ENHANCING CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LEARNERS THROUGH GROUP-BASED CAREER CONSTRUCTION COUNSELLING

Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela

(24473546)

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Philosophiae Doctor

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in the

Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR:

Professor J.G. (Kobus) Maree

PRETORIA

November 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela, student number 24473546 hereby submit this thesis titled, "**Enhancing career development of rural learners through group-based career construction counselling**", for the degree PhD, Learning Support Guidance and Counselling at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology. I declare that this is my original work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at this University or any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited in this thesis are acknowledged and indicated accordingly in the reference list.

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DECLARATION FROM EXTERNAL CODER

Dr Antoinette Cook
Educational Psychologist
BA, HDipEd (Postgraduate), BA (Hons), MEd
& PhD (Educational Psychology), Irlen Screener

Tel: 013 758 9000; Mobile: 0828929174; Fax: 013 758 9010

Email: cook@mweb.co.za

Address: PO Box 1858 White River 1240

Practice Number: 086 000 0255688

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Dear Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms

I hereby confirm that I have acted as Thembelihle Mahlalela's external coder. I have checked her data analysis and agree with the findings. I believe that the themes and subthemes identified in her study have been accurately reported.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Antoinette Cook
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ABSTRACT

The lack of career guidance in schools despite its inclusion in the Life Orientation subject continues to be a challenge, particularly in rural public schools. Life Orientation is not taught effectively in South African schools, even though it is the only opportunity for learners to receive career education (Smit et al., 2015). Consequently, learners receive little or no chance to explore the world of work critically, and they leave Grade 12 undecided and ultimately end up in inappropriate fields and either drop out of university or change from one course to another, thereby greatly extending the time it takes them to complete their studies (Ngoepe et al., 2017). Research has shown that group-based career counselling that is designed specifically for the South African context can be effective in enhancing high school learners' career development and improve career decision making (Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Maree, 2021).

The aim of my research was to explore the influence of group-based career construction counselling on learners' career development in a rural school. Data was generated by employing multiple qualitative sources to answer the research questions. These include pre- and post-intervention semi-structured group interviews, documents in the form of collages and timelines that were compiled by participants, the researcher's reflective journal and the Career Interest Profile (*CIP* version 6 of Maree, 2017). Convenience and purposive non-probability sampling were used to select a group of 15 Grade 9 learners aged between 14 and 18 to participate in the study. A non-linear iterative, thematic analysis process was conducted to identify themes that emerged from the datasets (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The findings in this study revealed that the subject choices made in high school are a key element in children's career development; therefore, addressing the matter early in Grade 9 can offer numerous benefits to young learners, including enhanced self-knowledge. Future research should consider assessing the value of career construction counselling in the changing world of work to benefit learners' career development in the 21st century and beyond.

Key concepts: Career guidance; Life Orientation; career development; career construction counselling; Career Interest Profile

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAAS	Career Adapt-Abilities Scale
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CDP	Career Development Practitioners
CEIA	Career Exhibitions and Information Association
CFT	Collective Fingers Theory
CIP	Career Interest Profile
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	The Department of Higher Education and Training
ETDP- SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
ES	Education specialist
FET	Further Education and Training
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
LO	Life Orientation
MCM	Maree Career Matrix
MDE	Mpumalanga Department of Education
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NEP	National Education Policy
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NCAP	National Career Portal
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PE	Physical Education
PEC	Person-Environment Correspondence
PGSS	Psychological Guidance and Social Support
RIASEC	Realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACDA	South African Career Development Association
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SETAs	Sector Education and Training Authorities
SLTCDM	Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making
SOP	Standard Operational Procedures
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TV	Television
TWA	Theory of Work Adjustment
PRESET	Pre-service Education and Training
INSET	In-service Education and Training

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has set in with digitisation and automation, which will ultimately shape the nature of career choices, career development, and career counselling practices in the future (Hirsch, 2018; Xing et al., 2018). Clearly, this era presents a challenge, more than ever, to introduce forms of career counselling that will empower learners from all walks of life to unleash their potential through self-realisation and enable them to achieve their dreams, so that they contribute meaningfully to their society. Socio-economic conditions should not be a barrier to children who have the potential and aspiration to become engineers, architects, medical practitioners, pilots, lawyers, or chartered accountants (to mention a few). Whether that child comes from the Whoonga streets in Tshwane, the notorious informal settlements in the Cape Flats, the Gauteng ghettos and slums, or the far-flung regions in Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, or Limpopo, I believe that the introduction of career construction counselling in South African schools can help to transform the devastating status quo of many schools (public schools in particular).

Maree (2013, p. 2) states that "one needs to acknowledge somebody else's initial pain in order to empower them to use their pain to help others, and in the process, heal themselves and make social contributions". This allows people to tell their stories and be listened to by caring audiences and helps them vent the pain they have suffered from psychological wounds as they reflect inwardly to pave their way out. The author suggests that individuals must be given an opportunity to become actively involved in the process of defining themselves through their own life experiences, whether painful or not, so that they become empowered to take control and authorship of their own lives as they interact meaningfully with others in their society. South African schools are in dire need of this kind of approach in order to reach out to learners growing up in appalling conditions, such as broken and child-headed families; homes with substance abuse, gender violence, and sexual abuse; political strife; and other social ills endured in our society that result in hopelessness and a bleak future.

The lack of career guidance support in schools, despite its inclusion in the Life Orientation subject, calls for examination of the extent to which group-based career and life construction counselling can be facilitated to promote the career development of Grade 9 learners in rural schools. Smit et al. (2015) maintain that Life Orientation is not taught effectively in South African schools, even though it is currently the only opportunity that learners have to receive career education. Most teachers provide only limited information on the careers that are available to learners. In under-resourced schools, in particular, learners receive little chance to explore the world of work critically

and to think creatively about overcoming the financial and social barriers that limit their career choices.

In my study, I argue that a different career guidance approach is needed in schools to supplement general career information, promote critical thinking, and foster hope for the future, particularly in learners living in socio-economically challenging circumstances. The socio-economic adversity in South Africa today restricts career guidance in under-resourced schools to the mere provision of career information and limits career counselling services to what is described by Smit et al. (2015) as a one-size-fits all approach that denies learners the opportunity to engage in critical and creative thinking on overcoming the financial and social barriers that may limit their career choices.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In line with Patton's definition within the Australian context, career guidance and counselling within the South African context is considered to mean "the type of education provided to prepare young people (learners) for the transitions within school and from school to work, with activities centred in work observation, work experience, self-learning activities, and job investigation activities" (2005, p. 22). Such career guidance and counselling will help learners to acquire the new skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of the changing world of work.

In school settings, career education comprises a programme that is aimed towards learning about the self and career and preparing learners for future options in their education, training, and work. This statement is in keeping with the following comment by Reid (2016, p. 202): "It is about the individual rather than the information about careers". Career learning and development programmes in school curricula need to be far more effective. Sadly, today, most teachers providing career-related information are not familiar with basic career guidance and counselling principles. Moreover, the internet cannot be trusted to meet the needs of young people in today's rapidly changing world of opportunities. Schools operating with a career practitioner offering one-on-one interviews without an established career learning and development programme as the basis of counselling will also fall short (Reid, 2016).

Career guidance in South African schools has been offered from Grades 7–12 with six topics for Grades 10–12 and five topics for Grades 7–9 as part of the Life Orientation content since 1999 (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011c; 2011d). The topics for Grades 10–12 are development of the self in society, social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, careers and career choices, study skills, and physical education. The topics for Grades 7–9 are development of the self in society, health, social and environmental responsibility, world of work,

and physical education. Life Orientation is allocated two hours a week in the school timetable, one of which must be dedicated to physical education, which makes it difficult for teachers to cover all the topics in a meaningful way (DBE, 2011a). There is no indication of career guidance in the school subject Life Skills for the lower grades (4–6), since the emphasis here is on the development of motor skills, attitudes, and values (DBE, 2011b).

As the previous paragraph indicates, career guidance and counselling within the South African school context encompasses a wide range of interventions, including the provision of career information to learners, exploration activities, career planning, and decision making. However, the socio-economic adversity in South Africa today restricts career guidance in under-resourced schools to the mere provision of career information and limits career counselling services to what Smit et al. (2015) described as a one-size-fits-all approach that denies learners the opportunity to engage in critical and creative thinking on overcoming the financial and social barriers that may limit their career choices.

Despite the inclusion of career guidance in Life Orientation after 1994, very little success has been achieved in the effective implementation of career guidance in most South African schools, particularly disadvantaged schools (Cook & Maree, 2016). This can, for instance, be seen in the large number of learners who leave Grade 12 undecided and ultimately end up in inappropriate fields and drop out of university or change from one course to another, thereby greatly extending the time it takes them to complete their studies (Ngoepe, Mojapelo, Ngoepe, & Van der Walt, 2017). Such poorly prepared learners often become poorly prepared adults who must contend with the harsh realities of the global changes in the world of work. Factors contributing to learners' lack of preparedness include the following: inappropriately trained career guidance teachers, lack of career resource centres in schools, the misconception that career guidance is the sole preserve of Life Orientation teachers, lack of parental involvement, and the constantly changing socio-economic and political situation both locally and globally (Naidoo et al., 2017).

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) recently highlighted the importance of career guidance by developing a "Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa" to assist career practitioners in the development and planning of career programmes within South African educational settings (DHET, 2016). However, currently, career guidance activities are conducted haphazardly by different agents in different contexts, and they are not well managed in schools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, universities, sector education and training authorities (SETAs), the DHET, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the Department of Correctional Services, the Department of Labour,

libraries, organisations, psychologists and psychometrists, lay counsellors, religious institutions, community centres, and web-based services.

It is hoped that the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners – which describes the knowledge and skills needed by career development practitioners working in diverse settings with diverse client groups – will provide practitioners with useful guidelines on how career interventions should be facilitated by people involved in career work at different levels.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which group-based career construction counselling can be provided to Grade 9 learners in a rural school to enable them to choose and construct careers so that they can make meaningful social contributions.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale of my study is based on my personal experience with the promotion of career guidance in different secondary schools where I have worked as a teacher. Below, I share my observations regarding the coordination of career guidance activities at the provincial level, where I am currently employed (at the time of conducting this study). The academic rationale is developed in response to the challenges brought by the global changes in the development of career guidance and counselling in South African schools, and their implications for the world of work. Moreover, I argue that a paradigm shift is needed to help schools understand that career guidance is an integral part of learners' development in the 21st century, hence the importance of introducing career construction. Lastly, I discuss the value of group counselling within a school setting and its advantages and disadvantages as a form of sharing knowledge and experiences during the counselling process.

1.4.1 Personal experience

My experience as a teacher for 21 years with learners in three different schools (Grades 8–12 secondary and Grade R–12 combined schools) sparked my interest in group-based career construction counselling. As the head of department (HOD) / education specialist (ES) for Social Sciences, including Life Orientation, in a secondary school and the deputy principal of a combined school at different stages, I assisted Grade 12 learners with their applications to tertiary institutions, provided advice where necessary, and coached teachers on how to help learners in their career choices and decision making. During this process, I learnt that very few Grade 12 learners were sure about what they wanted to do after leaving school. Some would choose careers that were not in line

with the subjects they were doing, such as wanting to do nursing while being in the commercial stream. Based on these observations, I believe that career choice intervention needs to be introduced as early as Grades 8 and 9, or even earlier, so that learners have a better understanding of the relevant subjects needed for their desired career journeys when they transition to Grade 10, which will help to avoid disappointment later in their lives.

While working as a deputy chief education specialist (DCES) for career guidance in the Mpumalanga Department of Education from 2015, I was responsible for coordinating Grade 11 and 12 career exhibitions and Grade 8 and 9 career awareness and subject-choice exploration programmes. During the exhibitions, I observed that some learners wander from one stall to another, giving rise to questions such as, do they really understand why they are attending the exhibition? Do teachers in schools really prepare them well before they attend, or do they think it is just a tour? What is the impact as they go back to school after the exhibition? Are there any benefits? The list is endless.

This has made me wonder what can be done to help learners become more career focused before they reach Grade 12. In this study, I have used qualitative group-based career counselling for the Grade 9 learners from a school in the Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga, which is a typical rural setting that provides a rich context for conducting research with learners from disadvantaged communities. Part of my work also involved career talks with Grade 10–12 learners in schools, where I was constantly reminded of learners' career indecisiveness. It became apparent that most learners are poorly prepared for their career lives and that much needs to be done to eliminate the shortcomings in career choices and decision making. Many schools have not begun to accept career guidance as an integral process of development throughout the educational journey of the learner and not just a once-off event. In his life-span, life-space theory of career development, Super states that a career is a lifelong process comprising specific stages during which career choices are made (as cited in Stead & Watson, 2017).

1.4.2 Academic rationale

1.4.2.1 Changes in the development of career guidance and counselling in South African schools

The challenges brought about by the global changes in the world of work have strengthened my determination to explore contemporary career practices that can be implemented in schools in order to meet these changes. The political situation in South Africa (at the time of this study) has diminished hope for stronger economic performance as we constantly witnessed the country's downgrading to junk status (Tella, 2017), which has led many citizens to believe that there will be no improvement within the next 10 years or longer (as anticipated by economic analysts). This could have far-reaching effects, including increased unemployment, retrenchment by many companies and

closure by others, migration of companies to other countries, and fewer new employment opportunities in the labour market. As a result, "individuals have to confront career planning, work entry, job search, job loss, work inopportunity, work stress, and work adjustment in an era of severe economic downturn and 'dejobbing', become more adaptable, reflect on their situation constantly, and acquire the skill to regulate and manage themselves in the absence of stable organizational structures" (Maree, 2015a, p. 410). In the same breath, Pretorius and Morgan (2010) remind us that careers are becoming boundaryless and that choosing a career can be fraught with difficulties, problems, and barriers that need to be overcome. However, barriers and frustrations in a career are an accepted fact in the boundaryless world, implying that career counsellors should acknowledge them and their impact on their clients and their career progression.

In their discussion of the global technological changes in the world of work, Watson and McMahon (2005) propose a postmodern view of work, emphasising people's capacity to continue learning throughout their lives in order to achieve employability rather than merely permanent employment. In the course of these changes, the concept of "career" has been redefined to mean a dynamic personal process of construction across people's life-spans. Consequently, there is a dire need for effective career counselling for a diverse range of people beyond the current provision of general career guidance services that are confined to schools.

I support the comments of Cook and Maree (2016), who state that a contemporary paradigmatic approach to career counselling is needed in response to the general changes in the world of work. To enhance the value of career counselling at a key juncture in the country, South Africa should heed the call to implement career counselling interventions in order to meet learners' career counselling needs in the 21st century. Such interventions entail interpersonal processes of helping people construct career stories that connect their self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and make meaning through narratives about self and work (Hartung & Vess, 2016). In other words, an approach is needed that will reflect current developments in the field of career counselling both elsewhere in the world and in South Africa. The aim is to ensure that South African learners, too, are exposed to career counselling theory and intervention that promises to prepare learners more adequately for fundamental changes in the world of work that are prompted by developments such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Hirschi, 2018).

1.4.2.2 Value of group counselling in schools

Group counselling is a cost-efficient means of reaching out to a large number of learners at a particular time, and it also creates an opportunity to learn from one another by listening and observing how others approach a particular topic. Sharing the knowledge and experiences of group members

provides social support as it can reduce the sense of isolation and stress involved in decision making and increase opportunities to learn about oneself and the world through dialogue (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Reid, 2016). In view of South Africa's typically overcrowded classrooms in rural schools, group counselling appears to be the best approach in this study.

Although group counselling has many advantages and is often the preferred mode of counselling in many schools, Shechtman and Kiezel (2016) urge caution as not everyone feels safe in a group and may consequently not be ready to invest emotionally in the group experience due to fear of criticism, thereby limiting self-disclosure. Some people feel naturally comfortable and safe in one-on-one relationships that strengthen bonding and the exploration of personal issues they would be reluctant to mention within a group context. The authors further emphasise that these challenges may be enhanced by cultural and gender influences. Collective cultures in particular believe that problems should be solved within the family to avoid shame and stigma. In some cultures, women tend to be more open, disclose more about their psychological difficulties, and seek help more easily than men. (Shechtman & Kiezel, 2016).

Therefore, counsellors must be able to appreciate the influence of culture, be aware of ways in which their own culture can affect their practices and be able to respect the diversity of values espoused by other cultures (Corey, 2013). Accordingly, planning, preparation, negotiation, flexibility, and group facilitation skills are essential for group work to be successful.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Primary research question

The primary research question in the study is: How can group-based career construction counselling inform the career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo[1] Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?

1.5.2 Secondary questions

The secondary questions in the study are divided into the following sub-questions:

Descriptive questions:

- How can group-based career construction counselling inform intervention to promote the career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?

[1] Permission was given by the school principal and the Head of Mpumalanga Department of Education to publish the name of the school. The matter was also clarified with my supervisor and the Faculty's Ethics Committee.

- Which factors contribute to career developmental challenges among these learners?[2]

Explorative questions:

- What were the main differences between learners' pre- and the post-intervention themes and sub-themes?
- How did group-based career construction intervention by means of the conduits of narratability, career adaptability, and intentionality influence learners' career development?

1.5.3 Working assumptions

The following assumptions relate to the questions listed in Sections 1.5. above:

- The learners' participation in the proposed group-based career construction intervention programme would afford them the opportunity to reflect on their career needs and help them make appropriate subject choices and informed career decisions that would be responsive to the global changes in the world of work and promote their career development.
- Career construction can be successfully integrated into the Life Orientation curriculum as stipulated by the DBE (2011d) to enhance learners' ability to construct their careers meaningfully and promote their career development.
- Facilitating the aforementioned intervention to rural learners can be instrumental in enhancing their career development by increasing their career adaptability scores and the potential to design successful career lives.
- I also assume that learners who are adequately informed regarding career and self-knowledge find it easier to cope with any kind of career-related challenges and are able to take personal responsibility for their actions and provide solutions that are relevant to any economic era in their lives.

1.6 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to explore the influence of group-based career construction counselling on learners' career development in a rural school. I intended on administering qualitative group-based career counselling intervention to Grade 9 learners from a typically rural setting to enable them to make informed career decisions. The intervention programme was implemented in

[2] The exact words "15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education" are not repeated throughout but should be assumed.

collaboration with the Life Orientation teacher to ensure that it was not seen as an isolated programme outside the school curriculum and the school subject of Life Orientation.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Career

The term career refers to a pattern of work-related experiences throughout a person's life-span (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Work-related experiences in this sense include objective events such as job positions and activities as well as work-related decisions and subjective interpretations such as work aspirations, expectations, needs, values, and feelings about particular work experiences. The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines career as an occupation taken for a significant period of a person's life with opportunities for progress. It also provides synonyms such as "job", "work", and "vocation". However, I agree with the career psychology specialists (Super, 1990, 1992; Guichard, 2009; Savickas, 2002, 2013) who assert that there is a thin line between these terms and define career as a collection of jobs held over the course of one's work life (i.e. people can hold different types of jobs over the course of a single career and can shift from one job family or collection to another, e.g. from a teacher to an engineer). Vocation, on the other hand, is regarded as a technical trade which may not always be accessed through higher education but rather formal or informal skills training. I concur with these authors' definition of work as "the domain of life in which people provide services either on paid or unpaid basis" (Lent & Brown, 2013a, p. 8), i.e. voluntarily, and job to mean a specific work or task assigned in a position that is held over a specific period of time. For the purpose of this study, I adopt a constructionist perspective viewing career as a non-static phenomenon in which individuals engage in the process of creating and recreating their well-being and reinterpret their past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations. Choosing a career involves a process of narrating and reflecting upon personal stories to form life themes (Di Fabio, 2012).

This postmodern view rejects the idea that career choice is a fixed decision, such as spending one's whole life working as a teacher, police, or doctor; instead, careers are viewed as being constructed, which means that the choice can be altered to suit one's needs and changing interests to meet the changes in the world of work (Savickas, 2013b).

1.7.2 Career guidance and career education

Career guidance and career education refer to a service that is focused on helping people who encounter difficulties with choosing a career or who are undecided to articulate their behavioural repertoire and translate it into vocational choices (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). In this study, both terms denote a kind of intervention that is aimed at helping prepare people for a vocation or job in a

particular field. The two terms are therefore inseparable as teaching involves both guidance and instruction.

Gysbers and Henderson (2012) argue that education has two interrelated systems, namely instruction programmes and career guidance and counselling programmes. The instruction programmes typically include disciplines (referred to as subjects in South African educational parlance) such as Fine Arts, Career and Technical Education, Science, Physical Education, Mathematics, Social Studies, and languages. All these disciplines (subjects) have standards that specify the knowledge and skills that learners have to master as they progress through their school years. The instruction programme takes up more of the school curriculum, but this does not mean that it is more important than the guidance and counselling programme. The two programmes are meant to complement one another.

From a career education perspective, career counsellors provide psychosocial and psycho-educational information. Psychosocial information includes information regarding the influence of people's social contexts and environment, while psycho-educational information helps people to better understand and "manage" their career choices. These two types of information help people to reflect on their future careers (how careers can be chosen and pursued), bearing in mind particular factors that are unique to their situation, such as the choice of a school, a subject set, a field of study, or the construction of their self-concept and self-image (Duarte, 2017a, 2017b; Savickas, 2013a; Super, 1957, 1990).

1.7.3 Vocational guidance

Vocational guidance (also known as vocational education) refers to the type of advice given to individuals to prepare them to become skilled workers, such as craftsmen, technicians, engineers, electricians, painters, or carpenters (Venkatraman et al., 2018). Trades are usually based on manual or practical activities that are traditionally non-academic, but occupations may also include professional vocations, such as engineering, accounting, nursing, medicine, or law. This type of education can take place at a secondary, post-secondary, further education, or higher educational level, and it can interact with the apprenticeship system but must be completed prior to being employed. Vocational guidance is important in that it offers a practical alternative for gaining the knowledge and skills needed to start a career by preparing candidates to work in a specific occupation through a combination of job-specific instruction and hands-on experience. The training programmes can last for one to three years or less (Vocational education, n.d.).

1.7.4 Career development

Career development refers to "the total constellation of psychological, sociological, economic and chance factors that combine to shape or influence the career of any given individual over the lifespan" (Herr & Cramer, 1996, p. 32; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017, p. 95). The goal of career development is to help people identify, describe, and understand that they have the ability to visualise and plan their own careers and lives (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). It is thus seen as an on-going process whereby people progress through a series of stages (exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement), each of which is characterised by a unique set of issues, themes, and tasks that need to be confronted as they progress through their lives. This is in keeping with the definition above that career development is progressive, not only concerned with the intervention of people's occupations but with formal and informal experiences that progress through different life stages and give rise to talents, interests, values, and knowledge of the world of work over time (Lent & Brown, 2013a).

1.7.5 Career counselling

Career counselling refers to a psychological intervention that helps people to consider the role of work in their lives (not the other way round) and identify who they are, establish their adaptability, and elaborate on their central life themes (Duarte, 2017a; Savickas, 2013a). Career counselling typically takes place between an individual client and the counsellor, although it may be conducted in groups for most educational settings in which clients might be experiencing common developmental challenges that may be either academic or career related. Career therapy, on the other hand, assists people in modifying distorted motives and answering the question, "How do I shape my career?" (Maree, 2010). This kind of intervention can either be in group form or one-on-one-interaction and is aimed at helping people with their career choices and decision making (Stead & Subich, 2017).

1.7.6 Career construction

Maree (2013) describes career construction as a process through which career counsellors assist people to face unique challenges inherent in choosing appropriate careers and scripting career and life stories for themselves. In career construction, people are given the opportunity to narrate (construct) their own stories so that they can understand themselves better and organise and make sense of their life experiences within their particular familial, social, historical, and cultural contexts. The role of career construction in the counselling process is to help people explore their own traits,

know how they adapt to changes arising from environmental factors, and understand why they behave and move in the direction that they do (Hartung, 2007).

Savickas et al. (2009) maintain that, due to the interconnectedness of different life domains, we can no longer speak of "career development" or "vocational guidance"; instead, we should envision "life trajectories" in which people progressively design and build their own lives, including their work careers. The question, "What am I going to do with my life?" should be answered not only by adolescents but by everyone as they negotiate major transitions in their lives. This life-design question prompt us to identify things that make life truly worthwhile.

Thus, in life construction counselling, people are assisted in making decisions regarding their career lives, rather than counsellors deciding for them. They can then realise that they have the potential to control their own lives. Patton (2005, p. 22) affirms that "we are in an era of do-it-yourself career management where individuals are being challenged to play a greater role in constructing their own career development". Career counsellors should therefore use the cultural resources that clients bring to the consulting room to co-construct action plans and help them move forward (Maree, 2013).

Based on the definitions provided for career construction counselling, career construction intervention, and life construction intervention above, it is clear that each of these concepts underscores the importance of aiding individuals in navigating their career trajectories. Consequently, these concepts were utilised interchangeably throughout the study to highlight their shared focus on empowering people in their career decision-making processes.

1.7.7 Group counselling

Group counselling can be defined as a process in which group members with particular challenges related to their careers come to counselling to share their problems, hoping for positive outcomes. These problems may emanate from different sources such as the home, school, or friends. The group leader focuses on different people and their problems, after which the group members attempt to help one another under the group leader's guidance (Jacobs et al., 2016). The group leader should be a professionally trained counsellor who is capable of creating a climate of trust, openness, responsibility, and interdependency through interactive counselling. Esposito et al. (2017, p. 392) use the concept of "mirroring" as a "metaphor that allows each member of the group not as an opaque surface, but as a human reflecting mirror who elaborates what is shared in the group setting and absorbs and reflects it in a more meaningful way". The group members can thus learn something about themselves from the effects they have on one another.

I am aware that the term "group guidance" within a school context applies to small groups of learners who can fit into ordinary classrooms characterised by cohesiveness and the sharing of

personal concerns (as is the practice in many South African schools at the time of this study) (Mahlangu, 2011). It is worth noting that, within such contexts, learners receive help on a regular scheduled basis, while individual counselling would be recommended for people experiencing specific psychological problems that the general information alone will not resolve (Shechtman & Kiezel, 2016; Reid, 2016). The difference between group counselling and group guidance lies in their goals. Group counselling focuses on growth, development, enhancement, prevention, self-awareness, and removing blockages to growth, while group guidance focuses on the mere provision of information (Corey, 2013).

