In our view, using the framework of such a constructivist and postmodern approach also links practice and theory with societal 'realities'. We invite future research to explore and explain the theoretical associations we established by constructing a resonant career theory. We also encourage documentation of this exploration of our premises in clinical cases.

Furthermore we propose the revision of training programmes to answer to diversity particulars so that theory–practice integration can be strengthened. We also support transformation processes focused on the recruiting of students representative of SA diversity to study in the field of educational psychology, focusing on career counselling, and to equip them with the skills to deal with larger and smaller groups satisfactorily. The variation in approach as a result of the cascade model of training needs to be researched more satisfactorily, since each facilitator may have mainly his or her own way of approaching their groups, resulting in different career counselling processes. Counsellors' (testers') expectations may also be influenced by the availability or non-availability of resources in rural situations.

Based on our extended partnerships with some rural communities we surmise that comparable communities could be as receptive to change or adoption of a new way of approaching life in partnership with career professionals as our partner communities. If an opportunity is missed to also get communities on board, systems may not be as successful as they are intended to be. Community structures, NGOs, school communities and youth organizations can be brought on board in order to encourage young people to talk about their lives, lifestyles and future aspirations. This may open doors for the culture of self-expression, taking pride in oneself and self-esteem. This can be achieved through the involvement of researchers who not only understand, but also share and espouse the cultural and linguistic forms of target groups. Tests so developed should not be developed from the presently presumed "one size fits all" philosophy, but reflect understanding of the experiences of testees and their living, playing and working environments.

It is up to all career psychologists to figure out what needs to be done in counselling in order to not jeopardize individuals and sustain marginalizing psychological practices. This article has been an attempt to contribute to the 'figuring-it-out-process'. The thesis for agency underpinning the narrative approach to career counselling, as argued in this article, is marvellously reflected in the following (Fine *et al.*, 2000:125):

"We stretch toward writing [counselling] that spirals around social injustice and resilience, that recognizes the endurance of structures of injustice and the powerful acts of agency, that appreciates the courage and the limits of individual acts of resistance [in clients and professionals], but refuses to perpetuate the fantasy that 'victims' [marginalized clients] are simply powerless."

## References

- Amundson N, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey J 2004. *Essential elements of career counselling*. Vancouver: Merrill Prentice-Hall.
- Anderson H & Goolishian H 1992. Human systems as linguistic systems: Evolving ideas about the implications for theory and practice. *Family Process*, 27:371-393.
- Barresi J & Jukes TJ 1997. Personology and the narrative interpretation of lives. *Journal of Personality*, 65:693-719.
- Becvar DS & Becvar RJ 1996. *Family therapy*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Burman E. 1996. The crisis in modern psychology and how to find it. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 26:135-142.
- Chen CP 2001. On exploring meanings: combining humanistic and career psychology theories in counselling. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 14:317-330.
- Christensen TK & Johnston JA 2003. Incorporating the narrative career planning. *Journal of Career Development*, 29:149-159.
- Christians CG 2000. Ethics and politics in qualitative research. In: Denzin NK & Lincoln YS. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chung YB 2001. Work discrimination and coping strategies: conceptual frameworks for counselling lesbians, gay, and bisexual clients. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50:33.
- Cronbach LJ 1990. *Essentials of psychological testing*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Curran HV 1988. Relative Universals: perspectives on culture and cognition. In: Claxton G (ed.). *Growth points in cognition*. London: Routledge.
- Dyson ME 1993. *Reflecting black: African-American cultural criticism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fine M Weis L, Weseen S & Wong L 2000. For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In: Denzin NK & Lincoln YS. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Foucault M. 1980. *Power/knowledge selected interviews and other writings*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault M 1981. *The history of sexuality: Volume 1: an introduction*. Hammondsworth: Penguin.
- Gergen KJ 1985. The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist*, 40:266-75.
- Gibson K, Swartz L & Sandenbergh R 2002. *Counselling and coping*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press South Africa.
- Greenwood DJ & Levin M 2000. Reconstructing the relationships between universities and society through action research. In: Denzin NK & Lincoln YS. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Herr EL 1997. Career counselling: A process in process. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 25:81-93.