1.7.8 Life Orientation teachers (educators)

Life Orientation teachers are educators who are mandated to "equip learners in the Senior and Further Education and Training phases of Basic Education with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in order to promote holistic development by enhancing confidence within themselves and to become responsible citizens" (Pillay, 2012, p. 167). The Life Orientation subject integrates topics such as health education, life skills, career guidance, physical education, human rights education, and religious education (DBE, 2003). It is therefore critical to note that the status quo in our country presently requires highly trained and specialised Life Orientation teachers in order to provide counselling support to the learners and to help them deal with other psychosocial issues affecting career decisions, as career guidance has been placed in their care as part of the Life Orientation curriculum (Pillay, 2012).

1.7.9 Career development practitioners

Career development practitioners (CDPs) advise people on how to plan and manage their careers, make occupational and study decisions, plan career transitions, and access career information (DHET, 2016). CDPs work in many different environments and therefore need certain specialised knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. CDPs operate at three levels depending on their competencies: Level 1 (entry-level), Level 2 (advanced level), and Level 3 (specialist level). Their overall role is to ensure that career development services are rendered in different community settings such as schools, universities, colleges, training institutions, the workplace, the voluntary or community sector, and in the private sector. Career development services are described as the services and activities that are intended to assist people of any age and at any point in their lives to make sound educational, training, and occupational choices and manage their careers.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

Research design refers to the approach selected by the researcher to study a particular phenomenon and helps the researcher make decisions regarding the choice of methods guiding the research process (Creswell, 2014; Fouche, 2005). A qualitative research design was used in this study as it is believed to be appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of the particular phenomena under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1.8.2 Research paradigm

The paradigm underpinning my study draws from both the interpretivist and constructivist approach, which emphasise the importance of understanding human interactions within social, historical, political, and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2014). Fundamental to this paradigm is the view that people develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are varied and multiple; thus, researchers seek to understand the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into minute categories or ideas (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). While the interpretive paradigm forms the basis for my study, I intend on using an integrative approach (merging traditional and postmodern approaches to career counselling), which provides a framework in which qualitative theories will be linked with the research questions (1.5.1–1.5.2). This framework forms the basis for career and life-construction counselling, which has the potential to promote group counselling.

1.8.3 Research methodology

1.8.3.1 Sampling procedures

Two types of non-probability sampling were used, namely purposive and convenience sampling to select a group of Grade 9 learners from a school located in a socio-economically disadvantaged, rural community setting in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education, where I was employed as DCES for career guidance at the time of this research. Purposeful sampling is typical for a constructivist paradigm, which selects samples with the goal of identifying information-rich cases that allow for an in-depth study, while in convenience sampling, participants are selected on the basis of their availability, accessibility, and convenience (Mertens, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The Grade 9 learners were specifically selected in the belief that the grade represents a critical stage during which learners engage in career- and subject-choice decision making as they transition from the General Education and Training (GET) band to the Further Education and Training (FET)

band (DBE, 2011c). My view was to explore the learners' career development as they construct their careers in a socio-economically disadvantaged rural community setting. A group of learners from Lubombo Secondary School participated in the career construction intervention programme and continued to attend their routine Life Orientation classes as per the curriculum prescripts.

1.8.3.2 Data generation processes

For this research study, qualitative data was gathered sequentially through a multi-phase approach:

- Phase 1: Qualitative data obtained by conducting pre-intervention group discussions.
- Phase 2: the group participated in the career and life construction intervention, during which they completed the Career Interest Profile (CIP) (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013a; 2013b; Maree, 2017).
- Phase 3: Participants created collages and drew timelines expressing views regarding their desired future career lives as well as the possible obstacles they might face and how they could overcome them.
- Phase 4: Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted for the purposes of data triangulation (Maree & Taylor, 2016).
- Phase 5: Inductive and deductive qualitative data analysis were conducted to identify themes and sub-themes that gave meaning to the findings.

The table below illustrates the sequential activities of the career intervention plan carried out during the data collection process as recommended by Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009).

Table 1.1

Planned sequential career construction intervention plan

PLANNED SESSION, AND DURATION	ACTIVITY	PROCESSES	INTERVENTION OBJECTIVES
First session: 40 minutes	General introductions; Pre-intervention group discussions	I introduced myself and allowed each participant to introduce themselves. Participants identified and discussed challenges in the world of work as well as the impact thereof and possible solutions, thereby promoting career adaptability.	Establish rapport. To enhance learners' critical thinking regarding the challenging status quo in the world of work.
Second session: 90 minutes	Completion of the *CIP*, Parts 1–4 (Maree, 2017)	Individual participants shared their own strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and who they admire in their personal lives and provided reasons why. They also shared their favourite magazines, TV programme, movie or radio talk show, sports, game, music, or favourite book and stated the reasons why. What is their favourite motto, quotation, or saying and why?	To enhance participants' awareness about their interests and abilities and self-knowledge; help them discover their own potential, strengths, capabilities, and areas for growth and link these to possible careers and ultimately narrow them down to the relevant school subjects.

PLANNED SESSION, AND DURATION	ACTIVITY	PROCESSES	INTERVENTION OBJECTIVES
Third session: 90 minutes	Making collages depicting participants' expected self and new life story with a title arranging their story in different chapters with relevant chapter headings.	Participants made collages depicting how they saw themselves in the next 10–15 years, highlighting possible obstacles that could hinder their success and how they would overcome them. They used the collages to write new stories about themselves, organising them into different sub-topics (e.g. this is me presently; my goals/dreams; obstacles that could hinder my achievements; and how will I overcome them. This is me in the years to come)	It enabled participants to construct their own life stories by narrating what was meaningful in their lives; they drafted their life plans by identifying activities that would shape their new identities through goal setting and how to achieve them.
Fourth session: 60 minutes	Drawing of timelines highlighting their significant life events.	Participants indicated the three biggest successes in their lives and shared the biggest problem/s they have ever experienced that caused pain when they were younger and how they feel about each of these experiences. They would also explain what lessons they have learnt about themselves through those experiences and how those shaped their lives.	It was anticipated that participants would have the opportunity to reflect on their past experiences to make sense of the present and consider shaping a meaningful future.
Fifth session: 90 minutes	Completion of the *MCM* career interest inventory.	Participants completed the career questionnaire by indicating their interest and level of confidence in each career.	Participants would be able to identify their main career themes or patterns in terms of their interest and confidence in each career (Maree & Taylor, 2016).

PLANNED SESSION, AND DURATION	ACTIVITY	PROCESSES	INTERVENTION OBJECTIVES
Sixth session: 90 minutes	Semi-structured focus group interviews	Participants would reflect on themes that emerged during the exploration activities *(CIP & MCM)* and explore the meaning of new emerging themes.	Encouraged participants to share experiences and new discoveries regarding their career stories.
Seventh session: 90 minutes	Completion of participants' vision and mission statements. Planning of activities (e.g. job analysis).	Participants would write short vision and mission statements along with a description of how they saw themselves accomplishing them, which they would ultimately translate into their individual career development plans, describing their individual career goals and how to achieve them.	To help participants identify their key life themes, personal values, and beliefs, sharpen their focus and keep track of the statements as a constant reminder of what is really important in their daily lives and have hope for a better future and purposeful career life.
Eighth session: After three months of data collection	Follow-up with the participants to provide feedback	Provide feedback on the outcomes of the intervention programme and encourage participants to revise, update, and modify their personal development plans where necessary to suit their individual career needs.	Feedback would create an opportunity for participants to reflect on their vision and mission and make amends where necessary.

1.8.3.3 Qualitative data analysis

Following qualitative data analysis techniques, I primarily engaged in "an inductive process of organising data into categories, [and] identifying patterns and relationships among categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 395). In this research, qualitative data for analysis emerged from the *CIP* narratives, timelines, collages, and the responses from the pre-intervention group discussions and the semi-structured post-intervention group interviews. As the analysis progressed, some datasets were examined deductively to verify if the emerging themes were supporting one another (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Miles et al., non-linear "interactive" and "cyclical" model (2014) was used to describe the iterative data analysis process followed in the study. An in-depth discussion is provided in Chapter 3 of this research study.

1.8.3.4 Quality assurance

Qualitative researchers are urged to be in the research field for an extended period to be able to share data with participants to enhance triangulation through multiple sources of data gathering (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Validity and reliability in qualitative research refer to the authenticity and credibility of the research findings (Lewis et al., (2013), thus qualitative assurance is understood in terms of trustworthiness (i.e. the degree to which data collection and analysis and the presentation of findings are presented in a thorough and verifiable manner). In this study, the strategies used to assess trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; De Vos et al., 2011; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Miles et al., 2014). A detailed discussion is presented in Chapter 3 of this study.

1.9 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

As a qualitative researcher, I had to be instrumental in the data generation process by assuming multiple roles, including facilitating the semi-structured focus group discussions, making observations in the research field and creating a conducive environment for learning during the implementation of the intervention programme, as well as transcribing, analysing, and making interpretations regarding findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). I entered the research site primarily as an outsider and gradually became an insider as the study progressed (Schumacher & McMillan, 2014). To avoid role confusion and safeguard the well-being of the participants, a psychologist was made available on-site to provide professional counselling in response to participants who might manifest emotional behaviours as a result of their participation in the study.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Strict adherence to ethical standards in planning and conducting qualitative research is required for both the participants and the profession (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). A number of ethical issues were considered significant when conducting my study, including obtaining permission to conduct the study, informed consent, clear communication of the purpose of the study, protecting participants from physical and psychological harm, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, as well as honesty and trust (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The purpose of my study was clearly explained to all role players from the outset, and permission was obtained from the head of the Mpumalanga Department of Education as well as the school principal. Because my research project involved human beings as participants, I adhered to all ethical guidelines specified in the Ethics and Research Statement stipulated by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and the Professional Board of Psychology.

1.11 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The chapters will be presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study
Chapter 2: Literature review
Chapter 3: Research design and methodology
Chapter 4: Data analysis and presentation of findings
Chapter 5: Discussion and relating findings to the existing literature on the topic
Chapter 6: Summary and conclusion

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I start by discussing a brief history of career guidance and counselling, focusing on the four economic waves through which career counselling has evolved globally in different centuries up to the present day and their implications for the practice of career counselling. This is done by reflecting briefly on the international, African, and national perspectives on career guidance and counselling, with the understanding that the terms "career guidance", "career counselling", and "vocational guidance" have distinct meanings that are time- and culture-specific. Therefore, examining the progression of the career field over the course of time has helped bridge the gaps in the facilitation of current and future career services in respect of South African education problems. Next, I explore the theoretical perspectives on career guidance and counselling emerging from the literature review. Lastly, the conceptual framework, which entails the background and the main constructs of this study, is discussed.

2.2 BRIEF HISTORY OF CAREER GUIDANCE AND CAREER COUNSELLING

My approach to the historical development of career guidance and counselling is adapted from Goss and Adebowale's views (2014) on internationalisation. The authors state that practices in Africa may not be entirely comparable to those in Western countries due to the nature and experiences of the clients in these countries, the availability of facilities, the differences in the facilitating environment, and the cultural influences impacting the passing of regulations and government policies. Notwithstanding, it is equally important to understand the career dynamics of all regions in the world in order to keep abreast of the internationalisation of the world economy and contextualise the unique characteristics of career studies. In this way, career studies in Africa can help uncover career management systems and intervention programmes that are contextually relevant to the continent rather than blindly adopting Western-developed career management systems (Ituma, 2011).

2.2.1 International perspective on career guidance and career counselling

Career counselling as a discipline in psychology originated in the West, predominantly in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and Hong Kong, and spread to other countries and regions of the world over time to meet the challenges and needs of different eras (Cheung, 2009; Young, 2013). During the late 1800s in the United States, school guidance programmes were closely connected to vocational education. The

programmes were directive in nature and involved the provision of guidance classes to promote character development, socially appropriate behaviour, and vocational planning (Paisley & Borders, 1995). The scope of school counselling changed over the years from vocational and educational decision making to personal growth and included responsive services that were made available to all learners. These changes were influenced by several factors, including philosophical (the work of early individual theorists) and historical factors such as the Industrial Revolution, World War II, and the Great Depression (Herr, 2001; Maree & Morgan, 2012; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2017).

Career counselling is a concept that has always existed as part of African history and culture in the sense that people who experienced emotional distress and behavioural problems were offered help in handling their problems. Through counselling, people were assisted in understanding themselves and developing to their full potential (Syamujaye, 2000). The advancement of career counselling beyond the United States and Europe to different parts of the world led to challenges regarding how far it could be adapted to different cultural contexts to meet diverse needs.

Maree and Morgan (2012) outline the four economic waves (also known as helping models) in psychology through which career counselling has evolved globally (from 1850 to the present) and influenced counselling theory and practice in the workplace. These models coincide with Zunker's (2016) chronology of historical events through which career counselling developed in the United States from the 18th to the 21st century.

2.2.1.1 First economic wave: Agricultural Era (1850–1910)

This era occurred during the 19th century prior to the Industrial Revolution when a career was regarded as a vocation. Personal character (e.g. self-sufficiency, humility, frugality, etc.) was highly valued during this period, and people managed their own careers and knew what they wanted to do. The dominant feature of this period was that most of the population were engaged in agricultural work such as hunting, pasturing/herding, and growing crops with and without irrigation (Baruch, 2006).

2.2.1.2 The second economic wave: Industrial Era (1900–1950)

This was an era of rapid urbanisation during which many people moved to the cities and became employed in production and industrial enterprises. The agricultural sector, which was paramount during the first economic wave, experienced a severe loss of jobs due to urbanisation. Frank Parson's (1909) vocational counselling model was developed during this era. The Great Depression and World War II (1939–1945) occurred, followed by high unemployment in several countries. This led to the application of assessment procedures (the objective/positivist approach) to assess personality

interests and values to classify new recruits for the career-related jobs offered to returning veterans. The need for vocational services increased as a result of the Great Depression and soldiers returning home after World War II, including those handicapped during the war who received personal and career counselling to help them adjust to civilian life (Pope, 2000).

2.2.1.3 The third economic wave: Service Era (1950–1990)

This refers to the 20th century, which is characterised by the establishment of large international corporations and increased efficiency in production. Because fewer people were needed to produce the same amount of goods, there was a mass movement of workers to the service industry (Baruch, 2006). Career counselling emerged during this era when people were advised to choose occupations and develop careers by climbing the traditional corporate ladder. Consequently, there was a shift from objective testing towards subjective testing in which people's construction of reality was considered (Maree & Morgan, 2012). Career development theories were formulated during this era as part of the career counselling movement led by, among others, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951); Roe (1956); Super (1957); and Holland (1966). By 1960, career counselling was common in schools and universities. In 1970, the career education movement was launched to improve career development by promoting career awareness, career exploration, value clarification, decision-making skills, career orientation, and career preparation (Zunker, 2011).

2.2.1.4 The fourth economic wave: Information Era (1990 to present)

This refers to the 21st century, which is marked by the emergence of the knowledge economy and computer technology and also known as the information communication technology era (Maree, 2015a). Career construction for life designing emerged during this era with the emphasis on empowering people to give their lives meaning, write their own life stories, and construct their own careers and futures instead of merely choosing a career (Savickas et al., 2009). There is increased emphasis on personal identity and less emphasis on "climbing the corporate ladder" together with a greater focus on career adaptability, flexibility, and lifelong learning (Meijers, 2003).

People's perceptions about careers and employment patterns have changed significantly with the realisation that they can hold multiple jobs and careers instead of remaining in one job throughout their lives (Roythorne-Jacobs & Mensele, 2016). They are also able to acquire new skills and attitudes required by the new careers in the highly competitive job market. There has been a shift away from modernism towards a postmodern approach that emphasises the role of counsellors as co-constructors of clients' career stories through dialogue. This approach is valued for its recognition of psychological, political, social, and economic cultures during the counselling process.

The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution with massive digital technology in this era has brought some uncertainties regarding employability in the labour market. There is fear that the revolutionary technologies such as 3D printing, robotics, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, and biotechnology can yield massive production and services at extremely low costs and greatly change production processes and their results (Prisecaru, 2016). Therefore, the demand for even more highly technologically skilled professionals will grow, requiring people who will be flexible and adaptable to the new technology in which they work (Butler, 2018).

2.2.1.5 Implications of the economic waves for career guidance and counselling

Career counsellors need to be cognisant of the impact of these different helping models (trends) that have informed career counselling at different stages as well as the influence of changes in the global economy (Maree, 2014), so that they can be able to play their co-construction roles as required by the current status quo in the career counselling field, rather than the role of being experts during the counselling process. The 21st century world of work requires career counsellors who will encourage their clients to become critical thinkers and skilled decision makers in order to become employable instead of being trained linearly for one specific job (Savickas et al., 2009).

For this ideal to be achieved, the counselling practice has to keep abreast of the emerging technological careers and the relevant skills and attitudes required to address these developments adequately. There is a great need to adopt a paradigm shift and move away from a predominantly traditional quantitative approach (psychometric assessments) to a much more qualitative approach, emphasising clients' ability to make meaning in their lives through their personal narratives or stories. Adopting a narrative approach with qualitative assessments (a postmodern approach) should promote the recognition of individuals' social and historical backgrounds, restore the traditional African culture of group storytelling and the spirit of Ubuntu (i.e. respect for human dignity) (Maree, 2010). As clients tell their stories, they learn to construct their self, identity, and career (i.e. design their lives) (Savickas, 2012).

The above statement reinforces the notion that people should give their lives meaning by creating holding environments, which is defined by Savickas as "something that helps people find meaning in their lives during times of transition to facilitate continuity in a fragmented society" (Maree, 2010, p. 362). Such environments comprise the primary significant others, the home, the school, the tertiary training environment, and the workplace. Maree (2010) affirms that, in the 21st century, people need to be able to create their own holding environments by becoming more self-reliant and drawing on their own advice to help themselves become whole.

2.2.2 Career guidance and counselling in Africa

In this section, I discuss the practice of career guidance and counselling as a social service within the African context prior to the 19th century, and I reflect on group counselling as a preferred approach in traditional African community settings. I conclude by highlighting the progress made by some African countries regarding the development of career guidance programmes from which valuable lessons can be learnt.

Prior to the Western influence, general guidance and counselling had always been part of the African heritage passed on to young people and children as a social service to help them develop into responsible and productive members of their communities (Bhusumane, 2000). Through participation in these social processes, young people learnt various skills used by their forebears to earn a living. They also learnt to function effectively as members of the community and became aware of the values, beliefs, and roles one had to play as a member of a particular regiment or gender. During the 18th century, counselling in most sub-Saharan African countries was viewed as a means through which people sought to understand themselves, develop their potential, become aware of opportunities, and help themselves in ways associated with formal guidance practice. Elders and chiefs at the time (prior to the 19th century) were regarded as valuable sources of guidance and counselling who acted as a vital link between ancestors and the present generation who were strengthened by the rituals, ceremonies, and prohibitions attached to the ancestors (Syamujaye, 2000; Sefotho, 2016).

Maree et al. (2006) emphasise the ability of Africans to tell stories and listen to the stories told by the elders, with the younger generations participating in the jesting and discussions at mealtimes or in the evenings around the fire, sharing in the sorrows, pain, and laughter as a way of teaching young ones lessons for good behaviour. Such African experiences were expressed through cultural singing, recitations, the blowing of horns, drum beating, and dancing as a way of revealing experiences in a relaxed mood that mapped out their future. Ten years later, in their article on the nature and role of traditional forms of counselling in Zambia, Chiboola and Munsaka (2016) reaffirmed the notion of the African tradition of passing knowledge through generations orally through proverbs, folk songs, and parables as part of cultural practice. Central to these narratives is the belief that education is promoted and demonstrated through assuming responsibility, helpfulness, and taking initiative in one's life (Magano, 2018).

These communal activities in African settings promoted social cohesion, such that all people in a village supported one another; no one was alien, as they ascribed to the Nguni proverb *"Umuntu ungumuntu ngabanye abantu"*, meaning "I am because you are" (Ngubane & Gumede, 2018, p. 246). The principle of "Ubuntu" resonates so well with what the authors above call the collective fingers theory (CFT), which states that "a thumb although is strong cannot kill aphids on its own, it would

require the collective cooperation of the other fingers" (p. 246). Based on this theory, guidance and counselling within the African context occurred as a social process embedded in a culture of collectivism embodied by core values of solidarity, compassion, cooperation, and communalism.

Premised on this perspective, career guidance and counselling in most African countries have since been offered freely and informally to those who needed it as part of communal heritage to strengthen communalism (Chiboola & Munsaka, 2016; Syamujaye, 2000) and promote good behaviour among members (Sefotho, 2016). The notion of communalism seems to be rooted in the traditional African belief that an individual exists in relation to and for the group, such as a family, clan, or tribe; therefore, solutions to problems are addressed at the group level. Thus, it is not acceptable to ignore the fact that one's neighbour is experiencing difficulties without offering some form of assistance that could be available within their means (Ngubane & Gumede, 2018).

While there is limited literature on the historical development of career guidance and counselling in Africa due to the lack of well-documented sources prior the 19th century (Walter, Yang, & Roslander, 2014), emerging literature shows that the group-based approach is still preferred within most African contexts. In a study of girls with behavioural and learning problems in schools, Vogel (2012) found that group counselling was effective and received positively by participants, thus recommending that it can be utilised by anyone who offers counselling support in schools. The results revealed that group work has the potential to change negative behaviour, define positive life goals and improve self-image. Magano (2018) further emphasises that the value of group counselling in traditional communities can be seen in people's tendency to make decisions based on community needs rather than on individual needs.

Since the inception of the 19th century, slight progress has been seen in several African countries, which attempted to develop formal career guidance programmes with the emphasis on vocational information, awareness of the world of work, the location of employment, and reducing examination anxiety. These include countries such as Nigeria (1950s), Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Swaziland (1960s), and Kenya (1970s) (Bhusumane, 2000; Orenge, 2011; Wambu & Fisher, 2015).

One country that attempted to develop a comprehensive career guidance programme in schools in the early eighties is Botswana, when the Ministry of Education adopted a recommendation from a needs assessment consultancy report to introduce the programme (Keabona, 2008; Muchado, 2018). Career counselling is offered as part of an educational programme or support service that strengthens the career guidance programme in schools to cater for the personal, social, vocational, and educational needs of learners. Career guidance is an allocated subject in the school timetable taught by trained teachers, while counselling is offered by professional counsellors. Much can be learnt from Botswana for making it compulsory for all teachers to study career guidance and

counselling during their training, so that they can provide effective career guidance and counselling in schools (Muchado, 2018; Stockton, Nitza, & Bhusumane, 2011). Progress in this regard has also been made in the Middle East.

Countries such as Israel, Jordan, and Turkey have introduced computerised and web-based career services to improve the quality and transparency of labour market information (Sultana & Watts, 2008).

Notwithstanding the progress made by some African countries regarding the provision of career guidance and counselling, there is a growing concern that, due to rapid educational, social, and economic changes in the 21st century, people seem to have lost the traditional value of hard work, creativity, and the sense of collectivism in favour of the individualistic approach to life borrowed from Western culture. As a result, people have become so preoccupied with their own concerns that traditional African counselling may no longer have value for them (Goss & Adebowale, 2014).

2.2.3 Career guidance and counselling in South Africa

This section is divided into two sub-sections. I begin by discussing career guidance in South Africa during both the apartheid era and the democratic era to show how the political influence has impacted the practice of career guidance and counselling in each era. Lastly, I discuss the provision of career guidance in the Mpumalanga Province.

2.2.3.1 Career guidance during the apartheid era

The origins and growth of career psychology in South Africa have been heavily influenced by politics, which is characterised by the deep divisions between the White and non-White (Coloured, Indian, and Black) populations prior to the democratic dispensation in 1994. The prevailing apartheid legislation at the time was based on racial discrimination, which severely undermined the participation of non-Whites in social and labour structures, resulting in restricted access to careers. The nature of career psychology was also affected by the political, economic, and social conditions. The apartheid system classified all South Africans according to race into Europeans (Whites), Asians (Indians), Coloureds, and Bantu (Blacks) (Naidoo et al., 2017).

The Whites were positioned at the top of the hierarchy so that they could enjoy all the privileges of the different resources allocated to them, including education and healthcare services. Whites enjoyed a prerogative right to careers and vocations, while Blacks were allocated menial work which the White people considered of less value. Racial separation was exacerbated after 1948 when the National Party came to power and pursued its policy of apartheid through the promulgation of the National Education Policy (NEP) Act 39 of 1967. This policy legislated school guidance to be

compulsory in White schools and the employment of trained guidance teachers to provide half-hour guidance lessons in the school curriculum each week. The subjects covered included personal development, citizenship, relationships with others, and career guidance (Kay & Fretwell, 2003; Naidoo et al., 2017).

Historically, school guidance and counselling in South African Black schools was largely marginalised, discriminatory, and under-resourced, as confirmed by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992), which found that guidance and counselling services had been neglected for most Black people due to racial segregation. As a result, many young people had no access to appropriate career guidance and counselling services as well as a lack of relevant knowledge regarding the world of work, and "education was used strategically as a gate-keeping instrument to prevent black people from entering the labour market" (Kay & Fretwell, 2003, p. 10). It was only in the mid-1980s that the quality of Black education started to improve, largely due to the student uprisings and school boycotts of 1976 and 1980 as well as subsequent protests at Black universities when high school learners and university students demanded an end to segregated education (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2011; Ramjit, 2015; Bantjes et al., 2016).

2.2.3.2 Career guidance and counselling in democratic South Africa

Since the inception of democracy in 1994, the education sector has radically restructured and developed various curriculum policies in response to the country's changing education needs, including Curriculum 2005, which was underpinned by the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) policy statement (1997). Critics argued that the OBE curriculum could not prepare learners adequately for life and work in the 21st century (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). Subsequently, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced in 2010, outlining the career guidance curricula needs for Grades 8–12 in the Life Orientation school subject in an attempt to provide career support to all learners at the secondary school level as part of the process of linking their personal growth and career development aspirations. Unfortunately, there is no coverage of career guidance in the Foundation and Intermediate phases.

Topics in the Life Skills curriculum content include personal and social well-being (development of the self, health, environmental responsibility, and social responsibility), physical education, and creative arts (DBE & DHET, 2011; Manyau et al., 2018). Consequently, the Framework for Cooperation in the Provision of Career Development Services in South Africa has tasked the DBE and the provincial education departments with ensuring that career information, advice, and guidance are provided to all learners and that sufficient time is allocated in the school curriculum across all grades from the Foundation Phase upwards (DBE & DHET, 2011; DHET, 2017).

Currently (at the time of this study), Life Orientation is offered two hours per week from Grade 7 to 12, of which one hour should be dedicated to physical education and the other to curriculum content, 5–7% of which should be used for career guidance. Teachers often find it difficult to strike a balance between the two aspects (physical education and content) due to time limitations and/or lack of understanding of how these can be integrated into the teaching and learning process, ultimately resulting in the ineffective teaching of Life Orientation in many schools (Smit et al., 2015; Manyau et al., 2018).

The introduction of Life Orientation in Grade 7 is seen as a starting point where learners become involved in the social spectrum programmes, so that they know themselves better, which prepares them to choose relevant subjects at the point of exiting Grade 9 and leads them to make informed career-choice decisions that respond to socio-economic factors (Nong, 2016). Therefore, this suggests that learners at this stage (Grade 7–9), should be given adequate information to know, among other things, the difference between the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Grade 10–12 in secondary schools and the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) Level 2–4 qualifications in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Colleges, as well as various fields of study and careers demanded by the labour market, so that they are able to choose an option with which to proceed (DHET, 2013).

In addition to receiving career guidance lessons as part of Life Orientation, secondary school learners also have access to a variety of career events outside the school, including career exhibitions and career talks offered by people working in a particular field (Ngoepe, 2017). Provincial education departments and non-government organisations (NGOs) take responsibility for organising these career events. Tertiary institutions also visit schools to provide career talks and conduct open days. Unfortunately, these events are usually more accessible to schools in urban areas. All tertiary institutions have student counselling units in place that are responsible for providing a wide range of counselling and academic support services to all students. Private registered psychologists also provide effective career counselling services, however, only for those who can afford to pay for such services (Kay & Fretwell, 2003).

As part of the socio-political developments in 2005, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), in consultation with the Departments of Education and of Labour, coordinated the establishment of the national career services within the context of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). By 2010, the career centre became fully functional and started servicing people telephonically countrywide. This approach was supported, as it was in accordance with the new qualitative approach discussed in the broader international career development discourse (Keevy et al., 2012).

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr BE Nzimande, introduced a highly successful career awareness campaign in 2012, *"Apply now! Khetha, Make the right choice. Decide your future"* to motivate Grade 12 learners to apply in time for available study opportunities at tertiary institutions, including technical and vocational education and training colleges. Currently, the DHET offers career advice through different media, including printed material (flyers, booklets, and Z-cards); national telephone calls (086 999 0123); SMS services (072 204 5056); email (careerhelp@dhet.gov.za); Twitter (http://twitter.com/rsacareerhelp); Facebook (www.facebook.com/careerhelp); a website (www.careerhelp.org.za); the national career portal (NCAP) (http://ncap.careerhelp.org.za); and a walk-in centre (DHET, 2012a, 2017).

Career development services are broadcast weekly by local radio stations in nine African languages throughout the country to ensure that even the deep rural areas are not marginalised. Each programme follows a prepared script and sufficient time for caller queries. A series of national and regional career exhibitions are held annually around the country to complement the print media and telephone helpline services.

The career awareness programme is expanding to support parents, career advisors, and institutions with different backgrounds, languages, and cultures (SAQA, 2012; Keevy et al, 2012). The responsibility of providing career guidance and counselling has also been extended to include NGOs such as the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), which has reached out to communities in line with the lifelong approach to career development (Naidoo et al., 2017). The advantage of the NYDA career services is that learners, job seekers, and out-of-school youth can access career information programmes and information on scarce and critical skills as well as accredited service providers located within the ambit of the SETAs at no cost. Job seekers are advised on job-seeking skills, writing curricula vitae, and doing online searches for employment opportunities.

In light of the above, it is evident that much still needs to be done to improve the provision of career guidance and counselling services in schools in order to prepare learners to face the challenging demands in the 21st century world of work. The South African Career Development Association (SACDA), founded in 2010, of which I am a registered member as a career development practitioner myself, is welcomed as a progressive initiative geared at leading the process of standardising career development services and the training of career practitioners in South Africa to be in line with international trends and improve service delivery by outlining the following objectives: "To promote career guidance and its practice; promote the role, professional development and education of career guidance practitioners; assist the professional development and education of members; and lobby for and respond to government policy initiatives" (SAQA, 2012; DHET, 2012b).

It is hoped that SACDA will become a supportive member of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) to represent South Africa internationally and have the opportunity to learn from and develop relationships with colleagues of other national associations in the international career and educational guidance community. The association will also contribute significantly to the effective management and coordination of career guidance information and services in the country. For this reason, the DHET, DBE, SAQA, SACDA, and the ETDP SETA have been tasked with working together to create a tier of competent Life Orientation teachers, career information officers, career advisors, and career guidance practitioners by instituting training programmes to ensure quality service delivery in schools, TVET colleges, and NYDA (see SAQA, 2012; DHET, 2016).

2.2.3.3 Career guidance and counselling practice in the Mpumalanga Province

There are four education districts in Mpumalanga: Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande, Bohlabela, and Nkangala. In terms of the departmental organogram (at the time of this study), the career guidance division falls under the Psychological Guidance and Social Support (PGSS) Sub-directorate, which is located in the Inclusive Education and Education Support Directorate. Officials in the province are responsible for coordinating the career guidance programme with the district officials to ensure that teachers are capacitated to facilitate the career guidance programme as part of the Life Orientation subject as per the national curriculum prescripts. The Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDE) collaborates with several stakeholders from different sectors, including NGOs and private companies, to improve the delivery of career guidance services to schools.

As part of rendering career guidance services to learners, the MDE holds annual career exhibitions for Grade 11 and 12 learners between February and May in each district to expose them to different careers, institutions of higher learning, SETAs, and private companies and enable them to interact directly with these parties to obtain first-hand information well in advance so that they are ready when the time for applications comes. The Grade 8 and 9 learners participate in the career awareness and subject choice exploration programme between July and September each year to help them choose relevant subjects linked to their preferred careers as they transition to Grade 10. The exhibitions are regulated by the Career Exhibitions and Information Association (CEIA) to ensure that the institutions participating in the exhibitions are fully accredited.

Apart from the career exhibitions, the career guidance officials visit schools regularly to conduct group career guidance and counselling as well as deliver talks on study skills. The individual career counselling service, however, remains limited in Mpumalanga, particularly in the rural schools. Only the former Model C schools with access to full-time professional counsellors are able

to offer individual counselling to learners whose parents can afford to pay the costs of private counsellors.

2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

In this section, I discuss two approaches to career guidance and counselling as well as the theories underlying each approach, namely the traditional and postmodern approach. This is done with the understanding that no single approach to counselling can adequately meet the diverse needs of learners within different contexts and that some approaches that were effective in the past may no longer be viable in the modern world of work due to far-reaching changes in the global economy. Therefore, professionals involved in career guidance and counselling services should familiarise themselves with the different approaches so that they can provide effective career services that are appropriate to the 21st century world of work and understand emerging career theories, including strengths and weaknesses and how to apply them in different contexts. I conclude by discussing approaches that are relevant to group career counselling, relating to my study and the importance of indigenisation in catering for culture-specific conditions.

2.3.1 Traditional approach to career guidance and counselling

The traditional approach (also called the positivist approach) is grounded in modernism and focuses on the measurement of personality traits that are assessed to obtain information needed for people to enter and succeed in specific careers. The traditional approach holds that career decision making is a rational and controlled process typically focusing on skills, interests, values, and other individual characteristics that are assessed match people to appropriate careers (McDowall & Peake, 2012). Other constructs that may be assessed include career decision making, self-efficacy, and career maturity (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). Theories that fall within the traditional approach include trait-and-factor theories, developmental theories, cognitive behavioural theories (also called social learning theories), psychodynamic theories, and relational and person-in-environment theories as discussed below.

2.3.1.1 Trait-and-factor theories

Trait-and-factor (also called person-environment fit) theories are grounded in the basic assumption that a reciprocal relationship exists between people and their environments (i.e. people influence their environments, and environments influence people). The theory holds that people possess unique abilities and/or traits that can be objectively measured and correlated with the specific requirements of certain types of jobs (Zunker, 2011). The term “trait” within this context refers to a

characteristic of a person that can be measured through testing, while "factor" refers to characteristics required for successful job performance. According to trait-and-factor theory, choosing an occupation involves matching the individual to a job so that their needs will be met and their job performance will be satisfactory (Sharf, 2013).

Drawing from a positivist worldview, trait-and-factor theories rely heavily on measurement and objective data obtained through assessment tests for abilities, aptitudes, and interests interpreted by an expert who makes predictions about the individual's suitability for future jobs. Career guidance is achieved by first studying individuals surveying different occupations and then matching the person with an occupation, thus "solving" the career problem; in this sense, career choice is viewed as a single, static event where there is a single right answer (Patton & McMahon, 2014). As contemporary theories emerged, the trait-and-factor theory was criticised for being static due to its "test and tell" approach and overreliance on assessment results emanating from the authoritative position of the counsellor. In addition, its applicability in the 21st century world of work has been questioned for not accounting for the likelihood of career transitions and individuals changing jobs in their lifetime (Zunker, 2011).

Schreuder and Coetzee (2017) identify three prominent theories underlying the trait-and-factor approach, namely Parson's (1909) vocational theory, Holland's theory of personality and occupational types (1966, 1973, 1985a, 1992, 1997), and Dawis and Lofquist's (1993) theory of person-environment correspondence (originally referred to as the theory of work adjustment). These three theories are seen as providing complementary (i.e. non-contradictory) views, since all of them focus on the match between individuals' aptitudes, achievements, interests, values, and personality and the requirements and conditions of the world of work (Sharf, 2013). The three theories are discussed below.

2.3.1.2 (i) Parson's vocational theory

Frank Parson (1909) developed a tripartite model outlining three steps guiding the vocational process required by individuals to make sound occupational choices and become successfully employed. These steps are:

- Developing a clear understanding of themselves (self-knowledge), including their aptitudes, interests, abilities, skills, attitudes, values, personality, ambitions, achievements, resource limitations, and other qualities.
- Obtaining knowledge of the job or occupation, including the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, and opportunities and prospects in different lines of work.

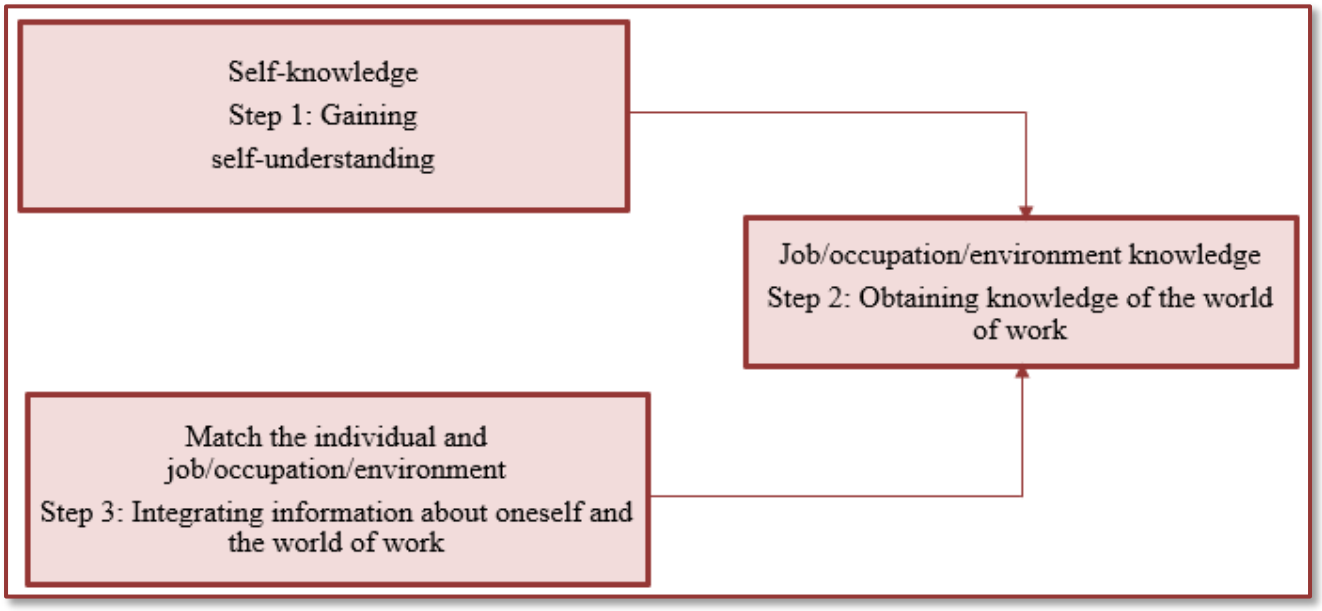
- Logical or reasoned matching of the individual's traits to the job that best "fits" him or her (i.e. identifying what the individual can do, or has the potential to do, and what the job requires the individual to do to be successful within that context). In other words, this step entails integrating information about oneself and the world of work (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).

It is important to emphasise that each step requires careful considerable efforts to be exerted in order for success to be achieved. The first step requires self-investigation and self-realisation of the individuals, with the assistance of a career counsellor. The second step requires accurate and comprehensive occupational information; therefore, Parson developed materials that describe occupations in detail (i.e. compensation, task requirements, and work settings). The third step (reasoned matching) is the most challenging, and its success relies on the "person's capacity being assisted by the counsellor to integrate information acquired from step one and two, thus leading to a career decision making process" (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017, p. 14).

The diagram below outlines the three constructs summarising Parson's theory.

Figure 2.1

Parson's vocational theory



Note: Adapted from Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017, p. 155

2.3.1.3 (ii) Holland's theory of personality and occupational types

Holland's theory of personality and occupational types is based on the underlying premise that career choice is an expression of one's personality, and that members of an occupation have similar personalities and histories. Individuals can be described in terms of six personality types:

realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional (RIASEC) (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). The same personality types are used to describe occupational environments which are categorised into the corresponding classification of personality to facilitate the matching and prediction process. Some individuals are better matched to some environments, and some environments are better matched to some individuals. To varying degrees, individuals conform to one or more of the six personality types, with a likelihood that they manifest the behaviours and traits associated with that type (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017).

Each personality type has a characteristic set of attitudes and skills that are used in response to problems encountered in the environment, and each type encompasses preferences for vocational and leisure activities, life goals and values, beliefs about oneself, and problem-solving style. However, individuals are rarely characterised by a single "pure" type; instead, it is likely to be a combination of several types, with one type being dominant and others being secondary (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). Central to Holland's theory is the concept of congruency, defined as the alignment between individuals and their environments in terms of the six personality types. Effective career guidance and counselling ultimately results in alignment between personality style and the characteristics of the work or educational setting (Herr, 1986; Sharf, 2013); for example, an enterprising individual working in an enterprising environment is considered highly congruent compared to the same individual working in an investigative environment.

2.3.1.4 (iii) Dawis and Lofquist's theory of person-environment correspondence

Dawis and Lofquist's theory of person-environment correspondence (PEC) (originally known as theory of work adjustment (TWA) focuses primarily on the "fit" of a person for a particular job (i.e. job fit involves matching the individual's traits with the requirements of a particular work environment) (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). The PEC theory is underpinned by two models: the predictive model and process model. The predictive model focuses on how individuals' satisfaction with and satisfactoriness for their work environment may predict their tenure, while the process model focuses on how fit between individuals and work environments is achieved and maintained (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Satisfaction refers to "the extent to which individuals' needs and requirements are fulfilled by the work they do, whilst satisfactoriness refers to employer's satisfaction with the individual's performance" (Sharf, 2013, p. 94).

According to the PEC theory, work is seen as a reciprocal interaction between an individual and the work environment in which each has requirements to fulfil for the other, i.e. the environment requires the individual or worker to possess adequate skills and abilities to execute tasks specified by a particular job in order to fulfil the employer's satisfactoriness. In turn, the individual has requirements for the environment's ability to satisfy their needs, such as providing incentives for job

performance, job security, good working conditions, a safe work environment, and opportunities for achievement (Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

The PEC theory further stresses that a state of correspondence or equilibrium occurs when both the individual and the environment are co-responsive to each other's needs (i.e. both parties are satisfied). Correspondence can lead to stability and tenure, which is a fundamental predictive aspect based on satisfaction and satisfactoriness. When the individual and the environment are in correspondence or equilibrium, work adjustment has been achieved (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). Dissatisfaction in the individual or the environment results in disequilibrium in the system and serves as a motivation for change; individuals may consider changing themselves through upskilling or reskilling or changing their work environment. Alternatively, the work environment may decide to retrain them or end their employment. Any kind of needs satisfied within the work environment are called reinforcers, because they can maintain or increase the rate of behaviour (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

2.3.1.5 Super's life-span, life-space career development theory

Donald Super's (1957, 1990, 2013) life-span, life-space theory views career as a dynamic process that evolves over time; thus, choosing and managing one's career development is understood to progress dynamically through sequential life stages in which different tasks must be accomplished, and failure to do so hampers the person's self-concept, which may result in difficulties with making career decisions later in life (Kidd, 2007; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). Super emphasises the reciprocal influence between the person and the environment in building the person's self-concept, and he argues that self-concept is a product of complex interactions among a number of factors, including physical and mental growth, personal experiences, environmental characteristics, and stimulation (Leung, 2008).

The theory further emphasises that, in each stage of development (growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement) discussed below, people have to accomplish certain tasks and assume specific roles that are played out in real-life theatres, including the home, school, workplace, and community (including child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse or partner, parent, homemaker, and pensioner) in order to successfully manage the vocational developmental tasks that are socially expected at any given chronological stage (Leung, 2008; Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017). The role of career guidance and counselling is to address people's concerns over a lifetime of development during which people undergo situational and personal changes.

The five chronological stages of development are discussed below:

- **Growth (childhood from birth to 12–14 years):** The primary goal of the growth stage is to develop a positive sense of self and acquire basic vocational information by exploring the surrounding environment. Children's actions during this stage are driven by curiosity to explore and experience the world around them. Pleasant experiences lead to the development of interests, abilities, positive self-esteem, and the ability to make decisions, while negative experiences result in feelings of alienation and helplessness (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).
- **Exploration (adolescence stage from age 14–24):** The main goal of this stage is crystallisation, which is defined as "developing a clear and stable vocational self-concept reflecting one's preferences for occupational fields and ability levels" (Hartung in Brown & Lent, 2013b, p. 94). Through crystallisation, individuals gather information about themselves and various occupations to learn more about the world of work and determine what kind of work they might pursue.
- **Establishment (early adulthood age from 25–45):** Establishment involves stabilising, consolidating, and advancing both the self-concept and a career pattern to develop a secure place in the world of work. As individuals stabilise in an occupation, they realise their self-concept by engaging in meaningful activities in their life roles, such as moving away from wondering whether the choice they made was a good one, and turn to focus on becoming dependable producers in the occupation (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017).
- **Maintenance (middle adulthood from age 45–65**): Maintenance involves holding a secured position through continued job proficiency and updating or innovating oneself with new knowledge, skills, and abilities to keep up with the job demands. Those who decide to stay in a position without updating their skills often stagnate and become poor performers (i.e. they get "stuck" in the holding task); in such instances, career renewal interventions are necessary (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017).
- **Disengagement (late adulthood from 65+):** Disengagement marks the retirement age when physical and mental capacities begin to decline, and people lose interest in work and retire or disengage from their work roles. The biggest question to answer during the disengagement stage is "What will retirement mean for me?" or "How will I adjust in order to cope with the transition?" (Hartung in Brown & Lent, 2013b, p. 96). While Super's theory contributed significantly to career development by providing a detailed account of the chronological stages of development, it is worth mentioning that these stages no longer accurately reflect current occurrences in the world of work and need to be updated to accommodate the effect of career transitions increasingly brought on by the rapid advancement of technology in the 21st century.

As technology continues to advance, information travels faster and people rarely remain in one career for a lifetime, thus the world of career guidance must continue to evolve with social and economic conditions (Wilson & Hutchinson in Eliason, 2014).

2.3.1.6 Social learning and cognitive behavioural theories

The social learning and cognitive behavioural theories are primarily anchored in Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory, which postulates a mutually influential relationship between people and the environment by emphasising three variables, namely self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Leung, 2008). In his theory, Bandura (1986) acknowledges the role of behaviour in learning, as well as the importance of thoughts and images in psychological functioning, by referring to the interaction between the environment, personal factors (such as memories, beliefs, and preferences), and actual behaviour as a triadic reciprocal interaction system, in which each of the three factors affect the other two (Sharf, 2013).

The social learning and cognitive behavioural theories emphasise a change-focused problem-solving approach and cognitive processes through which people monitor their career behaviour (Kidd, 2007). In this perspective, career choice involves the interaction of cognitive and affective processes, social conditioning, social position, and significant life events thought to significantly influence career choice. Thus, people are regarded as having the ability to process information effectively and think rationally (Zunker, 2016).

The role of the social learning and cognitive theories in career counselling is to address faulty thinking that can obscure rational decision making and assist people in discovering and unlearning faulty beliefs about career choice and different life roles. Theories in this category include Krumboltz's (1979, 1994) social learning theory of career decision making; the happenstance theory of Mitchell et al. (1999), Krumboltz (2004), and Krumboltz (2009, 2011) and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's social cognitive career theory (2000, 2002) (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017) as discussed below.

2.3.1.7 (i) Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making

Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory of career decision making (SLTCDM) holds that personality and career decision making are influenced by factors such as genetic endowments and special abilities, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills. Career choice is seen as a decision making process in which learning plays a major role, and it is accomplished through observations and direct experiences (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). Zunker (2016) discusses how each of these factors plays an important role in the selection of specific career alternatives:

- **Genetic endowment and special abilities** are inherited or innate abilities or disabilities including physical appearance, gender, ethnicity, and other qualities that may restrict individuals' participation in certain career opportunities. For example, individuals born with a special talent in art, music, writing, or athletics are more likely to respond well to learning and teaching, while those with limited musical abilities (tone defect) are unlikely to respond well to musical instruction no matter how long or how well it is done. The individual may improve but it is unlikely that they will become a skilled musician.
- **Environmental conditions and events** are factors of influence that are often beyond the individual's control, including natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and earthquakes which may affect economic conditions, technological developments, changes in social and educational systems, and cultural, political, and economic factors. For example, government policies regulating certain occupations and the availability of certain natural resources in the individual's environment may largely determine the opportunities and experiences that are available, which is beyond the control of the relevant individuals.
- **Learning experiences** include all previous learning experiences to which individuals are exposed that influence their educational and career decision making. Krumboltz (1979) identifies two types of learning experiences: instrumental and associative. Instrumental or direct learning experiences are those situations in which the individuals act on the environment to produce certain responses or consequences, while associative learning experiences include negative and positive reactions to external stimuli by observing real or fictitious models or by pairing two events in time or location. For example, statements such as "all politicians are dishonest" and "all bankers are rich" may influence the individuals' perceptions of these occupations.
- **Task approach skills** include skillsets that individuals have developed to new tasks or problems, such as goal setting, values clarification, problem solving and generating alternatives, work habits, and obtaining occupational information. The application of skills affects the outcome of each task or problem and in turn is modified by the results.

In short, Krumboltz (1979) argues that individuals are born into the world with certain genetic characteristics, and, as time passes, the individuals encounter environmental, economic, social, and cultural events and conditions from which they learn by building self-observations and task approach skills that are applied to new events and encounters. The successes and failures that accrue in these encounters influence individuals in choosing courses of action in subsequent learning experiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of making choices that are similar to previous ones that led to success and avoiding choices that are similar to those that led to failure (Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

The author further emphasises that the process is complicated by aspects of instability, since individuals change as a result of the continuous series of learning experiences, and the situation also changes because of the dynamic nature of environmental, cultural, and social conditions.

The social cognitive learning theory contributed significantly to career development based on its recognition of the importance of a wide range of influences on career choice rather than focusing on a single factor as well as acknowledging the importance of context in the social learning process to promote individuals' career decision making. According to Patton and McMahon (2014, p. 98), "the SLTCDM suggests that maximum career development of all individuals requires each individual to have the opportunity to be exposed to the widest array of learning experiences, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity".

2.3.1.8 (ii) Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz's happenstance learning theory for career counselling

Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1990, 1999), Krumboltz (2004), and Krumboltz (2009, 2011) developed the happenstance theory as an amendment to the SLTCDM, with the understanding that "as the world changes, so do the models" (Patton & McMahon, 2014, p. 98). The basic propositions are similar in that humans are born with different characteristics and predispositions at a given time and place to parents who are not of their own choice, with the primary emphasis on unpredictable social, environmental, and chance events during their life-span that can provide opportunities for learning with both positive and negative consequences for their decision-making processes (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999).

For example, the loss of a job as a result of outsourcing may lead an individual to find a better job elsewhere (positive consequence), while the loss of a loved one may have negative consequences for their career development. In such instances, the counsellor's function is to facilitate the learning of skills, interests, values, beliefs, and personal qualities that enable clients to create a satisfying life in a constantly changing work environment (Mitchell et al., 1999).

In a study of seven participants on narrative analysis of career transition themes and outcomes using chaotic theory as a guiding metaphor, McDowall and Peake (2012) found that "choosing a career does not necessarily follow a linear pattern, suggesting that chance, one or more 'false starts', trying different roles paired with states of dissatisfaction or disillusionment, unpredictability, and opportunistic career behaviour can lead to successful career outcomes in terms of 'finding a fit'. Five of the seven participants reported that externally imposed influences and chance events emanating through social connections, as well as being in the 'right place at the right time' precipitated their career transitions" (p. 405). These findings suggest that the chance factor does not encourage individuals to become passive recipients of opportunities or victims of circumstances; instead, they

need to take action to explore various work opportunities by interacting with people from different organisations or workplaces, participating in online job searches, volunteering, and being inquisitive in social encounters in various contexts, which increases the probability of success (i.e. to have the go-getter attitude).