- Hickson J & Christie G 1989. Research on cross-cultural counselling and psychotherapy: Implications for the South African context. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 19:162-171.
- Hickson J, Christie G & Shmukler D 1990. A pilot study of world view of black and white South African adolescent pupils: Implications for cross-cultural counselling. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 20:170-177.
- Higgs P, Higgs LG & Venter E 2003. Indigenous African knowledge systems and innovation in higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17:23-29.
- Inkson K 2002. Career metaphors and their application in theory and counselling. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 39:98-109.
- Joffe SE 1999. A postmodern, narrative approach to career planning. Unpublished Masters' dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Kriegler S 1993. Options and directions for psychology within a framework for mental health services in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 23:64-70.
- Lent EB 2001. Welfare-to-work services: A person-centred perspective. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50:33.
- Lent EB 2001. Welfare-to-work services: A person-centred perspective. *Career development Quarterly*, 50:33.
- Malia MW & Loubser CP 2003. Emancipatory indigenous knowledge systems: implications for environmental education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 23:276-280.
- McLean BA 1997. Co-constructing narratives: A post-modern approach to counselling. Unpublished Masters' thesis. New Zealand: University of Otago.
- MacMahon M & Patton W 2002. Using qualitative assessment in career counselling. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 2:51-66.
- MacMahon M, Patton W & Watson M 2003. Developing qualitative career assessment processes. *Career Development Quarterly*, 51:194-202.
- Mkhize N 2004. Social transformation and career marginalisation: theoretical and research implications. Paper read at the *10th Anniversary South African Congress of Psychology: Democratising the psyche*, Durban, 20-23 September.
- Nicholas L, Pretorius TB & Naidoo AV 1999. Historical perspectives of career psychology in South Africa. In: Stead GB & Watson MB (eds). *Career psychology in the South African context*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Niles SG & Harris-Bowlsbey J 2002. *Career development interventions in the 21st century*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice-Hall.
- Okocha AAG 1998. Using qualitative appraisal strategies in career counseling. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 35:151-160.
- Patton W & MacMahon M 1999. *Career development and systems theory: A new relationship*. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.
- Santos EJR, Ferreira JA & Chaves A 2001. Implications of socio-political context for career services delivery. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50:45.
- Savickas ML 1993. Career counselling in the post-modern era. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly*, 7:205-215.
- Savickas ML 2003. Advancing the career counseling profession: Objectives and strategies for the next decade. *Career Development Quarterly*, 52:87-95.
- Soal J & Kottler A 1996. Damaged, deficient or determined? Deconstructing narratives in family therapy. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 26:123-134.
- Tlali MT 1999. A review of the mono-cultural approach to psychology and various criticisms of cross-cultural counselling and psychotherapy in the South African context. *Vital*, 13:33-39.
- Van Niekerk EJ 1996. Enkele aspekte van die postmodernistiese kritiek teen die modernisme en die relevansie daarvan vir die opvoedkunde. *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Opvoedkunde*, 16:210-215.
- Walsh WB & Savickas ML 1996. Integrating career theory and practice. In: Savickas ML & Walsh

- WB. *Handbook of career counselling theory and practice*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.
- Watson MB & MacMahon M 2004. Postmodern (narrative) career counselling and education. *Perspectives in Education*, 22:169-170.
- Weis L & Fine M 1996. Narrating the 1980s and 1990s: Voices of poor and working class white and African-American men. *Anthropology and Education*, 27:1-24.
- Young R, Valach L & Collin A 1996. A contextual explanation of career. In: Brown D & Brooks L (eds). *Career choice and development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## Authors

**Kobus Maree** is an internationally known scholar, known for his work in career counselling. The encompassing aim of his research is to optimise the achievement of (especially disadvantaged) learners and to provide cost-effective career facilitation to learners. Editor of *Perspectives in Education*, he is a C-rated researcher with the NRF and was honoured by receiving exceptional achiever status from the University of Pretoria.

**Liesel Ebersöhn** is the Faculty of Education Research Co-ordinator: HIV&AIDS at the University of Pretoria. Her research centres on the intersection between positive psychology and the asset-based approach as it pertains to coping in the context of HIV&AIDS. Her research projects include a UNICEF project to develop 'safe schools' and a NIH project aimed at promoting resilience in young children of HIV-infected mothers.

**Maisha Molepo** is a research and training consultant. He holds a PhD in didactical pedagogics and focuses on the upliftment of (especially) rural populations. He is an award-winning and renowned researcher involved in numerous research endeavours, honoured by the University of Pretoria for his exceptional contributions to community upliftment.