One interesting example of an event of social chance is drawn from Mitchell's (1990) description of a participant's chance encounter with a couple in a restaurant (where he was working as a waiter at the time) that led to their offering to help him find employment in their organisation; the next day, he received an invitation to an interview in which he was successful. Having a simple conversation with the couple regarding his qualifications, interests, and aspirations redirected the focus to a career discussion that resulted in him incidentally securing a job. Had he not been open-minded and engaged in the conversation, he would have missed the chance of getting the job. Thus, he was taken aback by the fact that, after applying for more than 250 information technology (IT) jobs in the past without success, his brief social encounter became a breakthrough that secured him a job. The happenstance theory identifies five critical skills that can be used in the counselling process to recognise, create, and use chance as career opportunities, namely curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking:

Curiosity refers to exploring new learning opportunities and taking advantage of options offered by chance. Persistence means exerting effort despite setbacks. Flexibility refers to changing attitudes by adapting and adjusting to a variety of events as they unfold, and optimism involves viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable and risk-taking taking action in the faces of uncertain outcomes. (Mitchell et al., 1999, p.118)

While the happenstance theory is criticised for its difficulty to predict chance, its impact on career counselling vests in the emphasis on the concept of open-mindedness that encourages clients to experiment with a variety of possible options rather than being locked into a particular decision. The theory is relevant in the current evolving world of work and the lifelong learning process individuals constantly engage in due to career transitions (Lent & Brown, 2013a). In addition, the emphasis on learning more about the self (personal skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits, and personal qualities) and the environment rather than just making a career choice makes it relevant in dealing with work challenges that arise in the 21st century.

Individuals must learn to respond positively not only to planned events but also to various unplanned events and challenges by developing strengths based on their previous experiences in their life and career. The career counselling process should foster an attitude of taking advantage of unplanned events and dealing intelligently with the negative consequences in future (Sharf, 2013). However, Mitchell et al. (1999) caution that planned happenstance should not be confused with

reliance on fate or leaving everything to chance or luck, as it is about taking action and finding opportunities in the midst of adversity.

2.3.1.9 (iii) Lent, Brown, and Hackett's social cognitive career theory

The social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Brown & Lent, 1996; Lent & Brown, 2002, 2006, 2013b*;* Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000, 2002) builds upon the premise that while external factors such as social and environmental influences can affect career decisions, cognitive factors also play an important role in career development and decision making. The SCCT incorporates Bandura's (1996) triadic model, with specific emphasis on three concepts; self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals as discussed by Niles and Bowlsbey (2017) below.

- **Self-efficacy beliefs:** According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Story & Lepore, 2014, p. 86). Self-efficacy beliefs help individuals to answer questions pertaining to whether they can perform specific tasks such as: "Can I do this activity?", "Can I make this presentation?", "Can I pass the Mathematics exam?", or "Can I succeed in the debate competition?" Individuals' beliefs about their abilities play a central role in the career decision-making process, in that they tend to move toward those occupations requiring the capabilities that they think they possess or can develop, and they avoid occupations requiring the capabilities that they think they do not possess or cannot develop.
- **Outcomes expectations:** Outcomes expectations refer to the belief that an individual can perform a certain task, such as choosing a career path or avoiding one by envisioning the results. These involve estimating what the probability of an outcome will be, for example, "What will happen if I play basketball?" or "What will happen if I apply to a University?"
- **Goal setting:** The setting of goals helps individuals to organise behaviour that will guide their actions to be executed over a long period of time, including statements such as "I will persist in my studies because it is an important step towards obtaining my degree in counselling and obtaining a job as a counsellor".

In summary, self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations shape one's interests, goals, actions and, eventually, attainments. However, these are also influenced by contextual factors such as the availability of job opportunities, access to training opportunities, financial resources, etc. (Lent & Brown, 2013a). The nature of the task, people, and surroundings with which an individual has contact, and feelings of competence regarding similar tasks can also influence self-efficacy. Therefore, how individuals view their abilities and capacities affect their academic, career, and other choices. Individuals with a low sense of self-efficacy are less likely to persist in a difficult task; they

may have thoughts that they will be unable to do the task well, and they may feel discouraged or overwhelmed by the task (Sharf, 2013).

Regarding the goal of SCCT in counselling, Lent and Brown (2013b) recommends that counsellors help clients find careers that are congruent with their interests, values, and skills by exploring various possibilities that correspond reasonably well with their work personalities but were eliminated from consideration due to poor self-efficacy perceptions or inaccurate outcome expectations. In discussing occupations of low interest, counsellors should analyse the experiences and beliefs upon which their clients' lack of interest is based by identifying any inaccuracies in their clients' self-efficacy beliefs and occupational information (Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

The SCCT's unique contribution to career counselling is based on its provision of an integrated approach by emphasising both internal and external factors, including abilities, interests, personality, and values as well as the influence of social, cultural, and economic conditions towards individuals' career development and decision making by incorporating the trait-and-factor and developmental theories (Story & Lepore, 2014). The integrated nature of the SCCT makes it relevant for understanding a wide range of vocational behaviours relating to both career choice and work adjustment.

2.3.1.10 Psychodynamic theories

Psychodynamic theories have their roots in the thinking of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) who believed in the unconscious forces that drive human behaviour, hence they focus on issues of ego identity, life scripts, and life themes. Underlying these theories is the view that most emotional problems originate in people's childhood and that all experiences will have some kind of subsequent subconscious effect on the person. Career counselling helps people to review emotions, thoughts, early life experiences, and beliefs in order to gain insight into their lives and present-day problems, and to evaluate the patterns they have developed over time (Gad, 2018). Based on the above perspective, psychodynamic theories are relevant in career construction (my study) in that it alludes to the importance of individuals' early life experiences in the counselling process. Examples of psychodynamic theories include Bordin's (1990) theory of personality development, Roe's (1956) personality development theory, and Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's (1990) life-career decision-making theory discussed below.

Bordin (1990) posits that childhood experiences are associated with personality development, with an emphasis on the concept of play as a fundamental experience that brings about joy or satisfaction as it relates to personality and work. The urge to play may be conscious and unarticulated, yet it influences personality development and changes as individuals develop from being spontaneous to becoming more directed and intense as the child grows. Engaging in play may help

individuals recognise their own talents in activities that provided pleasure during childhood and ultimately influence career decisions (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

The author uses “a tree as a metaphor for career choices and the spontaneity of play, effort and compulsion as roots from which branches grow in different directions. The branches comprise the individual’s career decisions during his or her life, which reflect reaching out to an ideal fit between the self and work” (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017, p. 190).

The second psychodynamic theory discussed here is Roe’s (1956) theory of personality development underlined by the premise that child rearing practices in the first few years of childhood are primarily responsible for shaping individuals’ personality and the choice of certain occupations. However, much more emphasis is placed on the parents’ attitudes towards their children than the specific ways in which parents behave towards their children (Sharf, 2013). Following this premise, Gladding (2013) discusses Roe’s three different parent–child rearing relationships, each with two sub-classifications.

- **Emotional concentration on the child:** Emotional concentration on the child can occur in two ways: overprotection and over demanding. An overprotective parent does too much for the child, resulting in dependency and limited curiosity and exploration. An over demanding parent, on the other hand, expects perfection from the child, such as excellent school performance, and sets high standards for behaviour. According to Roe (1956), children who grow up in these types of environments are likely to develop a need for constant feedback and rewards and choose careers that provide recognition from others, such as performing arts.
- **Avoidance of the child:** Avoidance of the child can take a form of rejection and neglect. An emotionally rejected child may be frequently criticised or punished by their parents, without being given love or affection, while an emotionally neglectful parent makes very little effort to satisfy the child’s needs and pays more attention to their own problems than the child’s concerns and work. Roe (1956) speculates that children reared in an avoidance family pattern are more prone to considering careers in the science and mechanical fields as a way of finding emotional gratification in their lives.
- **Emotional acceptance of the child:** Emotionally accepting parents are those who are able to create a relatively tension-free environment by showing love and affection to their children, either casually or actively, thereby encouraging independence, while unaccepting parents display a negative attitude by ignoring their children’s emotional needs. Children from such families are likely to consider careers in the social fields in order to balance their personal and non-personal aspects of life, such as teaching or counselling.

The last psychodynamic theory discussed here is Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's (1990) theory describing two types of reality that people become aware of in career decision making: personal and common reality. Personal reality refers to people's sense of what is right, irrespective of what other people may think, while common reality refers to what other people and society regard as right for individuals (i.e. what they should do or not do).

The role of Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's (1990) theory on career counselling vests in their assertion that people should be made aware of the difference between the two realities and understand that the personal reality is important in career decision making, as it can give them a sense of empowerment in their lives. Counsellors should work with their clients' personal realities, being careful not to introduce the common reality from their expert knowledge about career decision making. Clients should not be encumbered by "should" that may interfere with their decision making that is best for them. Life and career are seen as inseparable concepts, thus people should "flow" with their careers, not work against them (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).

2.3.1.11 Person-in-environment approach

The person-in-environment approach focuses on the contextual interaction of social and environmental interchange over the individual's life-span. People are viewed as products of an environment that is inclusive yet unique. People's career development is thought to be influenced by and constructed within several environmental systems such as family, church, neighbourhood, school, neighbours, friends, workplace, community agencies, culture, and the customs of the larger group. People's concerns are seen to exist not only within the person but also to have developed through a variety of experiences, relationships, and situations.

The purpose of career counselling is to uncover internal as well as external variables that contribute to people's career development. The basic assumptions underlying this approach are rooted in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory (in Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017), which, although not a career counselling theory itself, identifies four systems that constitute an environment: the microsystem or the person; the mesosystem of the family, peer group, and schoolmates; the exosystem of family friends, extended family, neighbours, workplaces, the media and others; and the macrosystem, which is the total sum of broad ideologies expressed and modelled by the socio-cultural group. This theory holds that people develop in changing historical contexts, socio-cultural interactions, and relationships. From the person-in-environment career perspective, guidance counsellors should acknowledge that each person's life story unfolds within changing ecological systems, providing an opportunity to view all aspects of a person as a whole (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017; Zunker, 2016).

2.3.2 Postmodern approach to career guidance and counselling

The postmodern approach (also called qualitative/narrative or storied approach) refers to those theories that emphasise the importance of understanding careers as they are lived (i.e. the subjective experience of career development). Postmodernism embraces multi-cultural perspectives and emphasises the belief that there is no single truth, and, instead, individuals construct their own realities and truths based contextually on the interaction between cognition and social, cultural, economic, and political processes (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017). In other words, truth, knowledge, and reality are subjective concepts reflected contextually through linguistic, social, cultural, political, and economic forces that can affect personal experience. According to Gergen as cited in Nystul (2016, p. 322) "knowledge is not something that people possess in their heads, but rather something that people do together".

In this study, the postmodern approach is regarded as the most relevant approach that can be facilitated in response to the ever-changing developments and economic transitions experienced in the 21st century world of work due to its multi-cultural perspective towards career guidance and counselling. Because of its qualitative nature of enabling individuals to explore meaning in their lives through eliciting personal career stories, the postmodern approach enables counselling practitioners to address shortcomings that characterised the counselling profession in the past by accommodating the "twists and turns" of careers in the postmodern era (Maree & Morgan, 2012, p. 312). Bitter and Corey (as cited in Nystul, 2016) identify five techniques associated with postmodern counselling theories which counsellors need to embrace during the counselling process:

- **Listening with an open mind:** Counsellors should avoid preconceived ideas or taking a judgemental position, and they should instead attempt to empower clients by conveying optimism and encouragement and respecting and giving voice to their stories.
- **Asking questions that make a difference:** Counsellors should ask and address questions that can make a positive difference; for example, "Describe what is it like when you don't have this problem?" (Nystul, 2016, p. 89). Such a question can help clients to focus on what works as opposed to what does not work, thus replacing a cycle of defeatism with one of hope.
- **Deconstruction and externalisation**: Can occur in two ways: helping clients to gain valuable insights, minimising resistance by having them remove themselves from the problems associated with their storied lives, and scientifically examining problematic narratives from the dominant culture.
- **Alternative stories reauthoring and narrative repair:** Encourage clients to write their storied lives and create alternative stories that are more consistent with their goals and

aspirations (i.e. beginning to focus on solutions rather than problems to help clients develop more functional or meaningful stories.

- **Use of metaphors**: Using analogy to suggest an idea that is similar to clients' experience to help them examine the problem from a different perspective. Metaphors are also helpful in overcoming resistance by providing an indirect means of exploring painful experience and identify alternative means of overcoming problems (Nystul, 2016).

Two theoretical perspectives have evolved from the postmodern approach, namely constructivism and social constructionism. Both theories recognise the role played by narratives in creating stories that individuals utilise to define personal meaning in life. Constructivism focuses on meaning-making and constructing the social and psychological worlds through individual cognitive processes, while social constructionism states that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction (Hartung, 2007). From a constructivist perspective, narratives are seen as individuals' interpretation of the meaning in their lives, while from a social constructionist perspective, narratives are seen as individuals' interpretation of meaning and the significance of others (Maree, 2015b). The two theories similarly recognise language as a source of identity formation for people of all cultures, because all people acquire a sense of identity through language, which people use in creating narrative stories to define personal meaning in life (Nystul, 2016). I will first discuss constructivism, followed by social constructivism.

2.3.2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism contends that "knowledge is based on the subjective cognitions of individuals (i.e. there is no absolute truth; individuals construct or perceive their own reality or truth, which lies where they are and in how they derive meaning from the environment and experiences with others" (McMahon, 2017, p. 44; Sharf, 2013, p. 295). In this context, career counselling must accommodate the cultural contexts in which clients live and work, for if truth lies where the individual is, then truth may be culturally embedded (McMahon, 2017). There are two different constructivist approaches to career counselling, namely Cochran's (1997, 2007) narrative career counselling (storytelling) and Savickas's (2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) construction theory of life designing. Each of these theories places an emphasis on understanding clients' values or constructs (i.e. the way they see the world) (Maree & Morgan, 2012; Sharf, 2013). The two theories are discussed below.

2.3.2.2 (i) Cochran's narrative career counselling (creating narratives)

Cochran's (1997, 2007) narrative career counselling theory views the client's career as a story and emphasises the role of storytelling as a primary vehicle in the individuals' construction of their

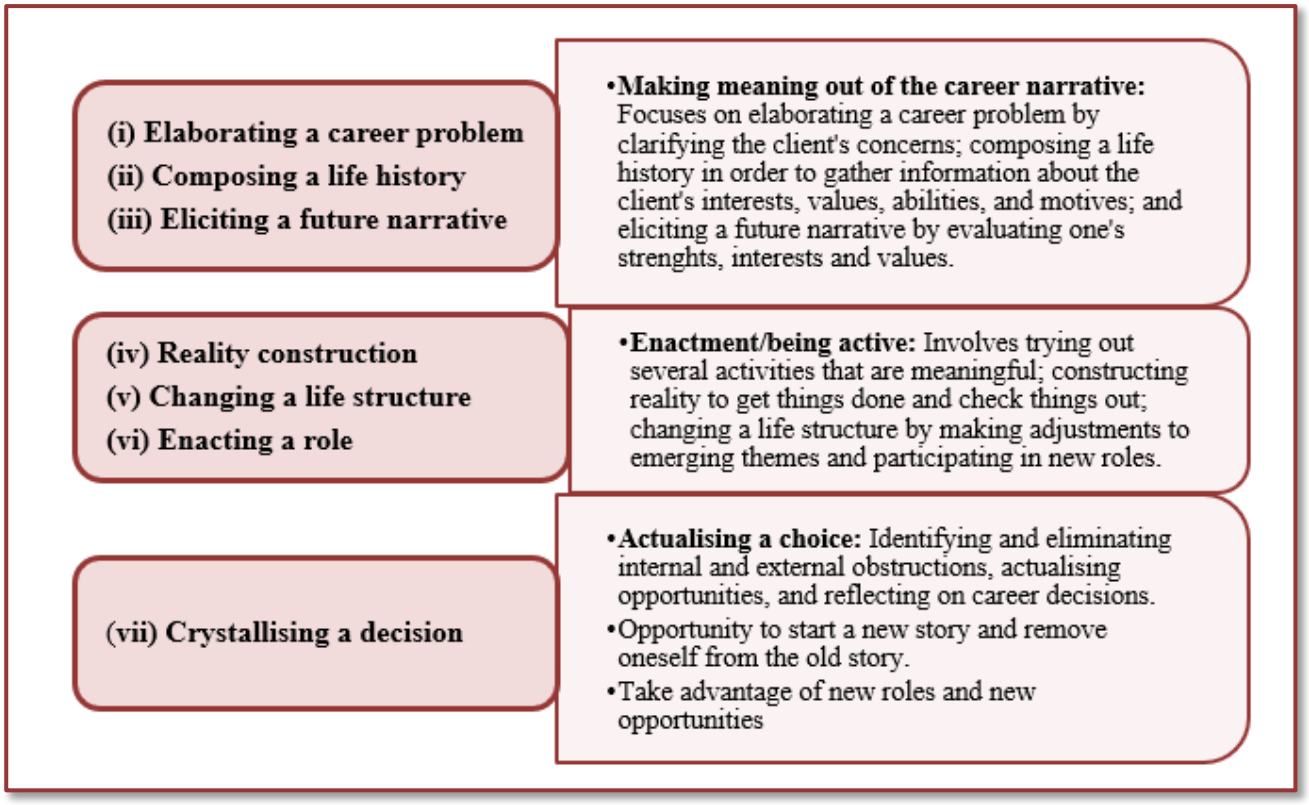
personal career narratives to come to grips with specific decisions within a greater life context that has meaning and coherence. In narrative counselling, clients tell stories about their past and present career development and construct their future career. Cochran (1997, 2007) notes that these narratives or stories help to provide clients with a sense of personal continuity across time (i.e. beginning, middle, and end). As individuals become aware of how the past has influenced the present, they can also make decisions about the future (Corey, 2013). Niles and Bowlsbey (2017, p. 89) define a narrative as "a meaning structure that organises events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole". In this sense, narratives help to give meaning to the plot of a person's story since they contain examples of behaviour and decisions that help to paint a portrait of who the person is, relative to engaging in the world.

Career counselling begins with the identification of a career problem, defined by Cochran (1985) "as gaps between one's current situation and a desired career future" (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017, p. 89). The career problem represents the beginning, while the middle relates to the way one is to move from the beginning to the end. When there are problems in the career story, difficulties in decision making (i.e. career indecision) often occur, which, from a narrative perspective, is viewed positively as a sign that clients are in the process of making change, during which they might lose a sense of where they are in the story of their lives and their goals. In this case, career indecision becomes an active process, not something that happens to the client in a passive manner. The indecision state warrants narrative counselling through which clients will derive meaning by attending to what they feel is important or unimportant in the description of their lives or career. Cochran (1991) uses the term "wavering", meaning that individuals waver back and forth towards finding meaning in their career paths, which presents counsellors with an opportunity to intervene by helping clients clarify their needs, values, and aspirations to determine the future direction of their story (Nystul, 2016; Sharf, 2013).

Cochran (1997) describes seven "episodes" in career counselling, grouped into three phases. The first three emphasise making meaning out of the career narrative, while episodes four through six focus on enactment, and the seventh refers to crystallisation of a decision, as illustrated below:

Figure 2.2

Cochran' seven episodes in career counselling (in three phases)



Note: Adapted from Sharf (2013, p. 299)

Narrative counselling builds on the premise that clients are the protagonists (main authors and actors) of their own stories as they interact with others in different environmental contexts to reach particular goals that will satisfy their needs; thus, they are seen as experts who know what they want in life. The role of counselling is to provide an opportunity for constructing a coherent life story by reauthoring social constructions and identity narratives that clients find problematic in the belief that they have abilities, talents, positive intentions, and life experiences that can be catalysts for new possibilities. For this reason, counsellors tend to avoid using language that embodies diagnosis, assessment, treatment, and intervention. Much emphasis is placed on understanding clients' lived experiences and de-emphasises efforts to predict, interpret, and pathologise problematic events. Based on the belief that it is not the person that is the problem, but the problem itself that is the problem, narrative counselling asserts that living life means relating to problems, not being fused with them (Corey, 2013).

2.3.2.3 (ii) Savickas's career construction theory for life designing

Savickas's (2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2013b) career construction theory for life designing became the most pre-eminent approach emphasising individuals' adaptation to the environment and the events that individuals face and build on the principles of career construction and self-construction,

which are considered lifelong, holistic, and contextual (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017; Maree, 2015b; Sharf, 2013). The career construction theory posits that people construct their own lives and careers by identifying (imposing meaning on) their vocational (work-related) behaviour and numerous experiences in the workplace (Maree, 2010). One's career unfolds as one makes choices and develops a narrative or story of one's life by using past memories (i.e. early recollections or childhood memories), present experiences, and future aspirations to produce a meaningful career story (Hartung, 2007). From a career construction perspective, individuals' careers are not made up of scores on inventories or tests, or the opinions of employers or families, but are a construction that individuals make by themselves. Individuals' careers are thus potentially seen as a central part of their lives, and the career becomes the construction of meaning within a unique social context (Maree, 2010).

Savickas's (2005) career construction theory blends three major career counselling theories into one approach of career construction and vocational behaviour, namely the differential approach or personality-environment fit (Parsons 1909, the developmental approach (Super, 1990), and the psychodynamic approach (Freud 1856–1939). The differential perspective in career construction addresses what different people prefer to do in their work (Savickas, 2005, 2009, 2013b), while the developmental perspective emphasises various ways in which people cope with career developmental tasks and transitions. The dynamic perspective attends to the ways in which people use various life themes to develop meaning in their career behaviour as they fit work into their lives (Maree, 2013; Maree, 2015b).

Career construction views the self from three perspectives: actor, agent, and author in the career development process (Savickas, 2013b). Individuals begin their career construction as children (actors), become agents and direct actions in adolescence, and finally become authors who explain the actions they direct in adulthood (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017). To assist clients in working with their story, Savickas (2012) applies the concept of life designing, which involves four phases: constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing, and co-constructing. Construction starts with small stories called micronarratives, which help counsellors to see how clients organise their view of themselves, their identity, and their career. Together, the counsellor and the client reconstruct the micronarrative into one that has positive outcomes and emphasises the strengths of the client. In co-construction, a macro narrative emerges from many micronarratives; the client and the counsellor develop a tentative portrait of the client's life and a theme of the client's career prospects, and the client becomes ready to face the challenges of applying for work and entering the world of work (Nystul, 2017).

When individuals tell their career stories, they are producing a narrative, which is essentially their own view of their career. Career construction counsellors listen to their clients' narratives, or

the storylines thereof, and identify their vocational personality style (abilities, needs, values, interests, and other traits characterising a person's self-concept), career adaptability (coping mechanisms), and life themes to help them construct meaning from their lives and build their own life-career stories (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). Di Fabio and Maree (2013c), too, maintain that career construction counsellors should "listen" not so much to the facts themselves as elicited from their clients but rather to the particular subjective perception of these "facts" as revealed in relation to their clients' specific narrative modalities.

Savickas et al. (2009) emphasise that the principle of life-design counselling operates within the framework of self and career construction and is therefore seen as lifelong, holistic, contextual and preventive in order to increase individuals' meaningful participation in their societies as described below.

- **Lifelong:** Life design intervention should not only be helping people acquire skills to deal with current changes and developmental issues but also equip them with adequate skills and knowledge that they value in their lifelong development. Guidance must be provided on how, when, and where such skills may be acquired and from whom can support be sought.
- **Holistic:** Life design counselling should not only focus on careers but also consider all salient life roles, such as family member and citizen, and hobbies.
- **Contextual:** The contextual factor emphasises the importance of incorporating past, present, and future interactions of individuals with their environment in which they explore different life theatres where different roles may be performed. As such, life designing is perceived as an inclusive process which incorporates the individuals' roles to become part of the intervention that constructs career stories and builds lives.
- **Preventive:** Life design interventions should not only be confined to times of difficulties but also focus on people's future, even long before some difficulties can be experienced. In so doing, individuals will be encouraged to be more proactive than reactive to circumstances. Maree (2010) cautions that the process of life designing should afford individuals with the opportunity to develop a comprehensive, action-oriented career plan that can be redesigned, as needs, interests, and experiences change (Savickas et al., 2009).

As part of the lifelong, holistic, contextual, and preventive process, the life-design framework for counselling interventions aims to increase clients' narratability, adaptability, intentionality, and activity as driving instruments in bringing about positive change in the life stories of individuals (Maree, 2015c).

- **Narratability:** Communication between the client and the counsellor is instrumental in helping them formulate stories in their own words and map out their subjective identities. In so doing, individuals engage in personal dialogue to examine their past and present experiences to help them to better understand their own life themes, vocational personality, and adaptability resources (Savickas, 2013b).
- **Adaptability**: Life designing aims to bring about change in individuals' lives by increasing their career adaptability through incorporating the four Cs, namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Ginevra et al., 2018). Savickas and Porfeli (2012) describe the Cs as career-adaptability resources or psychological strengths that influence self-regulation in coping with tasks, transitions, and traumas. Concern implies being optimistic about life within a particular time perspective, and thus helps to individuals look ahead and prepare for what might come next. Control is an aspect that "enables individuals to become responsible for shaping themselves and their environment to meet what comes next by using self-discipline, effort and persistence" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 663). Exercising control over one's life involves being convinced that life is not only about using self-regulation strategies to adjust to contextual needs in different settings but also being able to influence and control a particular context. Curiosity refers to individuals' tendency to explore their environment, as such curious people tend to imagine themselves in various situations and roles, which is critical for career exploration. Lastly, confidence refers to one's capacity to stand by one's own aspirations and objectives, even in the face of adversity (Neureiter & Mattausch, 2017).
- **Activity:** Engaging in various activities provides individuals with an opportunity to gain insight into their personal abilities, talents, and interests (Savickas & Pouyaud, 2016). Interacting with people from whom they receive feedback helps them formulate new selves and identities, reinterpret their life themes, and ultimately write new life stories. Thus, activity helps clients to turn actions into meaningful behaviour (Savickas, 2012).
- **Intentionality:** From a constructivist perspective, careers are built by engaging in activities and reflecting on the outcomes. The counsellor and the client should concentrate on meaning-making through intentional processes in the ongoing construction to enable clients to validate what they consider important in their lives (Savickas et al., 2009).

Savickas (2005, 2006) identifies four core concepts of career construction, namely life structure, career personality, career adaptability strategies, and life themes (Maree, 2010; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). Following the narrative paradigm, these concepts can be used to prompt clients to author their own life-career stories and enhance their experience of work as a personality meaningful context for development (Hartung, 2007).

- **Life structure:** The combination of work and other roles that constitute a person's life. Individuals engage in various social roles that are determined by certain functions to be executed at a particular time in different settings, including family, school, leisure, and community, over their life-span. Individuals' level of commitment to their different roles is influenced by prevailing cultural value orientations, the changing nature of work, the growing diversity of society, the global economy, the marketplace, and occupational barriers (Hartung, 2007). The role of counselling is to help individuals recognise and address the relative importance they ascribe to various life roles rather than assuming that their work role constitutes the main focus of their problems and concerns.
- **Career adaptability strategies:** Refer to the coping mechanisms used by people to deal with developmental tasks and negotiate environmental changes and role transitions (Maree, 2013; Maree, Cook, & Fletcher, 2018. Career construction counselling helps clients to make appropriate choices by increasing their adaptability in terms of concern for their work role and career, control of their career, curiosity regarding their opportunities and options as well as confidence in making career choices (Maree, 2013; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). Individuals are considered adaptable when they act in an appropriate manner in a specific situation (Maree, 2010).
- **Personality style:** The abilities, needs, values, interests, and other traits that characterise people's self-concepts are viewed as dynamic, fluid, and subject to the social world rather than stable, static, and objective tangible entities (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).
- **Thematic life stories or life themes:** Reveal the patterns of motivations, motives, and aims in people's lives, thus dealing with the reasons why people make the career choices that they do. The concept of life themes represents the private meaning people attach to their career-life stories, which can be revealed through early recollections (Sharf, 2013). The role of counselling is to identify life themes that give life purpose, meaning, direction, and coherence (Hartung, 2007).

In summary, life themes explain individuals' life structure, personality style, and career adaptability strategies. Personality style indicates what a person has achieved, while career adaptability strategies reflect how they have achieved it. Self-defining stories about vocational development tasks, career transitions, triumphs, and traumas indicate life themes that play out between the self and society, which shapes the role of working in a person's life (Hartung, 2007).

2.3.2.4 Social constructionism

Social constructionism holds that reality is constructed from conversations with people in various contexts (Watson, 2017), mainly focusing on how interaction with others affect people's views of the world and the actions they take as a result of their views. In other words, social constructionists examine how people fit into the world of work and into their lives (Nystul, 2016). The social constructionism theory is grounded in the belief that people construct reality socially through the use of shared and agreed-upon meanings that are communicated through language, social interaction, and relationships, and thus that objective reality is impossible to access. Reality and knowledge are regarded as intersubjective; consequently, the personal meanings attached to the social and psychological world of individuals are constructed through social processes and interaction (Maree, 2013).-

The intersubjective social reality perspective believes that individuals' sense of the social world emerges continually as they interact with others. Cunliffe (2008) defines intersubjectivity as the presence of others in oneself or of oneself in others, which means that it is not two individuals coordinating an activity and coming to an understanding of what each other thinks but individual selves in relation to others – inseparable because their whole life is part of each other's life history (i.e. there is no "me" without "you", because we are always in relation to each other). The author further states that people use dialogue to engage in conversations at a particular time and space, whether in person or cognitively. Such engagements are regarded as micro processes of co-constructing and maintaining understanding of social realities in everyday conversations. Therefore, the focus is not on what social reality is but on how people shape meaning between themselves in responsive dialogues, because there is no universally shared understanding of reality. In career counselling, intersubjectivity aims to offer insights into how people negotiate meanings about experiences, and, in so doing, shape those experiences between their conversations with an aim of becoming more thoughtful, careful, and reflexive regarding their actions (Cunliffe, 2008).

As such, social constructionism rejects the idea of a singular self and recognises multiple realities, viewing the self as polyphonic. A polyphonic self can speak with different voices and can shift from one position to another, depending on changes in context and time. The multi-voiced conception of the self has positive implications for career counselling in that storytelling becomes an important avenue to enter the life space of one another. By engaging in a conversation, together, the counsellor and the client are able to deconstruct unproductive stories and construct new productive ones (Mkhize, 2005).

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ravitch and Riggan (2017, p. 5) define a conceptual framework as "an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous". Within this context, "argument" refers to a series of sequenced, logical propositions to ground a study and convince readers about the importance of the study. As such, a conceptual framework is understood as the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform a research study, which can be presented in a visual or narrative form, highlighting the key factors, concepts, and variables to be studied (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Maxwell (2013, p. 41) further argues that a conceptual framework is constructed, not found, in that researchers build an argument connecting their research to key theories, policy issues, problems of practice, or social and political realities that affect people's lives and society. Following this approach, I was able to align key concepts in relation to the research questions raised in my study (Henning et al., 2004).

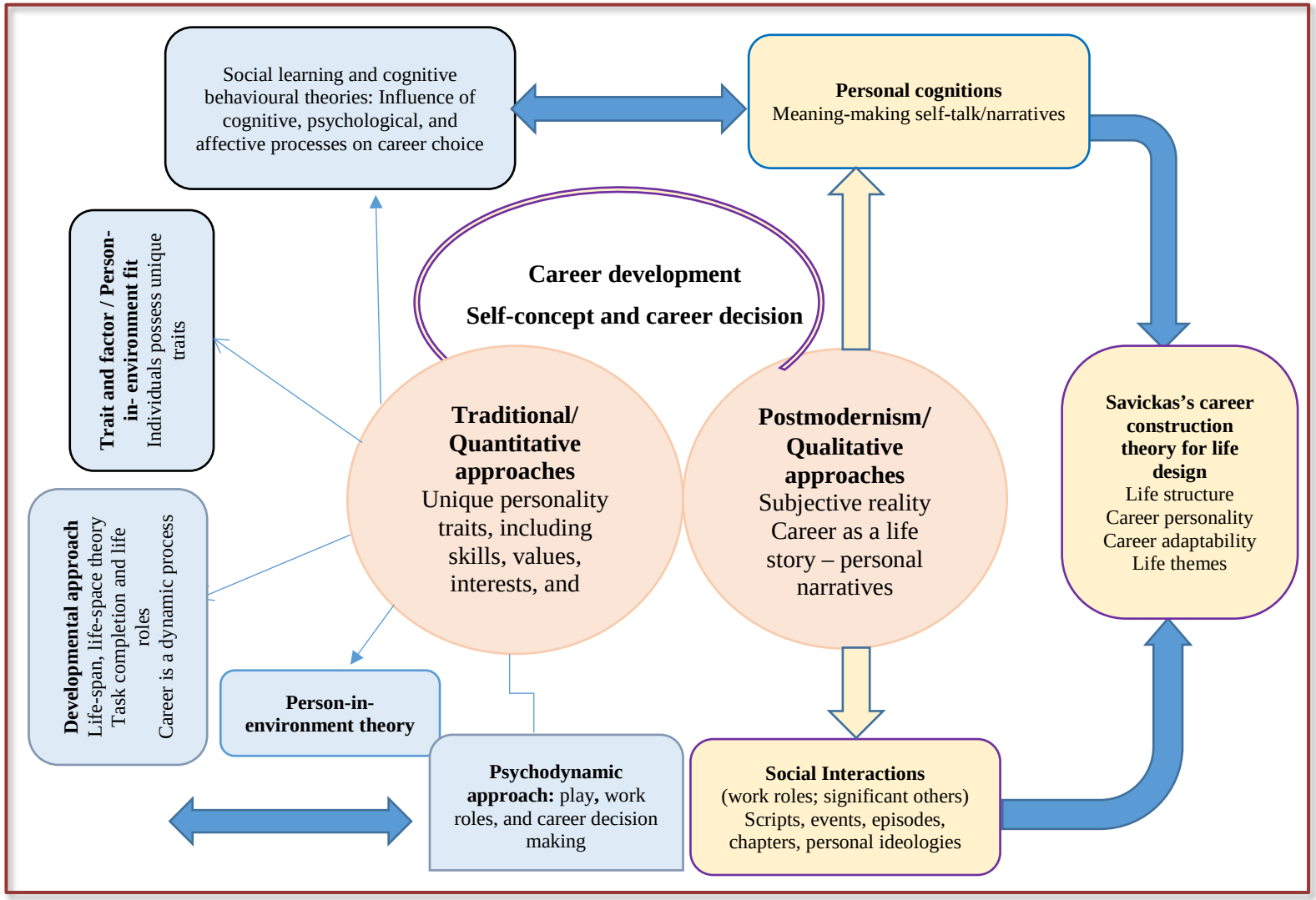
An integrative approach (merging traditional and postmodern approaches to career counselling) provides the framework for this research study, where qualitative theories are linked with the research questions (1.5.1 and 1.5.2). Given the unpredictable nature of the rapidly changing world of work facing unparalleled economic and technological upheavals, counsellors should consider merging different theories to help them work more flexibly in order to meet disparate people's needs as some theories can better meet certain types of needs than others (Sharf, 2013). Corey (2013, p. 468) supports the merging of different theoretical perspectives by stating that "no single theory is comprehensive enough to account for the complexities of human behaviour, especially when the range of client types and their specific problems are taken into consideration. No one theory holds all the truth, and no single set of counselling techniques is always effective in working with diverse client populations."

As such, there is a growing recognition that career counselling interventions can be most effective when contributions from various approaches are integrated and yet remain open to perspectives that play a crucial role in the personal counselling approach, since each theory has its unique contributions and its own domain of expertise (Charokopaki, 2019; Corey, 2013; Hirschi 2012; Maree & Beck, 2004; Lindo et al., 2019; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Rottinghaus & Eshelman, 2015; Stebleton, 2010). With this notion in mind, I remained cautious of attempting to mix theories with incompatible underlying assumptions when developing the personal integrative perspective. I accept that each theory has its strengths and weaknesses and is, by definition, "different" from the others, and it is thus not realistic to expect that "all" theories can be integrated.

The visual representation below (Figure 2.3) represents my conceptual framework, illustrating how some approaches can be integrated to promote career construction counselling within a group context. The conceptual framework draws on constructivism principles underpinning career construction counselling to help integrate (as far as possible) the trait-and-factor theories, the life-span, life-space career development theory, social learning and cognitive behavioural theories, person-in-environment theory, and psychodynamic theories with each other. This framework is preferred because of its multi-linear perspective and its potential to achieve the aim of the study, namely to enhance the career development of Grade 9 learners in a rural school through group career construction counselling. In addition, the impact of the contextual interaction between social and environmental experiences on career behaviour over time cannot be overlooked.

Figure 2.3

Visual representation of the conceptual framework, compiled by the researcher



Note: From Rottinghaus and Eshelman (2015)

The above representation provides a framework that challenges the traditional linear approaches in favour of an integrated, multi-linear approach to career counselling in the 21st century. The integrated approach should facilitate dynamic and holistic intervention in the career and economic situation of the research participants in the ever-changing world of work. Central to the approach is the view that career and the self are inseparable in that people (referred to as learners/participants in this study) are seen as social actors, motivated agents, and autobiographical authors involved in a continuous process of constructing their own careers, rather than passive recipients of services rendered by a counsellor who is perceived as an expert in the counselling process (Corey, 2013). People engaged in the process of self- and career construction are likely to discover meaning through personal cognitions (i.e. self-talk/narratives) and social interactions (by assuming different social and work roles) with significant others within any given environment they find themselves in (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

The two circles (traditional and postmodern approaches) at the centre of the diagram connected by a curved line at the top represent the core dimensions of career development, while the rectangles represent the multiple realities to which people are exposed through career intervention strategies in their search for meaning in their lives. The arrows connecting all the different shapes signify the interconnectedness of phenomena (multiple realities, i.e. personal, psychological, social, cognitive, and environmental realities) to which people attach meaning at various stages in their lives and in various life roles. This view is consistent with Savickas's view (in Maree, 2016) that people act out social roles on various life-career stages or theatres such as the family, school, community, society, tertiary institution, and work–life contexts.

I believe it is important to incorporate Super's life-span, life-space theory as it maintains that people are embedded within broader contexts in which the work role is assumed as part of many life roles (Hartung, 2007). Emphasis is placed on how individuals develop over time in relation to the meaning they give work. In this context, career is also seen as a dynamic process that evolves over time, rather than a once-off event, during which people are actively involved in the construction of their own lives by reflecting on their personal life stories (Chen, 2015). During this process, clients write their autobiographical stories, which provide them with autobiographical bridges to deal with multiple transitions. The task of career counsellors should be seen not as merely testing their clients with a view of determining the work categories to which they belong but rather as collaborating with them to help them construct themselves and their careers optimally (i.e. maximise their potential so that they assume full responsibility and gain control over their lives) (Mkhize, 2005).

Following a narrative paradigm, Savickas's (2005) four core concepts of career construction (as discussed in 2.3.2.1.ii) are incorporated into my conceptual framework, namely life structure, career personality, career adaptability strategies, and life themes (Maree, 2010; Schreuder & Coetzee,

2017). These concepts are useful as they provide the basis for clients to author their own life-career stories and enhance their experience of work in a personal meaningful context for development (Hartung, 2007). For the purpose of my study, I use the career construction intervention programme to encourage participants to narrate their own life stories as they author life chapters based on their past, present, and future experiences (Maree, 2013).

Constructivism is of particular interest in my study as it facilitates the understanding of career development and meaning-making for Grade 9 learners as they relate their individual career stories (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Charokopaki, 2019; Stebleton, 2010). The learners were able to gather information about themselves by exploring their past, present, and future selves; as they do so, they are able to establish their sense of self and become increasingly aware of career opportunities and the world of work. Constructivism conceptualises identity as a self-construction process that develops over time into a life story (Savickas, 2011b; Savickas, 2019b) as it builds on the premise that what people know and who they are develop through experiences and social discourse between people (Savickas et al., 2009). Cochran (1997, 2007) notes that narratives or stories help to provide a sense of personal continuity across time. As individuals become aware of how the past has influenced the present, they can make decisions about the future (Corey, 2013).

In conclusion, I believe that merging traditional and postmodern approaches provides a basis for an integrated perspective towards career construction counselling, since both approaches agree on the importance of self-concept in sound career decision making. However, I acknowledge with caution that, for the postmodernist, meaning is derived through narratives, while for the traditionalist, meaning is derived through social interactions. With this notion in mind, I use Table 2.1 (see following page) to summarise the link between the two approaches.

Table 2.1

Link between traditional and postmodern theoretical approaches

THEORY	THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS	LINK WITH OTHER THEORIES
Traditional/Positivist approach	Grounded in modernism: Focus on measurement of personality traits, including skills, values, interests, and abilities as determinants of career choice.	
Trait-and-factor or person-environment fit theories: Holland's theory of personality and occupational types; Parson's vocational theory, and Dawis and Lofquist's theory of work person-environment correspondence (PEC)	Emphasise the reciprocal relationship between people and their environments (i.e. there is contextual interaction of social and environmental interchange over the life-span) (Zunker, 2011).	Link with social learning / cognitive theories and developmental theories by emphasising the interaction between different factors in the development of the self.
Super's life-span, life-space career development theory	Career choice is a dynamic life process, progressing through developmental stages that are congruent with age and self-concept (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).	In agreement with psychodynamic theories by emphasising the development of the self as a product of social interactions among numerous factors and individuals' engagement in different life roles in various contexts (Leung, 2008).
Social learning and cognitive behavioural theories): Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making; Mitchel, Levin, and Krumboltz's happenstance learning theory for career counselling and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's social cognitive career theory (SCCT)	Career choice involves the interaction of cognitive, genetic, and affective processes as well as significant life events outside the individual's control (Zunker, 2011).	In agreement with psychodynamic theories by emphasising increased self-awareness as influenced by external and internal factors in which the individual lives.

THEORY	THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS	LINK WITH OTHER THEORIES
Psychodynamic theories: Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's life-career decision-making theory, Bordin's theory of personality development and Roe's personality development theory	Emphasise the importance of early life experiences in shaping individuals' personality and behaviour and the choice of certain occupations (Gad, 2018).	Agree with Super's developmental theory that the self is central to career development and the decision-making aspect in the developmental stages.
Postmodern approaches (qualitative/narrative or storied approach)	Embraces the notion of multi-cultural perspectives and the existence of subjective reality (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017).	
Constructivism, social constructivism and Savickas's career construction theory for life designing	Grounded in postmodernism, and people's careers are seen as potentially a central part of their lives. The career becomes the construction of meaning in a unique social context (life and career are inseparable).	In agreement with psychodynamic theories (Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman) and the development theories (Super) on addressing constructs of self-concept, life-span, and life-space (roles and tasks) and the interconnectedness of psychological and societal characteristics of the self-concept.

Compiled from Mitchel, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999), Patton and McMahon (2017), Nystul (2017), and Schreuder and Coetzee (2017)

2.5 OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the historical development of career guidance and counselling by alluding to international and national perspectives, not for comparison but to enhance readers' understanding of how career guidance and counselling practices have evolved through different stages to the current global and national practices to prepare individuals for the world of work in the 21st century. I have also presented an explanation regarding the provision of career guidance in South Africa during the pre- and post-democratic era. The literature on theoretical perspectives on career guidance and counselling was explored extensively to broaden the understanding of the trends that have emerged over time.

Traditional theories discussed include the trait and factor / person-environment fit theory; the life-span, life-space developmental theory; the social learning, cognitive, and psychodynamic

theories; and the postmodern theories for career construction include constructivism and social constructionism. This discussion was necessary, as it forms the basis for the integrated approach to career construction counselling adopted in my study, which is presumed to maximise individuals' potential in making effective career decisions that will stand the test of time. This is particularly true when one considers the high unemployment rate currently experienced in South Africa, which is aggravated by the radical technological and economic changes faced by the labour market and the realities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A self-construction approach in career guidance and counselling seems necessary to assist individuals to acquire relevant skills to meet these challenging occupational circumstances and attain adaptability, career resilience, and employability. I concluded this chapter by discussing the conceptual framework and the paradigmatic perspective that emphasises the intersubjective reality that is socially constructed in order to find the meanings that lie behind social action and are not examined in an objective manner (James, 2016; Terre Blanche & Durkheim, 2012). This epistemological stance for career construction suggests that individuals are capable of developing multiple meanings that are relevant to their own experiences that they can use to shape their own careers in order to meet their needs in particular contexts.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methods, processes, and procedures used in the data generation process of my study. The research paradigm underpinning my research design and the data analysis process guiding the interpretation of findings, issues of validity, reliability, and trustworthiness are discussed and justified. I conclude by describing my role as a researcher, the ethical obligations, and the limitations of my study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm can be defined as a worldview encompassing general philosophical orientations about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study (Creswell, 2014). The paradigm underpinning my proposed study draws from the interpretivist/constructivist worldview, which emphasises the importance of understanding human interactions within their social, historical, political, and cultural contexts. Fundamental to this paradigm is the view that people develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are varied and multiple; thus, researchers seek to understand the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into minute categories or ideas. Garrick (as cited in Henning et al., 2004) maintains that people are not passive recipients of social, political, and historical information but have inner capabilities to form their own perceptions about events. He adds that the world is made up of multi-faceted realities that are studied as a whole and that, therefore, interacting factors, events, and processes can be explained within the context in which they occur.

Working from an interpretive paradigm allows an in-depth understanding of qualitative participants' experiences regarding career construction counselling within their specific learning contexts. This paradigm is preferred, because it enables researchers to take an insider perspective in the research process in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the research participants while acknowledging that their own background will shape their interpretation (Creswell, 2014). In other words, researchers "participate in the research process with their participants to ensure they are producing knowledge that is reflective of their reality" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 102).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is "a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data-gathering methods used and the data

analysis done" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 72). Durrheim (2012) contends that, a research design should be understood as a strategic framework for action, designed by considering four dimensions to ensure that valid conclusions are reached. These dimensions are the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm informing the research, the context or situation within which the research is conducted, and the research techniques used to generate and analyse data. In executing the research process, researchers should reflect on these dimensions to produce a coherent guide for action that provides valid answers to the research questions posed in the study. Ultimately, the methodological requirements of the research question, the type of data generated, and how the data was processed is reflected in the research design chosen for the study, depending on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Henning et al., 2004).

3.3.1 Qualitative research design

Qualitative research is a form of research in which the researcher becomes part of the research process by connecting with the participants in the process of gathering and interpreting the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher becomes an insider who analyses words, texts, and images or photographs and groups them into larger meanings of understanding, such as codes, categories, or themes, using interactive and non-interactive modes of inquiry (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). By becoming an insider in the research field, inquirers want to understand the contexts in which the participants in the study address a problem and the experiences they are faced with at a particular time. The emphasis here is on the fact that what people say cannot be separated from the context in which they say it, and such contexts would potentially yield rich, in-depth, and meaningful data from participants. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) asserts that a qualitative research study should have the following characteristics:

- **Research in natural settings:** Participants' behaviour and actions are observed through face-to-face interactions, where researchers talk to them directly, and such prolonged engagements generally lead to eliciting meaningful data to the research.
- **Researcher as key instrument**: Researchers gather information themselves and interpret it by examining data sources or interviewing participants; in so doing, they are likely to obtain thick, in-depth responses.
- **Multiple sources of data:** Researchers use different methods of gathering, reviewing, and making sense of data through documents, interviews, observations, and audio-visual sources. Through these datasets, participants can share their ideas freely without being confined to predetermined measurement instruments or scales.

- **Inductive and deductive reasoning:** Researchers are able to work bottom up and move back and forth, organising themes until comprehensive patterns are created.
- **Participants' meanings:** Researchers keep track of the meaning that the participants attach to the research problem, instead of the preconceived notions they might bring to the research or obtain from literature.
- **Emergent process**: The initial research plan is not rigid, as some, or all, anticipated stages might need to be changed during or after entering the research field for data gathering. Modifications regarding participants, research site, methods or research questions might be necessary as determined by emerging circumstances. Such instances become a learning opportunity for researchers to gain more insight about the problems presented and find ways to address them.
- **Reflexivity**: Qualitative researchers reflect on their personal experiences, historical, and cultural backgrounds, and how these can shape meaning related to gathered data.
- **Holistic perspectiv**e: Qualitative research involves a non-linear, comprehensive process focusing on multiple perspectives covering diverse issues that are likely to arise in the research field.

It is for these reasons that qualitative research is preferred in this study for its potential to facilitate multiple perspectives which quantitative research would not be able to address.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Sampling procedures

Two types of non-probability sampling, namely purposive and convenience sampling, were employed to select a group of Grade 9 participants, which was the only Grade 9 class from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education, where I was employed as DCES for career guidance (at the time of the study). The class consisted of 50 learners during my first encounter with them, but the number gradually diminished to 15 due to withdrawals before the end of the intervention programme. I explained from the onset that they were to participate in the group-based career construction intervention programme, which was conducted concurrently as part of their traditional Grade 9 Life Orientation lessons with the aim of promoting their level of career development.

In convenience sampling, participants are selected on the basis of their availability, accessibility, and convenience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this study, the participants were purposively selected based on the view of them being in Grade 9, which is considered critical for career and subject choice. This kind of exercise is considered a vehicle for exploring their career

development through which they construct their careers within the socio-economically disadvantaged rural community setting in which they find themselves. Purposive or judgemental sampling is also based on the fact that the participants have fairly homogeneous characteristics regarding the research topic (Gay et al., 2014), (i.e. all of them came from the same ethnic group and home language, all were in Grade 9, and all were born and bred in the typically rural village characterised by sheer poverty, as outlined in Table 3.1 below. In this study, poverty is defined as a condition in which individuals are unable to meet their most basic needs, including those for clean water, housing, health care, quality education, employment prospects and infrastructure regardless of age, ethnicity and race (Ngubane, Mndebele & Kaseeram, 2023).

Table 3.1

Descriptive characteristics of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	Home language	Ethnicity	Settlement type
IP1	16 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP3	18 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP16	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP17	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP18	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP19	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP22	16 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP23	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP24	16 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP26	14 years	Female	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP30	14 years	Male	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP31	15 years	Male	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP32	17 years	Male	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP33	15 years	Male	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village
IP34	18 years	Male	Grade 9	SiSwati	African	Rural village

In keeping with the rationale for Grade 9 being the most critical stage for career- and subject-choice decision making, as per prescripts guiding transition from the General Education and Training (GET) band to the Further Education and Training (FET) band, and in line with the “World of Work” theme for the Life Orientation curriculum (DBE, 2011c), I deemed it fit to provide a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the sampling strategies employed in my research in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

Sampling strategies: Advantages and disadvantages

SAMPLING TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	SAMPLE STRATEGY	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Homogeneous sampling	Participants have similar experiences or outlook: low socio-economic background	Small intact group of Grade 9 learners in a rural school	Simplifies data collection and analysis	Threats to internal validity may affect the outcomes
Convenience sampling	Process of including whoever happens to be available	Non-random sampling selection depends on availability	Sample selection is simple and participation is voluntary	Difficult to generalise results to the entire population
Purposive sampling	Selected participants are believed to be key informants	Non-random sampling	Sample selection based on researcher's judgement	Potential for inaccuracy in the researcher's criteria and results are not generalisable

Note: Adapted from Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2014)

3.4.2 Qualitative data generation

In this study, qualitative data was gathered by employing pre-intervention group discussions, post-intervention semi-structured focus group interviews, and my observations and documents (*CIP*, collages, timelines, and research journal). A multi-phase sequential approach was followed to explain sequentially how the career construction intervention processes unfolded as illustrated in Table 3.3, which summarises the five phases followed in the data generation process.

Table 3.3

Summary of the activities enacted during each of the five phases followed in the data generation process

PRE- INTERVENTION		DURING INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION		DATES OF INTERVENTION
First Phase	**Second Phase**	**Third Phase**	**Fourth Phase**	**Sixth Phase**	**First Phase to Fifth Phase**
Pre-intervention group discussions were conducted during which participants identified and discussed challenges in the world of work as well as the impact thereof and suggested possible solutions to the challenges that are aimed at increasing	Participation in the career construction intervention by completing the *CIP* (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013a, 2013b) on career preferences and dislikes, career categories, and narrative questions (life story) and the Maree *Career Matrix (MCM)* inventory, assessing interests and level of confidence in careers.	Making collages through which participants expressed their views regarding their desired future career lives and draft timelines depicting significant obstacles they foresee and how they could overcome them. At the same time, personal observations were recorded in my reflective journal to keep track of the behavioural patterns and themes of	Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with the participants for the purposes of data triangulation (Maree & Taylor, 2016). The qualitative data generated provided an in-depth analysis of the participants' verbal and non-verbal responses regarding their perceptions of career construction, emerging themes, and categories, as well as behavioural changes	Qualitative datasets were examined inductively to identify themes and sub-themes that added meaning to the findings as well as deductively to verify whether the identified themes supported each other (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Creswell	**Pre-intervention group discussions: First Phase:** 9 February 2020: introductions and pre-intervention group discussions (challenges in the world of work and possible solutions) 23 February 2020: groups' feedback presentations **Second Phase: Intervention programme**: 10 March 2020: *CIP* narrative completion (*half done and carried over* to 25 and 27 August 2020 due to the Covid-19 lockdown) 10 September 2020: *MCM* completion: Third phase: 17 and 24 September 2020:

PRE- INTERVENTION		DURING INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION		DATES OF INTERVENTION
First Phase	**Second Phase**	**Third Phase**	**Fourth Phase**	**Sixth Phase**	**First Phase to Fifth Phase**
career development.		experiences observed during my interaction with the participants.	observed during the intervention session.	& Creswell , 2018).	drawing up collages and timelines **Post-Intervention: Fourth Phase**: 13 and 22 October 2020**:** semi-structured focus group interviews: Qualitative examination and transcription of datasets: 1 November 2020 to 31 March 2021
Data sources: Response charts	**Data sources:** Responses to the *CIP* narrative questions and the *MCM* inventory assessment results.	**Data sources:** Completed timelines, collages, and researcher's reflective notes.	**Data sources:** Semi-structured interviews' audio recordings	**Data sources:** Verbatim/written transcripts	April 2021–December 2022: Reporting of findings

Lochmiller and Lester (2017) emphasise the importance of linking emerging data to research questions, theoretical frameworks, and the techniques used. The table below summarises how the research questions link up with the data generation techniques in this study.

Table 3.4

Linking research questions with data generating techniques used to address research questions

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION	QUALITATIVE APPROACH AND PURPOSE	DOCUMENTATION
How can group-based career construction counselling inform the career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?	**The *CIP*:** Participants completed the qualitative interest questionnaire comprising questions about career categories, preferences, and life stories (narratives) to examine how and why changes in the participants' level of career development were facilitated	Written responses on the questionnaire
SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS	**QUALITATIVE APPROACH AND DESCRIPTION**	**DOCUMENT STRATEGY**
How can group-based career construction counselling inform intervention to promote the career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?	**Researcher's observations (in addition to the *CIP outcomes*)**: Personal experiences, reflections, and participants' behavioural patterns, actions, and emotions were observed to search for hidden meanings	Reflective notes in the researcher's journal
Which factors contribute to career developmental challenges among these learners	**Semi-structured interviews:** Conducted to elicit participants' insights regarding factors influencing their level of career development.	Recordings and interview transcripts
What were the main differences between learners' pre- and the post-intervention themes and sub-themes?	**Pre-intervention group discussions:** Conducted to determine the participants' insight on career knowledge and the world of work in relation to their level of career development and the need for career counselling **Post-intervention semi-structured** group interviews: Conducted to determine the	Written responses presented by groups on wall charts. Audio recordings and transcripts

	impact of the career construction counselling intervention	
How did group-based career construction intervention by means of the conduits of narratability, career adaptability, and intentionality influence learners' career development?	**Document study:** Participants' collages and timelines were examined to establish the extent to which career development was promoted through group-based career construction intervention. An extensive literature study was also done to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem.	Individual collages and timelines, transcripts, and literature sources, including journals, research papers, and government reports.

3.4.3 Career Interest Profile

In this study, the *CIP* was used to generate qualitative data from the participants to answer the primary research question discussed in 1.5.1: To what extent can group-based career- and life-construction counselling promote the career development of Grade 9 learners in a rural school? and the secondary research question in 1.5.2.1: How are the theoretical foundations of career development promoted by current guidance and counselling programmes?

The qualitative data responses were analysed to promote in-depth understanding of the meaning of group-based career and life-construction counselling as an intervention process in this study.

❖ **Rationale for the *Career Interest Profile***

The *CIP* was designed to help people narrate their own career stories, listen to themselves, and co-construct their careers with a career counsellor (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013a, 2013b). Based on its applicability to individuals and groups, and to people in marginalised societies who have received little to no career counselling at any level of their education, the *CIP* is chosen as the qualitative career counselling instrument used in this study. It was used to assist the research participants not only in choosing "appropriate careers" but also in constructing their career lives successfully (Maree, 2013). The author further cautions researchers not to rely only on psychometric results in the provision of career counselling to learners. He emphasises the importance of considering the subjective meanings people attach to their career and life stories as a key element in successful career choices, self- and career construction, and life designing (Wessels & Diale, 2017). Although English First Additional Language is used predominantly as the language of instruction in public schools, most learners in rural schools have very low proficiency in English. In light of the above, it became necessary to explain the meaning of the questions in a language the research participants understand

in order to obtain meaningful responses to the questions. The *CIP* questionnaire has four main parts as shown in the table below.

Table 3.5

Description of the CIP

PART	INFORMATION GATHERED	CAREER COUNSELLING PARADIGM	THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
Part 1: Biographical details	Participants provide personal details, family influences, and occupational information.	Career education	Developmental
Part 2: Career choice questions	Participants prioritise five liked and five disliked careers from a total of 19 from which they ultimately choose their dream career	Vocational/Career guidance	Differential
Part 3: Career categories	Participants prioritise their six most preferred and six least preferred careers (ranked in order of preference)	Vocational guidance	Differential
Part 4: Career story / Narrative questions	Career questions that relate to the self are asked to elicit participants' micronarratives and help them identify their major life themes.	Career counselling	Developmental and storied

Note: Adapted from Maree (2017)

3.4.4 Maree Career Matrix inventory

The *MCM* is a standardised career interest inventory that can be administered to learners at Grade 9 level with second-language English or Afrikaans proficiency. The test measures interests and self-estimates of confidence to follow certain careers. The purpose of the *MCM* is to assist in the career journey of people by assessing and charting their career interests and their skills confidence (Maree & Taylor, 2016). In a study conducted on 1,106 Grade 11 learners from public schools in the Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and North West provinces of South Africa, the Rasch analysis showed that items in the *MCM* interest scales measured a single construct, and all categories had reliability

coefficients above .70. The test–retest reliability for career interests and self-estimates of confidence about aptitude exceeded .70 for all categories; this is an indication of good stability of scores over time. The results suggest that the *MCM* is a standardised test with good psychometric qualities, is easy to use, takes relatively little time to administer, provides reliable and valid results, and can be administered to large groups with relative ease (J.G. Maree, personal communication, 29 January 2020).

The instrument consists of a list of 152 careers that fall into 19 career categories made up of eight careers each. The participants are requested to indicate the extent to which they are *interested* in each of the 152 careers using a three-point Likert rating scale: 2 = *Definitely interested*; 1 = *Unsure*; 0 = *Definitely not interested*. They also indicate their level of confidence regarding doing the work in a particular career, regardless of their actual ability to do the work (i.e. disregard their interest in doing the kind of work required and focus only on their confidence about being able to do the work in the particular career) using a three-point Likert rating scale: 2 = *I will definitely be able to do the work*; 1 = *Unsure*; 0 = *I will definitely not be able to do the work.* The *MCM* scores provide career counsellors and their clients with a starting point for clarifying and discussing career profiles in greater depth (Maree & Taylor, 2016*)*. The *MCM* is considered to be relevant for the study as it was developed as a South African instrument that is applicable to people who have little exposure to the world of careers.

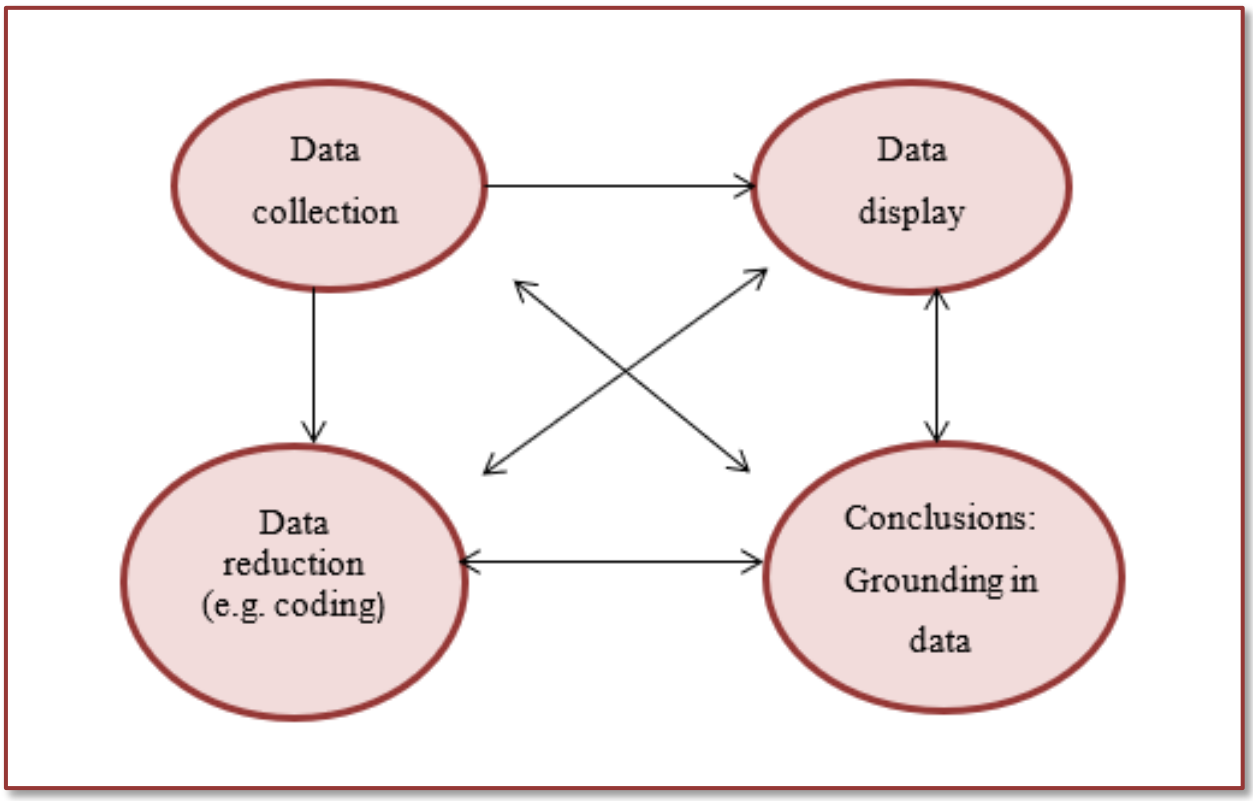
3.5 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is “primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories, identifying patterns and relationships among categories” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 395). The analysis process is described as non-linear, iterative, and recurring, because it drives the researcher back and forth between different stages of data collection and analysis until data themes and conclusions emerge from the data rather than being imposed prior to data collection. The qualitative researcher is viewed as a primary research instrument who employs multiple methodologies to understand human experience as it occurs in social life and to make sense of the patterns and themes (categories) emerging from the collected data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Following this premise, data triangulation was achieved by applying inductive and deductive analysis through the *MCM* inventory and the “Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation” template employed to merge prominent themes that emerged from the *CIP* narratives relating to the participants’ interest and level of confidence in specific careers. Through the inductive–deductive processes, I had to move back and forth, examining the data sources until comprehensive themes were established, while deductively, I revisited data sources to verify if emergent themes supported each other or whether I needed more additional information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Corbin and Strauss (2015) describe the qualitative analysis process as "mining" the data, because the researcher, similar to a miner, digs deeper into the ground to discover the treasures hidden beneath the surface. This perspective reinforces the subjective nature of qualitative analysis in agreement with Terre Blanche et al. (2012, p. 276), who state that "subjectivity is not considered the enemy of truth, but the very thing that makes it possible for us to understand personal and social realities emphatically." Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's non-linear "interactive" and "cyclical" model (2014) is used to describe the iterative data analysis process to be followed in the study.

Figure 3.1

Qualitative data analysis interactive model



Note: Adapted from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014)

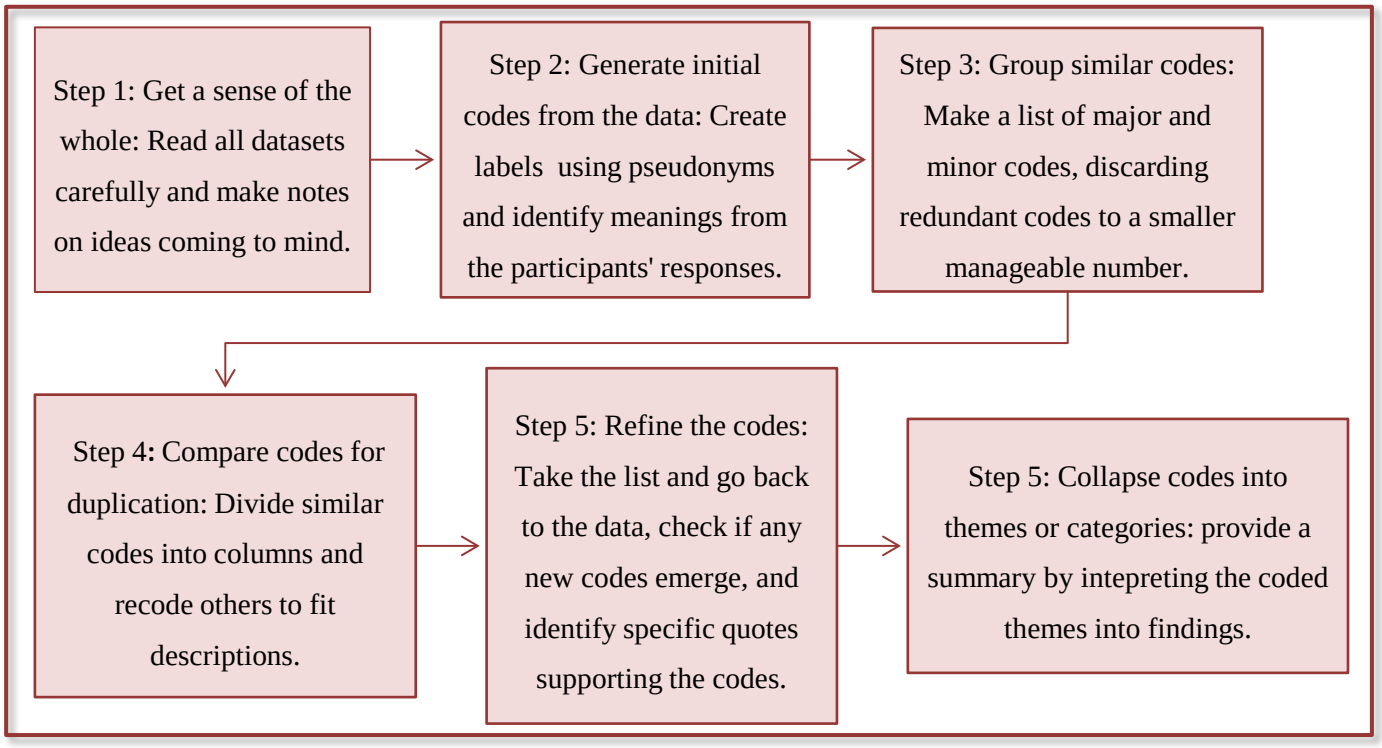
The above model illustrates that data analysis flows concurrently in three interwoven activities: data reduction, data display, and the drawing of conclusions, which occur before, during, and after data generation (while the above authors use the concept data condensation, I prefer the concept data reduction, implying the narrowing of datasets into manageable themes or categories). In this research, themes were coded, categorised, and interpreted as they emerged during the analysis process. I have been actively engaged with the data from the beginning of the data collection process, through the analysis up to the writing-up stage by listening to the semi-structured focus groups' audio recordings and reading and interpreting the participants' written responses to the narrative questions (Mertens, 2010).

3.5.1 Thematic analysis

Central to the iterative process is thematic analysis, which refers to the process of data coding through which data is reduced to a manageable size to facilitate reporting. It is a process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data where small pieces of data are segmented into chunks (parts) and analysed to create codes (McMillan & Schumacher, (2014). Codes are used to provide meaning in the form of quotations, relationships, context, participants' views, events, processes, and other actions or ideas. For the purpose of this study, I have employed the steps recommended by Creswell (2014) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014) for identifying and refining data codes, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2

Steps in the thematic analysis process



Note: Adapted from Creswell (2014 and McMillan and Schumacher (2014)

The qualitative data referred to above was gathered from the career construction intervention activities, pre-intervention group discussions, semi-focused group interviews, the narratives from the *CIP*, the *MCM* inventory results, and the notes from my reflective journal (Creswell, 2014).

3.5.2 Quantitative data analysis

While this research is primarily qualitative, the use of the *MCM* inventory as a source of data generation to assess the participants' interests and their level of confidence to follow certain careers necessitated the inclusion of this section of the quantitative analysis. The participants' responses

derived from this test were helpful in making inferences regarding their level of career development based on the assessment of their career interests and skills confidence (Maree & Taylor, 2016). By way of deductive analysis, I have used the four dimensions of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale[3] *(CAAS)* to look for evidence in the participants' narratives regarding their level of concern, curiosity, confidence, and control.

3.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Classifying my research study as qualitative necessitates that I discuss the strategies employed to ensure and verify the quality of the data analysed in my study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). The terms "reliability" and "validity" are used for quantitative data assurance while trustworthiness is used for qualitative data assurance (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Within the context of qualitative research, validity and reliability refer to the authenticity and credibility of the research findings (Lewis et al., 2013).

3.6.1 Qualitative quality assurance

Validity in educational research can be understood in terms of trustworthiness to describe the degree to which data collection, analysis, and findings are presented in a thorough and verifiable manner (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Within this context, validity is one of the hallmarks of sound qualitative research since it is based on ascertaining whether the findings are accurate from the researcher's perspective, participants, or the readers of a particular account. Therefore, qualitative researchers identify themselves with the world being researched and thus cannot be completely objective but remain subjective by viewing other people's perspectives as equally as valid as theirs (Cohen et al., 2018). Strategies to assess trustworthiness in this study include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (De Vos et al., 2011; Miles et al., 2014):

- Credibility (authenticity) refers to the truth value of the research findings (i.e. whether they are trustworthy and believable).
- Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the research process and methods across researchers over time (Di Fabio, 2012; Miles et al., 2014).
- Confirmability (neutrality) refers to the extent to which the research findings are objective and confirmed by other researchers (De Vos et al., 2011).
- Transferability refers to the applicability of the research findings to other contexts or settings.

Table 3.6

Strategies that were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data

CRITERIA	STRATEGY	ACTIONS TAKEN
Credibility	Triangulation	Multiple data sources were employed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to gather data that produced converging conclusions, including the *CIP*, *MCM* inventory, collages, and timelines. (All the procedures followed for generating meaningful data were explained in this chapter).
	Member checking	Follow-up semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with participants to allow them to comment on the identified themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
	Reflective journal	I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded personal observations, experiences, and behaviour patterns observed throughout the data generation process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).
	Prolonged engagement in the field	I spent four months engaged in data generation on site to obtain an in-depth understanding of the career construction processes and the setting of the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010).
Credibility and confirmability	External auditor	An ongoing review of the entire project was done in consultation with my supervisor, Professor J.G. Maree.
	External coder	The data was reviewed by an external coder in order to promote interrater validity (Cohen et al., 2018). I am aware that my subjective immersion in my data would have influenced my analysis of the data (at least to some extent, despite the fact that I took every conceivable step to analyse the data as objectively as I could). Therefore. I asked an experienced colleague with many years of experience to act as my external coder.[3] I took this step to enhance the confirmability and validity of the outcomes of my thematic data analysis. This step also bolstered my study's interrater (intercoder) validity (MacPhail et al., 2015; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

[3] A confirming letter from my external coder can be found on p. iv of this thesis.

CRITERIA	STRATEGY	ACTIONS TAKEN
Dependability	Presenting negative or discrepant information Verbatim responses	Because real-life perspectives do not always coalesce, contradictory evidence relating to emerging themes were presented as data in the section "discussion of findings" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I selected some quotes verbatim from participants' conversations that are important in answering the research questions posed in the study (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).
Confirmability	Clarify researcher's bias	Biases that could possibly influence the interpretation of the findings were addressed by clarifying my work experience and educational background upfront (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 16).
	Recorded data	Participants' conversations and the semi-structured interviews were recorded, listened to as and when the need arose, and transcribed after the sessions.
	Comprehensive data generation methods and procedures	The data obtained, the methods and procedures used, and the conclusions drawn were detailed systematically and documented explicitly to enable easy auditing by any outsider (Miles et al., 2014)
Transferability	Providing a rich and thick description	A detailed description of the research context is provided in the preliminary literature review section and the theoretical framework, illustrating what models guided the data generation and analysis process (De Vos et al., 2011).
	Drawing inferences	Generalisations were avoided as I focused on understanding participants' perceptions regarding the career construction phenomenon; instead, the concept of "particularity" was preferred, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 202), denoting "a particular description and themes developed in the context of a specific site."

Note: Compiled from Creswell and Creswell (2018), De Vos et al. (2011), Butler-Kisber (2010), and Miles et al. (2014).

3.6.2 Triangulation

Triangulation can be defined as combining multiple theories, methods, observations, and empirical evidence in research aimed at yielding a more accurate and comprehensive representation of research results (Silverman, 2014). The use of multiple methods of data generation is the most common form of triangulation to ensure the credibility of qualitative research based on the assumption that relying exclusively on one method of inquiry may bias or distort the researcher's picture of a particular reality being investigated (Cohen et al., 2018).

In addition to the multiple sources of data employed during the data generation process (*CIP*, collages, timelines, reflective journal, and the *MCM*), triangulation in this study was achieved by conducting follow-up semi-structured focus group interviews with participants to allow them to comment on the identified themes and patterns to verify truthful representation. My supervisor and external coder also provided expert advice by commenting on the interpretations of my findings to address any issues of bias that could impact the results. Silverman (2014) further cautions that triangulation is not a way of obtaining a true reading, but a strategy that adds rigour, breath, complexity, richness, and depth to an inquiry, thus data should not be used to adjudicate between accounts, but a strategy of using different methods of data generation to substantively yield the same or similar results. The more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher's confidence (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.7 RESEARCHER'S ROLE

It is crucial that researchers clearly state the various roles they assumed during the data generation process in the study, particularly because their role affects the type of data gathered. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) state that, as situations change, roles may also change. Some of the things that may necessitate change in the researcher's role include the need for language fluency with the participants, interaction to obtain in-depth data, establishing a social relationship to promote rapport, depending on the degree and intensity of interaction. In this study, my responsibilities as a researcher included carrying out the following procedures (Cohen et al., 2018; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- **Insider/outsider role:** My role as a researcher was that of an insider and outsider (also called partial participation) in that I started as an outsider when I first came to the school, and gradually changed to that of an insider as the study progressed, and this promoted the development of rapport and trust with the participants. Moreover, being aware of my academic background in educational psychology and my work as a career guidance practitioner, I took additional caution to maintain my responsibility as a primary data generation instrument, as I had to switch to the role of an observer participant as and when the need arose. As an observer participant, I always kept a reflective journal in which I recorded my personal reactions to participants' verbal and non-verbal responses, my own feelings, and responses to emerging data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Furthermore, the participants' low proficiency in English as First Additional Language speakers posed a challenge to communication and necessitated the translation of most concepts into their home language to facilitate understanding and avoid misinterpretation of certain concepts (Silverman, 2014).

- **Informed consent and assent:** Written informed consent was obtained from the participants and their parents/guardians to take part in the research study, and for the use of recorded and written data presented by the participants.
- **Psychological welfare**: To avoid role confusion and safeguard the well-being of the participants, I ensured that a qualified educational psychologist was always available on site to provide professional counselling as an intervention to participants who could manifest emotional behaviours in response to their participation in the study.
- **Facilitating research activities**: I was responsible for facilitating the career construction intervention programme, including explaining the purpose of my study to all role players, making observations, facilitating the semi-structured focus group interviews, and analysing and interpreting the resultant data.
- **Compliance with ethical rules:** The ethical rules as specified by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria were adhered to, including being a sensitive observer who recorded phenomena faithfully (Maree, 2016). I was cautious about the fact that plagiarising, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet my or the audience's needs is unethical (Stangor, 2011).
- **Reporting and storing data**: I remained responsible for ensuring that raw data and other materials (such as the details of procedures and instruments) were kept in a safe place, so that no duplication or piecemeal publications of the same data are done (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- **Researcher biases and assumptions:** I remained aware of my own biases that could influence the research findings by keeping a reflective journal for the entire duration of the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).
- **Creating a conducive environment for learning:** It was part of my obligation to respect the research site by minimising disruptions as far as possible to ensure that teaching and learning were not jeopardised during the implementation of the intervention programme.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Strict adherence to ethical standards in planning and conducting qualitative research is critical not only for the welfare of participants but also for maintaining effective professional conduct in behavioural research as a scientific discipline (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Stangor, 2011; Terre Blanche et al., 2012). The following ethical issues were considered significant in ensuring that participants' rights, dignity, and sensitivities were maintained throughout the study.

- **Permission to conduct the study**: Written approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, outlining the purpose of the research and the techniques and procedures that were used. The Head of the MDE also issued written permission to conduct the study in the selected school, whose principal granted approval as well.
- **Informed consent**: Written permission was obtained from the participants and their parents/guardians to participate in the research at the school. The main purpose of the research, the risks and benefits involved, and the methods and procedures followed to minimise potential risks were explained in advance, including the fact that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time (Lewis et al., 2013).
- **Confidentiality and anonymity**: Participants' real identity was not by any means disclosed, including reporting in ways that could reveal their identity or allow them to be traced; instead, codes were used to ensure anonymity (Cohen et al., 2018; Stangor, 2011). All information obtained during the study was kept safe and private with the understanding that it should neither be passed on nor discussed with anybody else in any form that can connect or identify individuals.
- **Honesty and trust**: It was my sole obligation to honour ethical commitments and agreements based on honesty and openness aimed at enhancing a healthy researcher–participant relationship as well as considering how knowledge gained through research should be used (Miles et al., 2014).
- **Protection from physical and psychological harm**: Care was taken to ensure that the participants were always safe, and I was cautious in dealing with emotive and distressing topics that could arouse feelings and thoughts of discomfort during the intervention (Stangor, 2011). To avoid role confusion and safeguard the well-being of the participants, a psychologist was always available during the intervention sessions to provide professional counselling for any behavioural and emotional changes as the need arose. My sole function remained that of researcher.
- **Collaborative partnership:** Serves to ensure that the study conducted does not only address the researcher's needs but also benefits the participants and the target community, as such it was important that I became sensitive to the traditional values and cultural practices of the community (Terre Blanche et al., 2012).
- **Social value:** The problem being researched and the planned interventions bring about knowledge that will be of value to the participants and the community (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). Hopefully, the participants' experiences in the career construction intervention during

this study have promoted growth in their level of career development and enhanced their individual sense of self.

- **Scientific validity:** For research to yield reliable and valid outcomes, the research design, methodology, and data analysis applied in a study should be rigorous, justifiable, and feasible and able to answer the research questions satisfactorily (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). Unreliable and/or invalid methods are unethical, as they result in the wasting of resources and inconvenience and expose participants to risk unnecessarily. In this study, a comprehensive plan was in place to apply the methodology, generate the data, and conduct the analysis, while being guided by my supervisor in arriving at valid and reliable outcomes.
- **Independent ethical review**: The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria provided ethical clearance for the research study after a research proposal was submitted.
- **Communication of results**: The participants were informed prior to the study that the research findings would only be made available upon request, and that the full research report would be stored in the University of Pretoria's archives.

3.9 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH

The qualitative nature of my research involved predominant inductive data generation and analysis processes, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings. Every effort was made to provide thick and rich descriptions of the research processes and procedures (Sections 3.4 and 3.5) regarding the participants' experiences of career construction in a rural community in such a way that other researchers may recognise similarities in their own contexts (Henning et al, 2004). Other limitations that arose in the study include the following:

- The data in the study was collected from a small group of learners from a disadvantaged, rural socio-economic background that may not be representative of the entire population (Stangor, 2011). The participants' views on career construction might not be typical of all Grade 9 South African learners, since South Africa is a culturally diverse nation. Therefore, it was noted that, should the research be repeated under similar conditions, it might not yield the same results as those obtained in the study.
- Effective implementation of the programme requires people who are trained in career construction, which had not been done at the time of this study; however, the MDE had since initiated the process of training Life Orientation teachers incrementally (per district) from 2020.

- Inadequate funding had impacted negatively on the provision of adequate resources (i.e. lack of computers and internet access and difficulty with the procurement of the questionnaires): the number of participants were limited to 50 in consideration of the costs of the resources (i.e. the *CIP* and the *MCM*) without compromising the intended efforts of uncovering deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of the career construction processes, as Cohen et al. (2018, p. 113) emphasise that "the process of balancing benefits against possible costs is chiefly a subjective one". To achieve this ideal, sound decisions regarding the research content and procedures were made in accordance with professional and personal values. In this study, the lack of computers and access to internet confined the research to the use of manual copies, which could have been fast-tracked by online participation.
- **Dual roles**: Although I was from a similar cultural background to the participants, switching between English as language of communication to siSwati home language could have influenced the originality of meaning during the explanation of some concepts. Consequently, the participants' insights might not be an authentic reflection of their intended interpretations/thoughts as expressed in their responses (i.e. it is uncertain whether the intervention could have yielded the same or different results if participants had used their home language in communication).
- **Longer time taken in the research field due to unforeseen circumstances:** The recess during the teacher strike in the district at the start of the research, along with the Covid-19 lockdown, resulted in the extension of the data generation period and ultimately the entire study. Such extensions were unfortunate and undesirable, since we had to recap each time we resumed, because the participants might have either forgotten where they were before the break or lost the zeal to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology used in the study, including the research design, data generation and analysis processes and procedures, and the strategies that were applied to enhance reliability, validity, and trustworthiness. This was followed by quality assurance techniques and ethical considerations that guided the study. In the next chapter (Chapter 4), the results will be presented.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

`4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of group-based career construction counselling on the career development of learners in a rural school. In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology as well as the various data generation and analysis processes were discussed. Data was generated through qualitative research methods (discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2). Qualitative data was obtained from a variety of data sources, including pre-intervention group discussions, the narratives of the *CIP*, collages, timelines, and the semi-structured focus group interview transcripts. In this chapter, I present an overview of the participants' background information and discuss the impact that Covid-19 had on my research, as well as the challenges faced by South African public schools as a result of Covid-19, and the relevant intervention measures. This is followed by the qualitative analysis process and the presentation of findings relating to the different themes and sub-themes obtained from the different datasets. Lastly, concluding remarks are made.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Convenience and purposive non-probability sampling were used to select a group of 15 Grade 9 participants, both boys and girls, between the ages of 14 and 18[4] from Lubombo Secondary School; there were 50 participants in the initial research process but this number gradually decreased to 15 by the end of the study. This was due to some participants having withdrawn from the process, since the study took much longer to complete due to the national Covid-19 lockdown. All participants in the group came from the same ethnic group and speak the same home language, were in Grade 9 at the time of the study, and were located in a typically low socio-economic rural community where sheer poverty is a daily reality. This probably explains why their level of English proficiency was profoundly low.

All 15 participants partook in the group-based career construction intervention programme over a period of 15 sessions (initially planned for nine), while simultaneously participating in their traditional Life Orientation lessons and the post-intervention reflections at the end of the study. It is worth mentioning that the number of sessions and the duration and sequence of the intervention programme did not materialise as initially outlined in the data collection plan due to contextual factors and unforeseen circumstances that arose in the process. Some sessions took longer than

[4] Detailed descriptive characteristics (statistics) Table 3.1, p. 73.

anticipated and certain activities had to be postponed and realigned by adding more sessions to make up for the lost sessions. I must indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic was the most traumatic and devastating experience endured in our life history at that time, having impacted not only education but all sectors. Eventually, the entire world had to suddenly adopt new lifestyles and coping mechanisms as part of personal psychosocial adaptation, as there was no professional intervention readily available. In light of these experiences, it became necessary to add the section below in which I discuss the impact that Covid-19 had on my research and education in general, with special emphasis on public schools, since my research site fell within this category. The discussion will focus on the following:

- The impact of Covid-19 within my research context
- Specific challenges faced by public schools within the context of Covid-19
- Interventions to make up for lost time

4.2.1 Impact of Covid-19 within my research context

The abrupt onset of Covid-19 in March 2020 and the subsequent total national lockdown coincided with the first week of my data generation process at the research site. Due to several restrictions introduced to manage the pandemic, I was compelled to wait for a period of five months, since all schools and various economic sectors were completely closed. The reopening of schools was staggered per grade, prioritising Grades 12, 11, and 7 until all grades resumed late in 2020. Many changes were introduced in the schools' daily operations that led to the restructuring of the school attendance timetable to accommodate social distancing in classes. This arrangement compelled all schools to make learners' attendance rotational each week per grade to adhere to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Containment and Management of Covid-19 for Schools and School Communities (DBE, 2020a), which regulated compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of this research. Therefore, no classroom could accommodate more than 20–25 learners at any given time, which implied that more sessions had to be arranged to comply with the new regulations. These arrangements negatively affected my research to the extent that I could not complete my research within the prescribed duration *(a very harsh experience indeed that I never anticipated)*.

As the country went through the different lockdown stages in the varied alert levels between 1 and 5, travelling between local, provincial, and national borders were strictly prohibited (particularly during alert levels 3–5). Consequently, I was unable to execute the activities listed below during the stipulated time frames, and my research was adversely compromised and suffered the following effects:

- **Visits to the research site and lack of contact with participants:** My research came to a complete halt from March to the end of August 2020 (when the country moved from lockdown alert level 5 to 3), since my visit to the research site was not possible due to the restrictions on interprovincial travelling and movements within local municipalities instituted at the time (South Africa News, 2020). As a result, I had a complete lack of contact with the participants, as schools were not allowed to welcome visitors during this time.
- **Participants' intervention programme (September–October 2020):** The intervention programme had to be resumed in the first week of September 2020, after engaging in serious negotiations with the school principal and committing myself to the strictest compliance with all Covid-19 protocols as per the SOP for the Containment and Management of Covid-19 for Schools and School Communities (DBE, 2020a). The postponement of the research to late that year influenced the pace of my research in that I had to accelerate the data generation process to complete it within two months before the commencement of the annual examinations. I also noted with concern a general decline in the participants' morale, which was evident in their irregular attendance; as such, the research strategies relating to the sample size were compromised.
- **Access to the university library:** The limited access to the University of Pretoria from alert level 5 to 2 (March–September 2020) remained a cause of concern as many of its services were not available until the end of September 2020 when the country moved to alert level 1 (Kupe, 2020). Some functions gradually opened in October 2020 when the country moved to alert level 1, along with relaxed restrictions, with some library personnel working from home. In the process, students had to rely on online consultations and e-access to support material.
- **Face-to-face meetings with the supervisor (From March 2020 until the completion of this research):** It took some courage to switch from the traditional face-to-face meetings to the new virtual platforms to ensure that regular communication was maintained with my supervisor. It was a bittersweet experience to gradually adjust to the status quo; with the help of my supervisor, we managed to meet successfully via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, and he consistently emailed me recorded copies of our discussions.

In addition to the general impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, I was personally adversely affected in the following ways:

- **Delayed completion of my studies:** Failure to execute the data gathering process between March and August 2020 derailed my studies and forced me to apply for extension for an additional year, which was unfortunately not approved. For this reason, I had to register anew in the subsequent two years (2021–2022), for which I was psychologically unprepared.

Fortunately, my supervisor, family members, and colleagues encouraged me to soldier on to ensure that I finish my studies regardless of the circumstances.

- **Financial constraints:** The extension of my studies increased my financial responsibility to pay tuition costs for the additional two years, which I had not planned for as I was paying all study fees on my own due to lack of external funding.
- **Load shedding:** The onset of load shedding (stages 6 to 4, 3 and 2) at different times in 2021 hampered the pace of my research, particularly October–November 2021, during which we experienced lengthy intervals (constituting hours) without electricity. This resulted in an irregular work pace, which affected my schedule for submissions to my supervisor.

I deemed it necessary to share the above information with the reader to provide insight regarding the impact that the different Covid-19 alert levels had on my research and not assume that the reader knows and understands the disruptions caused by the pandemic. It is also worth noting the long-term effects to be endured across the world in the next few years.

4.2.2 Specific challenges faced by South African public schools as a result of Covid-19

In this section, I reflect on the challenges related to the impact of Covid-19 on South African public schools by drawing from lessons learnt during the government's response to the pandemic as a springboard for addressing similar challenges that could arise in future. It is an undisputable fact that the onset of the pandemic exposed the harsh realities that most rural schools have endured since the dawn of democracy, as stated by Legotlo (2014), who described most South African schools as "starvation prisons for rural folks" (p. 8), particularly those in remote areas. Teaching and learning were more adversely affected in rural public schools than urban and private schools, and this occurred in the following ways:

- **Lack of access to quality education:** Learners in rural schools, especially the poorest of the poor, remained marginalised, despite passed policies, as there has not been provision of adequate resources and quality education for all learners. This gap became evident in public schools during the lockdown period, while independent and well-resourced schools managed to continue with online learning at the time. The school in which I conducted my research suffered similar disruptions in that learners could not access online learning and thus had to stay home and wait until schools were reopened along with the new rotational timetables instituted by the DBE at the time. Following this challenge, I was compelled to suspend my research and wait until the school deemed it convenient to welcome my resumption with the intervention programme. While schools lost considerable learning time through the rotational attendance, skipping some days or weeks to comply with the social distancing norms, or even

abruptly closing due to Covid-19 cases at school (Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021), I also felt like a victim of Covid-19, as I was trapped in those circumstances without progress.

- **Large class sizes and physical distancing requirements contrasted with the practical reality in public schools:** As per the DBE (2013), the acceptable norm for a class size is 1:40 (except for Grade R, which is 1:30); this had to be revised to 1:25 or less per class in order to comply with requirement of 1.5 m physical distancing as per the previously mentioned SOP (DBE, 2020a) that governed compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the challenge of lack of classrooms, overcrowding, and the poor state of school buildings, schools were compelled to operate in shifts, following timetables that suited their context and functionality, either opening biweekly or on specific days a week, or using the platoon system, as the traditional model of daily attendance was practically possible. In many cases, the shortages of teaching staff became evident, since some teachers preferred not to attend due to comorbidities and age.

Following these new developments, I had to revise my research schedule so that participants attended on Saturdays, since my programme could not be accommodated in the daily school timetable. At the same time, I had to ensure that each session did not exceed two hours as per the Covid-19 protocols, while guarding against compromising the quality of the intervention processes, and I strived to finish all sessions by the end of October 2020 before the commencement of the final school examinations. These arrangements adversely affected my research in that the participants' attendance became irregular and the number was reduced from 50 to 15, and it ultimately compromised the research methodology initially planned. Participants' irregular school attendance coincided with the national reports of learners' high absenteeism and dropout rate in many schools due to the impact of the pandemic, particularly among learners with weak learning foundations (DBE, 2021).

- **The implementation of online education and its practicability within my research context:** As part of the developments in addressing the Covid-19 challenges faced in the education sector, the DBE responded by introducing online learning through partnering with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from April 2020 in the provision of "multi-media Covid-19 Learner Support" that included the broadcasting of content across the three national SABC-TV channels and 13 radio stations (with online support), as well as dedicated education channels on the DSTV and Open View broadcast satellite services (Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021, p. 20; DBE, 2020b; Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020). Cellular service providers (MTN, Telkom, Vodacom, and Cell-C) also declared certain websites and learning portals to be zero-rated (i.e. data free), so that learners could access a variety of learning content at low costs (Shepherd &

Mohohlwane, 2021). While these initiatives are highly commended, they also experienced setbacks, including a lack of access to electronic devices and connectivity in a number of homes and under-resourced schools from disadvantaged backgrounds who could not afford online learning platforms. Only learners from wealthy families benefitted, and continue to benefit, from online learning.

- **Regarding the practicability of online education with the learners in my research context:** The school in which I conducted my research is classified as Quintile 1, since it is located in a remote rural village with limited access to the resources that are necessary to create a safe learning environment. Within the South African context, quintile schools refer to the ranking of schools based on the unemployment and literacy rates of the community in which they are located, ranging from Quintile 1 to 5. The Quintile 1, 2, and 3 rankings refer to impoverished schools, with Quintile 1 being the poorest. Therefore, schools servicing the poorest communities (Quintile 1, 2, and 3) have been declared "no fee schools", meaning that no compulsory school fees may be charged. Quintile 4 and 5 are ranked the "least poor" with the most resources, where the learners' parents earn good salaries (DHET, 2013).

Some participants were using daily scholar transport to and from school, which limited my schedule to the confines of the typical school timetable, which ultimately did not work until we shifted attendance to Saturdays. I must state that when the first hard lockdown was implemented, I had already started with my data gathering process in March 2020; therefore, I had to wait until August 2020 due to the sporadic closures and opening intervals, which were accompanied by several disruptions since the school was entirely dependent on physical contact with the learners due to lack of connectivity and technological resources such as computers, laptops, and smart boards. Very few learners had smart phones; therefore, I was compelled to use manual print versions of resources. Consequently, my research was delayed until my prescribed study period with the institution lapsed. Should the school have had the necessary technological resources and connectivity, my research could have continued alongside the online learning platforms without being affected by the disruptions.

- **The discrepancy between the real situation in schools and the applicability of Covid-19 protocols:** The fact that my research coincided with the onset of the pandemic afforded me an opportunity to explore whether the Covid-19 protocols were feasibly applicable as was expected in schools. As a career guidance education official in the Mpumalanga Province, I was tasked with the responsibility of monitoring schools' compliance with the Covid-19 protocols and providing support where necessary, I seized the opportunity to make observations regarding the realities on the ground. During the monitoring process, I observed

instances where physical distancing was compromised to accommodate the large number of learners in the number of classrooms available. This is confirmed by Spaull and Van der Berg (2020), who found that at least half of South African learners were unable to comply with distancing rules due to overcrowded classrooms, and the hazardous and unhygienic conditions experienced prevented some schools from meeting basic Covid-19 safety requirements, including a lack of running water, sufficient classrooms, and proper toilets. Much still needs to be done to explore further innovative ways to ensure that all schools receive sufficient resources to create safe learning spaces for all young people.

- The same conditions mentioned above negatively influenced the pace of the research intervention sessions reported on in this study and prolonged the duration of the entire research project, as my research site was no exception. It was a painful experience to turn back at times without meeting participants, regardless of prior appointments duly confirmed with the school principal or delegated person in the school. Such instances adversely affected the participants' level of interest in that, gradually, fewer of them showed up in the subsequent sessions until they completely withdrew from participation. This resulted in participants leaving intervention activities prematurely without completion, hence the small number of participants at the end of the programme. For this reason, all the data sources with incomplete intervention activities were excluded from the data analysis process, which compromised the research process.

It is also interesting to note that, in some instances, the challenges turned out to be catalysts for change that sparked positive intervention measures to combat the impact of the pandemic, including the following:

- **Making up for lost schooling time:** The DBE introduced national supplementary remote learning campaigns aimed at supporting the 2021 cohort of Grade 12 learners and the learners in the General Education and Training Band (GET) from Grades R to 9 with supplementary support content to enable them to catch up with the learning that was lost. This helped them to develop crucial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values during the academic year. These campaigns included the provision of digital and non-digital learning resources through the DBE TV on Open View Channel 122, SABC 1, and DSTV Catch-Up, YouTube channels, and digital and mobile chat platforms (DBE, 2021). The WOZA Matrics 2021 Catch-Up Programme and the Tswelopele Campaign are other initiatives established by the DBE in collaboration with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT).
- **Vaccination programme:** The DBE efforts to vaccinate teachers and learners above the age of 18 since 2021 has also allowed schools to remain open for daily attendance, thereby preventing further disruptions to learning (DBE, 2021).

While the department's initiatives are highly commended, the school at which I conducted my research, among many others, could not benefit much from the remote learning interventions, since they lacked the relevant technological resources to do so. As a result, I had to continue visiting the school in person for reflection sessions (January–March 2021) as part of concluding my research project, which could have been done remotely if the school had access to viable connectivity for online media platforms. From this exercise, I also learnt that, as a researcher, my relationship with participants should not be abruptly cut off, even after the research processes have ended; instead, providing continued support becomes an element of inspiration in the participants' lives.

4.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Qualitative analysis in this study is primarily inductive, iterative, non-linear, and recurring, because I was compelled to move back and forth between entire datasets and continue with analysis until the reporting process. All data sources were first transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, described as a process of segmenting and labelling text into smaller chunks (parts) and analysed to make codes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). This was done by drawing on the participants' lived experiences to make sense of the meaning of those experiences as they present themselves within the multiple data sources, namely the pre-intervention group discussions, the *CIP*, *MCM* inventory, collages, timelines, and semi-focused group interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The analysis process was aimed at describing, evaluating, and interpreting the impact of group-based career construction counselling on learners' career development.

Thematic data analysis was used in this study[5] because it allows the researcher to combine both reflexive and deductive analyses, as adapted from Jebb et al. (2017), who argue that scientific progress should be optimised by striking a balance between deductive and inductive approaches and avoiding applying one approach to the exclusion of all others. Implementing one approach to the exclusion of all others can, according to Tukey (1980, p. 23), be described as "madness". My efforts at making sense of the data can therefore best be described as inductive–deductive.[6] I concur with the view expressed by Bernard and Ryan (2010, p. 107) that "no matter how hard we try, there are no purely inductive or deductive studies". Inductively identified themes emerged naturally from the participants' responses, as drawn from the different data sources, while deductively, evidence was drawn from the participants' narratives relating to the four constructs of the *CAAS*,[7] namely concern, curiosity, confidence, and control, which were repeatedly mentioned by the participants. However, I had been mindful of my role as a primary research instrument to make sense of emerging patterns and themes from the raw data rather than only matching existing theories.

[5] Table 3.6, p. 83. Steps in the thematic data analysis process.
[6] I am aware that the "deductive" facet of my work comprises only a small aspect of the data analysis process.
[7] Career Adapt-Abilities Scale – South African Form (Maree, 2012).

In this study, data was generated by first engaging in open group discussions with the participants prior to their participation in the career construction intervention activities, which included responding to the narrative questions in the *CIP*, drawing collages and timelines, the semi-focused group interviews, and the post-intervention reflective discussions conducted at the end of the intervention programme.[8]

Following the inductive processes, I used my reflective journal to record notes based on the observations made, analyse and systematically organise the data by identifying patterns, and allow codes and themes to evolve. The analysis process involved combining related codes into themes and sub-themes with short descriptions or labels which were narrowed down to refined groups until no further themes or sub-themes were identified. During the process of identifying themes, I used the *MCM* inventory and the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, through inductive–deductive analysis, to explore the meaning of emerging themes relating to their interest and level of confidence in specific careers.

In this way, the *MCM* and the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template form served to triangulate the analysed data from the *CIP* in that the prominent themes that overlapped in both the *CIP* and *MCM* were merged in the template to avoid duplication. A coder (Dr Cook, a registered Educational Psychologist and a qualified PhD researcher in career construction) was requested to verify the identified codes, themes, and sub-themes and either confirm or refute them to promote interrater validity. These themes were substantiated in the analysis process by including some examples of the participants' responses.

4.4 REFERENCING SOURCES OF DATA

4.4.1 Coding system for referencing data sources

The coding system applied to report the participants' responses ascribed from the transcribed data is described below (see Table 4.1 below) to help the reader follow the participants' responses regarding the identified themes from eight data rich sources, namely the pre-intervention group discussions, *CIP*, *MCM*, Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, collages, timelines, semi-structured focused group interviews, and my reflective journal for which alphabetical letter codes (A–H) have been used as referencing. Three different coding systems have been applied to the relevant types of data sources used.

[8] The intervention objectives and linking activities are summarised in Table 3.4, pp. 77–78.

Table 4.1

Data referencing and coding system

Data source	Description	Participant Number/ Group name	Page number	Line number
Pre-intervention group discussions	Discuss challenges in the world of work and the need for career adaptability.	Group name (GA–GF)	1–3	1–79
CIP	**Narrative questions: Parts 1–4 explore individual interests and abilities**. Part 1: Biographical information (B1), including two sub-sections on family influences and occupational information. Part 2: Questions related to career choice (most liked and least liked careers) and dream career (B2) Part 3: Six career category preferences (B3) Part 4: Career story narratives (B4): 15 open-ended life-story questions	Participants number 1, 3, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, & 34.		
MCM	Career questionnaire exploring individual interest and level of confidence for each chosen career, sub-divided into eight career categories.			
Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template	Tool for integrating individual's career information into a concrete career plan by reflecting on themes that emerged during the exploration activities *(CIP & MCM)* and their meaning.			
Collages	Construct own new life stories and draft life plans.			
Timelines	Highlight significant events by reflecting on past experiences to make sense of the present and consider shaping a meaningful future.			
Semi-focused group interviews	Share experiences and new discoveries regarding their career stories.		1–8	1–258
Reflective Journal	Record my reflections on the patterns and themes of experiences observed.		1–50	Different lines

Note: Adapted from Maree (2020, p. 75)

The referencing of data sources is represented by the letters A–H referred to above and different digit-codes grouped into three categories relevant to the type of data source quoted outlined as follows:

For the pre-intervention group discussions, semi-structured focus group interviews, the reflective journal, and a four-digit code was used (a letter code and three digits), in which the first letter refers to the type of data source, the second number refers to the participant, the third to the page number, and the fourth to the line(s) where the responses could be found. For the pre-intervention group discussions, however, the group names GA to GF were used instead of participant numbers, where the letter GA stands for Group A, GB for Group B, GC for Group C, GD for Group D, etc., since feedback presentations were done by one representative on behalf of each group using wall charts. Therefore, a complete reference for the pre-intervention group discussions includes the first code A (Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4) – addressing different career aspects (Table 4.1) to help individuals identify major life themes linked to their career interests, personal life experiences, and narratives, referring to the data source – while the second code refers to the group's name, the third to the page number, and the fourth to the line number/s (see Table 4.1).

Three data codes have been used for the *CIP* (a letter code and two digits) in which the first letter refers to the data source, the second to the participant, and the third to the section of the *CIP*, detailing each participant's response to certain career aspects as directed by the question in a particular section. There are four parts in the *CIP* in which they reflect on themselves and construct their own lives better.

For the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, the collages, and the timelines, I have used two codes (a letter code and one digit) in which the letter refers to the data source and the number refers to the participant's number, as it is not possible to allocate a page and a line number for these sources, since they are depicted as illustrations, and the greater part of the above-mentioned template is presented in a tabular form. For practical purposes, individual participants were assigned sequential numerical codes throughout; the first participant was coded IP1, the second IP2, and the third IP3 until the last as can be seen in the following examples:

- **Example 1:** The four-digit code (G, IP22,1, 16–17) means that the response refers to the data source G (semi-structured focus group interviews), participant number 22, page 1, line numbers 16–18, "*In addition, I also even did not know what is the meaning of the concept 'career', I was just coming to school without knowing which direction to take in life.*" For the pre-intervention group discussions, the four-digit code (A, GA, 1, 25–26) refers to the pre-intervention group discussions data source A, the group name Group A, page 1, and lines

number 25 to 26, *"If people are poor but they have grade 12 qualification* (sic) *must be given a certain amount per month since they are bread winners."*

- **Example 2:** The three-digit code (B, IP16, 1) means that the response refers to the data source B *(CIP)*, intervention participant number 16, Part 1: *"I like to deal with pills; like to do study work on time; like to study; like to present in front of people; like to communicate or solve problems."*
- **Example 3:** The two-digit code (E, IP16) means that the response refers to data source E (collage), intervention participant 16, *"My greatest fear is that I could die or burn inside my family's house."*

4.4.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the different themes and sub-themes presented in the study are discussed below.

Table 4.2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1

THEME 1: CAREER DEVELOPMENT		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Career exploration	Any comments[9] expressed by participants indicating an awareness of career information and decision making regarding their future careers. Example: (B, IP18, 2): *"I like to explore things, (to fly); to teach children to know how to feel to be a learner; I like to work hard; like to work with electricity; to know about money."*	Any comments expressed by participants not indicating an awareness of career information and decision making regarding their future careers. Example: (B, IP30, 4): *"You help me to choose and understand about the setfkt (sic) [certificate], what is a career, I thout (sic) [thought] that I will not choose the career that I just choose but I did choose my best career that was helpfully to me."*

[9] Comments refer to written phrases, sentences, or words expressed by participants, as presented in the different data sources.

THEME 1: CAREER DEVELOPMENT		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Participant displays an understanding of the nature of the desired career in the reasons provided for their five most preferred careers: pilot, teacher, welder, electric engineer, and bank teller.	Participant displays lack of awareness regarding career information.
Subject choice	Any comments expressed by participants indicating the impact that their subject choices have on their desired careers. Example: (B, IP22,2): "*My dream career is to become a doctor bcos I perform very much (well) in Mathematics, and am not scared of blood.*"	Any comments expressed by participants not indicating the impact of their subject combination on their desired careers. Example: (B, IP30, 2): "*My dream career is to be a Software Engineering because they earn good salaries and because sometimes when I deal with electricity I enjoy and fill (sic) relaxed, I believe that everything is possible and I will prove it.*"
	For one to become a doctor, Mathematics, among other subjects such as Science, is a prerequisite.	Relevant subjects not mentioned/considered in his career.
Career fields	Any comments participants made indicating knowledge of career fields. Example: (G, IP32, 3, 97–99): "*I have learned that there are many careers out there, because you know mam, we grew up knowing that the only careers available are jobs like Doctors, Police,*	Any comments participants made not indicating knowledge of career fields. Example: (E, IP32): "*In future I wonna see myself graduating in school. meaning that I will work very hard to reach my dream.*"

THEME 1: CAREER DEVELOPMENT		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Nurses, things like that, but now I know that we are not limited." Increased career knowledge.	No reference to any kind of career to be pursued to attain his goal.
The value of education	Any comments participants made indicating the importance of education as a motivating factor in improving their lives. Example: (B, IP3, 4): *"Education is the key to success."* Strong sense of hope and confidence that things will get better through education.	Any comments participants made not indicating the importance of education as a motivating factor in improving their lives. Example: (E, 1P22): *"I want to have these (sic) fancy house and have a nice life for me and my husband."* Participant believes that material things will improve their life.

Table 4.3

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2

THEME 2: CAREER ADAPTABILITY		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Concern	Any comments participants expressed indicating concerns for future plans and willingness to explore personal strengths and weaknesses that could impact their career decisions. Example: (B, IP16, 2): *"I like to deal with pills; like to do study work on time; to present in front of people; communicate or solve problems."* (reasons for liking pharmacology, teaching, and TV presenter) *"… am scared of people who are sick; scared to fly; am scared of injured people"* (reasons for not liking nursing, pilot, and doctor). Ability to explore the impact of interests, capabilities, and incapabilities towards regarding the choice of career.	Any comments participants expressed not indicating concerns for future plans and willingness to explore personal strengths and weaknesses that could impact their career decisions. Example: (E, IP34): *"I want to marry my future wifey cause (sic- wife because) I want to make my wife happy."* Values marriage in improving life (education not mentioned).
Control	Any comments participants expressed indicating that they have control over their own lives and are accountable for their own actions.	Any comments participants expressed not indicating that they have control over their own lives and are accountable for their own actions.

THEME 2: CAREER ADAPTABILITY		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Example: (F, IP18): *"I learned that I have to believe in myself, trust myself, have confidence. I realized that I don't have to live my life to make people happy. I have to live my life truthful, love myself just the way I am."* Participant is the master of her own life.	Example: (E, IP24): *"My greatest fear is that I may get ill before achieving my dream."* Feeling of insecurity and lack of control.
Curiosity	Any comments participants expressed indicating an interest in exploring opportunities to venture into the unknown. Example: (B, IP18, 2): *"I like to explore things (to fly); to teach children to know how to feel to be a learner; I like to work hard."* Participant displays an interest in exploring possibilities and taking risks.	Any comments participants expressed not indicating an interest in exploring opportunities to venture into the unknown. Example: (F, IP18): *"Sometimes I felt neglected by my parents and my friends. I was going crazy, … … I notice it was painful."* Struggled and lost zeal for life.
Confidence	Any comments participants expressed indicating assertiveness, determination, and ability to achieve their personal goals, thus enhancing their positive self-concept. Example: (B, 1P18, 4): *"I am kind and I am a go-getter, and if I do something wrong, I can face the consequences."*	Any comments participants expressed not indicating assertiveness, determination, or the ability to achieve their personal goals, thus enhancing their positive self-concept. Example: (B, IP3, 4): *"Other people see me as… giving up when doing things."*

THEME 2: CAREER ADAPTABILITY		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Participant is the master of her own life and has the ability to take responsibility for her own actions.	Lack of motivation and persistence, participant succumbs to other people's opinions about her own life; the phrase displays the participant's lack of self-confidence, as she allows herself to be judged by other people (social influence – significant others).

Table 4.4

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3

THEME 3: CAREER CHOICE INFLUENCES		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Significant others	Any comments participants expressed indicating the influence that other significant people (parents, peers/friends, teachers, and role models) had on their career choices and development. Example: (B, IP24, 3, 75–76): *"Also, that our parents should not decide for you, for instance, they say 'we want you to be a doctor, and me mam, I don't like to be doctor with all my heart."*	Any comments participants expressed not indicating the influence that other people (parents, peers/friends, teachers, and role models) had on their career choices and development. Example: (G, IP33, 1, 5–7): "… *as time went on, and after reading all the pamphlets you gave us and the career books, I began to understand, and I also started researching myself."*

THEME 3: CAREER CHOICE INFLUENCES		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Parents' influence may be frustrating to their children, particularly if the choice is not what the child wants.	Career choice not influenced by significant others and based on personal research rather than other people's influence.
Socio-economic factors: financial support, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment	Any comments participants expressed relating to factors such as finance, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment that make it challenging to manage their career development or attain their career goals. Example: (A, GB, 2, 70-73): *"People are educated but they don't work."* (E, IP32*): "I don't have money to go to the school or college or University."*	Any comments participants expressed not relating to factors such as finance, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment that make it challenging to manage their career development or attain their career goals. Example: (A, GB,1, 16–17*): "Some children they are the slow learner so that is hard to understand about learning, they decide to leave their studies."*
	Unemployment and lack of finance cited as challenging factors in goal attainment.	Challenge ascribed to barriers to learning other than socio-economic conditions.

THEME 3: CAREER CHOICE INFLUENCES		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Politics: corruption	Any comments participants expressed relating to the impact of corruption on the attainment of their career goals. Example: (A, GA, 1, 4–5): *"If you want a job you have to have connections, people who will help you get the job."* Connections/nepotism is a challenge in goal attainment.	Any comments participants expressed not relating to the impact of corruption on the attainment of their career goals. Example: (A, GE, 2, 59): *"Unemployed graduates with-jobs that are not marketable or incorrect choices."* Lack of goal attainment is related to inappropriate career choice rather than corruption.
Advancement in technology	Any comments participants expressed relating to the influence of technology on the emergence of new careers and the extinction of certain careers. Example: (A, GB,1,28-29*): "They must also think that when they use much technology (influence of the 4IR) their careers can also disapar (sic) disappear."* Job extinction due to advanced technology and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.	Any comments participants expressed not relating to the influence of technology on the emergence of new careers and the extinction of certain careers. Example: (A, GC, 2, 40-41): *"Many people struggle to choose career choice when they were still studying."* Inappropriate career choice cited as a hindrance to embrace new careers.

Table 4.5

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 4

THEME 4: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Self-construction	Any comments participants expressed regarding self-knowledge and the courage to shape their future lives. Example: (F, IP18*): "l learned that I have to believe in myself, trust myself, have confidence. I realized that I don't have to live my life to make people happy. I have to live my life truthful, love myself just the way I am."* Self-discovery, self-knowledge, and positive self-concept.	Any comments participants expressed that are not related to self-knowledge and the courage to shape the future lives. Example: (E, IP22): *"I want to advertise skin-care products] in social media, tell people how the product treats people in skin."* Hopes to get courage from a good-looking physical appearance.
Lived experiences	Any comments participants expressed relating to past and present personal experiences that had or may have had an impact on their early career development. Example: (F, IP23): *"… I lost my mother at a very young age. I experienced the same when my father suffered massive stroke, it was when I failed my test in grade 8. It was hurtful to see my father in the same experience."*	Any comments participants expressed not relating to past and present personal experiences that had or may have had impact on early career development. Example: (E, IP32): *"I work very hard to get a gold medal and a trophy in sports."*

THEME 4: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
	Hurt affected school performance.	Determination to work hard until goal is achieved.
The power of personal mottos	Any comments made relating to the power that personal mottos have in self-motivation, the realisation of personal strengths, and the ability to seize opportunities and appreciate life in general. Example: (B, IP16, 4): *"Books before boys:* B, IP21, 4): *"Where there is a will, there is a way."* Participants' strong character, determination, and a sense of responsibility.	Any comments made not relating to the power that personal mottos have in self-motivation, the realisation of personal strengths, and the ability to seize opportunities and appreciate life in general. Example: (B, IP1,4): *"Education, sing and playing."* Motto is absent; there is no reference to a specific motto he lives by.
Optimism	Any comments participants expressed relating to a positive attitude towards life in general as well as present and future circumstances. Example: (E, IP16): *"I try to work hard to become what I want in life and change my family's background."* Believes in hard work for a better future.	Any comments participants expressed not relating to a positive attitude towards life in general as well as present and future circumstances. Example: (E, IP16): *"I was betrayed by my own friends. The friends I was thinking I'm going to walk my journey with them."* Loss of trust due to betrayal by friends.

THEME 4: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION		
Sub-themes	**Inclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**	**Exclusion criteria (including samples of substantiating quotes and brief explanations of quote's relevance)**
Life Orientation lessons experience	Any comments expressed relating to the impact of the Life Orientation lessons on their personal and career lives and recommendations to enhance effectiveness. Example: (G, IP33, 7, 201–203) *"To a certain extent, it does help you understand yourself…, but in terms of careers it (LO) is not assisting us well because it does not provide us with careers information."* Very little impact or less value added by Life Orientation lessons to career education.	Any comments expressed not relating to the impact of the Life Orientation lessons on their personal and career lives and recommendations to enhance effectiveness. Example: (G, IP24, 8, 20–245): *"…am asking if you will still assist our teachers when we come back, bcos now it's already late, also to assist other learners especially those who did not participate in the programme."* Call to share with other learners who did not participate in the career construction intervention.

4.5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Punch (2009) contends that there is no one "right" or "wrong" way to analyse qualitative data. Several perspectives must be considered in the process of qualitative data analysis. Castro et al. (2010) argue that, normally, a small number of distinct and clear (strong) main themes should emerge from a sizeable dataset. Such themes should reflect the views of 20% of the response codes. This percentage explains a substantial segment of the variance between themes. I gathered my data from the *CIP*, *MCM*, collages, timelines, and the semi-structured focus group interviews. As explained, data analysis in my study comprised six steps to facilitate a comprehensive interpretation of the data. The aim of this was to arrive at better understanding of how participants made sense of the intervention experiences.

I subsequently draw on the *CAAS* dimensions (my anticipated themes) as my starting point to see if I could find evidence of the existence of these "themes" in the data. Given that qualitative data analysis is strongly associated with inductive data analysis especially (Suter, 2011), I started my data analysis by attempting to identify novel themes (inductive analysis). Here, I drew on the view that "no matter how hard we try, there are no purely inductive (or deductive) studies" (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 107). Therefore, it seems safe to say that my approach to data analysis in the current study can best be described as inductive–deductive. Three themes emerged inductively following thematic data analysis, namely career development, career choice influences, and the impact of the intervention on the participants' career development. The fourth theme, career adaptability, and its four sub-dimensions emerged deductively through evidence sought from the participants' responses. These themes are discussed below. Where necessary, I have used direct quotations[10] expressed by the different participants for purposes of clarity:

- **Career development:** Comprises four sub-themes, namely career exploration, subject choice, career fields knowledge, and the value of education.
- **Career adaptability:** Comprises the four constructs of the *CAAS*, namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, deductively drawn from the participants' narratives as evidence.
- **Career choice influences:** Entail significant others, socio-economic factors, politics, and advancement in technology.
- **Impact of the intervention on the participants' career development:** Entails self-construction, the power of personal mottos, optimism, and the value of the Life Orientation experience.

[10] Where possible, participants' responses were quoted verbatim to clarify the point of argument.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Career development

THEME 1: CAREER DEVELOPMENT				
Sub-themes	**Career exploration**	**Subject choice**	**Career fields**	**The value of education**
Descriptors	Career awareness, career choice, and decision making	Subject combination, relevance to desired career/s	Career fields and information on careers	Breakthrough to better life and being inspired to work harder for a brighter future

The theme "career development" emerged consistently in all the different data sources throughout the analysis process. In this study, the term "career development" is defined as "the total constellation of psychological, sociological, economic and chance factors that combine to shape or influence the career of any given individual over the lifespan" (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017, p. 95). It is worth mentioning that during the initial phases of the intervention programme, most participants seemed very reluctant to participate in the intervention programme, and they did not show any interest in learning more about careers. This was more evident in the high level of disciplinary problems occasionally displayed by most participants during our contact in the first few sessions, which gradually improved as we became more familiar with each other. It was only after the intervention activities that most participants started showing an interest in learning more about careers, and there was a remarkable improvement in discipline, as illustrated in the following comments by some participants during the semi-structured interviews:

Female participant number 24, for instance, stated:

"Since last year you started teaching us Mam, I did not take it seriously, (Aah! bengibhala nje, ngingakutsatsi serious, bengibona ngatsi mdlalo nje…), I thought we were just playing, I took it as a game, I used to write just for the sake of writing. …… I regarded it as a waste of time, but now I understand that choosing a career is not a once of thing, but a process." (H, IP24, 1, 22–27)

Female participant number 26 stated:

"Even me, I also did not take you seriously in the beginning ("vele bengingavisisi nekutsi kwentekani, bengimane ngenta nje…), Truly, I was clueless, I did not understand what was happening, I just attended for the sake of attending, but now I realise that I have to take a decision to become something in life." (H, IP26, 2, 31–33)

It is these statements at the end of the intervention during the semi-structured interviews that revealed the participants' feelings of surprise as they discovered their newfound awareness of career decision making and development.

4.5.1.1 Career exploration

The participants' prolonged engagement in different activities gave them an opportunity to reflect on and gain more insight into their personal strengths and weaknesses to help them know themselves better. At the same time, they were exposed to different contexts through which they began to uncover their interests and abilities, which enabled them to start planning towards achieving their set goals. In so doing, they gained more insight and ascribed personal meanings to their various experiences. It was also interesting to see the participants' excitement (observed from the smiles on their faces) as they completed the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, since it allowed them an opportunity to reflect more in-depth on their responses on the *CIP* and *MCM*, addressing specific career information (H, 10–11). Through this activity, they had a much more in-depth exploration of their desired careers; an ability to link their identified interests, strengths, abilities, and weaknesses to those identified careers; and a better opportunity for reflecting on their narratives and their lived experiences.

It was evident from the responses provided by two participants to the question regarding three career choices they did not like (medical doctor, pilot, and police officer on the one hand, and journalist, teacher, and traffic officer on the other) that they understood the kind of qualities required to pursue these careers, the required interests and abilities, as well as the strengths and weaknesses relating to these careers:

Participant number 30 (male) stated:

"I am scared of blood, I don't like hights (sic), I hate to shoot or kill people." (B, IP30,2)

Participant 32 (male) also stated:

"I did not (sic) *like to have trips in my life, I don't like to be patient to people or young ones, I don't like to stop at road."* (B, IP32, 2)

Another female participant's response to her preferred careers, namely chartered accounting, social work, teacher, and animal doctor (veterinarian) can be ascribed to her self-awareness of strengths, abilities, and interest (her sense of caring) towards her desired careers, in which she states:

"…. because I love teaching some people, cos I love calculating money and cos I love to take care of some people, and cos I love animals." (B, IP3, 2)

Based on the above comments, it seems that the participants' opportunity to explore and reflect on their personal talents, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and abilities led to increased career awareness and better career choices.

4.5.1.2 Subject choice

The importance of relevant subject combinations in Grade 9 for certain career options seemed to be a serious challenge for most participants before the intervention programme. Some of them seemed to be confused when asked to state their dream careers, the careers they liked most, and those they liked least in the *CIP*. For this reason, some would list careers that contradict the subjects not liked, while others would repeat the same careers they liked most as the careers they liked least, which suggests that they did not understand that subject choice is one of the most significant factors impacting their ability to choose a particular career.

This is evident in one participant who listed social work, teaching, and nursing as the careers they liked most but repeated the same careers as the careers they did not like. In addition, the same participant listed different (new) careers in the list of career preferences that were not mentioned in the list of most liked careers, namely information and communication technology, marketing, and arts, and listed the careers they disliked as research, social work, and caregiving (B, IP1, 2&3), which shows no congruence between the responses. The lack of awareness regarding the impact of subject choice on desired career could also be seen in the participant who stated that her dream career is to be a doctor, but she dislikes Mathematics and Natural Sciences (B, IP24, 1&2) yet has a strong interest and caring personality, stating:

"… cos I like to help people who are sick; I want to share my knowledge to other people; bcos (sic) I don't want to see other people treated badly; I like to take care of animals." (B, IP24, 2)

This statement is an indication that some participants were not aware that interests are not the only important factor for career choices and that weaknesses, strengths, abilities, and subject combination all have an influence in shaping one's career; consequently, some people find themselves making inappropriate career choices.

4.5.1.3 Career fields knowledge

Career fields within the context of this study entail the different career categories (e.g. health and medical sciences, engineering and the built environment, human and social sciences, to mention a few) that learners can use to make informed career decisions, considering multiple factors such as subject choices, interests, abilities, and employability in line with the technological changes in the

labour market. It is concerning that, during the pre-intervention group discussions, most participants displayed inadequate knowledge regarding the different career fields that are available in the labour market. This was evident in their responses to their dream careers and career category preferences, where they repeatedly confined themselves to only those careers that they are most familiar with, such as teaching, nursing, social work, security, medicine, aviation, journalism, etc.

They rarely mentioned scarce skills careers such as engineering, psychology, counselling, law, architecture, information and communication technology, somatology, surgery, marine careers, and aviation careers (the list is endless), which suggests limited knowledge on the variety of career fields that exist. They also seemed to be unaware of the fact that certain careers have different fields of specialisation, for example, that medical practitioners would include surgeons, paediatricians, cardiologists, gynaecologists, etc. therapists would include speech and hearing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, etc. and engineering would include chemical, mechanical, electrical, metallurgical, and civil engineering (to mention a few). However, some participants started showing noticeable improvement as they completed Part 2 of the *CIP* regarding their dream careers, which suggests that they had increased knowledge of different career fields. This is evident in the following statements shared by two participants in the post-intervention semi-structured group interviews respectively.

A female participant, number 26, shared her reasons why she would like to pursue a career in one of the following fields as evidence that she knows what it takes to enter into these careers:

"… My preferred careers are to become a Doctor, Pilot, Social worker, Teacher or Engineer because of the following reasons. I like to take good care of sick people and to be (sic-I am) patient. I am not scared to fly high and moving. I am taking care of children because I love them, I give learners information and teach them at Sunday school. I can also take Engineering because I love to fix cars or airoplanes (sic: airplanes) and other things… my favourite subjects are Mathematics and Natural Sciences with good performance of 60%-80%". I can study a degree in MBChB in a University to become a Doctor (sic-Medical Practitioner), go to an Aviation /Flight school for Pilot, University of Technology to study Mechanical Engineering and a degree in Education to be a teacher or a Bachelor in Social work." (B, IP26, 2)

A male participant, number 34, stated the following during the semi-structured focus interviews when the participants shared what they learnt from participating in the career construction intervention programme:

"… After participating in this programme, I have gained because when I was in grade 8, I did not know what I wanted to become…. but now I feel confident because I am aware of my capabilities, that's why I have chosen Software Engineering because I like working with computers and after teaching us about the different careers and the pamphlets you gave us, I also made my own research, now understand that it entails developing and maintain software systems and applications, and I like working with computers… I can also go for Electrical Engineering cos I also like to fix things… or Architecture bcos, I have always enjoyed drawing many different things including house plans you know …" (G, IP34, 2, 34–42)

The most notable observation was made regarding the consistency in the career choice patterns displayed by participants when they completed the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, as it allowed them to synthesise career patterns that emerged from both the *CIP* (Part 2, Section 1a, Part 3) and their scores obtained after completing the *MCM* inventory. The illustrations in Tables 4.6.1(a), 4.6.1(b), 4.6.2(a), and 4.6.2(b) below are extracts from the completed Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template of female participant number 23 and male participant number 33 (only extracts of Steps 2, 3, and 4 are cited below), illustrating the congruence between the participants' stated dream career, career preferences, and their interests and abilities as evidence of increased career fields of knowledge and decisiveness (D, IP23; D, IP33).

Tables 4.6.1(a), 4.6.1(b), 4.6.2(a), and 4.6.2(b) below illustrate extracts of the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template with the highlighted colours representing career themes that emerged consistently as identified by each participant in their *CIP* and the *MCM* inventory. The highlighted colours represent the participants' dream careers, ultimately arranged chronologically, as follows:

- Blue denotes the participant's first career choice
- Green denotes the participant's second career choice
- Yellow denotes the participant's third choice
- Purple denotes the participant's fourth choice

This conclusion was made after careful consideration of the participants' careers identified in the *CIP* and the integrated *MCM* interest and confidence categories during which six steps were followed in completing the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template explained below.

Table 4.6.1(a)

Extract from Step 2 of the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template summarising the most preferred careers for participant number 23 (IP23), as identified in their CIP and the integrated MCM interest and confidence categories

CAREER INTEREST PROFILE (CIP)		MAREE CAREER MATRIX (MCM)			SCHOOL MARKS PER SUBJECT AT THE END OF LAST YEAR	
Seven preferred interest categories	**Five preferred careers**	**Seven careers underlined in green**	**Preferred (Interest and Confidence) Career Categories)**	**Specific careers you scored both high interest (2) and confidence (2)**	**Subjects**	**Mark**
1. Medical and paramedic services	1. Psychologist	1. Psychologist	1. Medical and paramedic services	1. **Writer**	1. SiSwati Home Language	**73**
2. Mathematics and accounting industry	2. Therapist	2. Auditor	2. Social community services and teaching	2. **Astronomer**	2. English First Additional Language	**65**

3.	Information and communi-cation technology	3.	Chartered accountant	3.	Web designer	3.	Information and communi-cation technology	3.	**Psychologist**	3.	Life Orientation	**66**
4.	Office-based activities	4.	TV presenter	4.	Office Administrator	4.	Research	4.	**Translator**	4.	Mathematics	**58**
5.	Legal practice and security services	5.	Social worker	5.	Magistrate	5.	Legal practice	5.	**Mediator**	5.	Natural Sciences	**54**
6.	Engineering and built environment	6.		6.	Regional planner	6.	Engineering and built environment	6.	News reporter	6.	Technology	**50**
7.	Word artistry	7.		7.	Journalist	7.	Adventure activities, nature, and outdoor life	7.	Pharmacist	7.	Social Sciences	**48**
											Creative/Visual Arts	**54**

Note: Step 2: Please complete the following table by referring to your CIP answer sheet, MCM report, and school marks (you may also include other relevant information). (Extract from female participant number 23 [IP23])

Table 4.6.1(b)

Extract showing Step 3 and 4 of the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, summarising possible careers for participant number 23 (IP23) that have emerged repeatedly as main career themes from their CIP and the MCM interest and confidence categories

Step 3: Identify your integrated main interest categories/patterns (based on the information provided in the table above)		**Step 4: Where do you want to study after having completed Grade 12?**			
Interest Category or Field		**Summarised Possible Career Choices**	**University**	**University of Technology**	**TVET College / Private Training**
1	Medical and paramedic services	1. Psychologist	X		
2	Word artistry	2. Journalist	X		
3	Legal practice	3. Magistrate	X		
4	Office based activities: Office	4. Auditor	X		
5	Mathematics and accounting industry	5. Regional planner		X	
6	Engineering and built environment				

Note: Step 3: Identify your integrated main interest categories/patterns (based on the information provided in the table above). (Extract for female participant number 23 [IP23])

Table 4.6.1 (a) and (b) above indicates that, for female participant 23 (IP23), the first dream career highlighted in blue is psychology, her second choice highlighted in green is journalism, her third choice in yellow is law (magistrate), and her fourth choice in purple is auditing. The participant seemed to have a strong interest in psychology as her dream career, and the other three were identified as possible desired careers she would probably pursue as options, as reflected repeatedly throughout her *CIP* and the *MCM* respectively and ultimately integrated in the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template.

Table 4.6.2(a)

Extract from Step 2 of the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template summarising the most preferred careers for male participant number 33 (IP33), as identified in their CIP and the integrated MCM interest and confidence categories

CAREER INTEREST PROFILE (CIP)			MAREE CAREER MATRIX (MCM)		SCHOOL MARKS PER SUBJECT AT THE END OF LAST YEAR	
Seven preferred interest categories	**Five preferred careers**	**Seven careers underlined in green**	**Preferred (interest and confidence) career categories**	**Specific careers you scored both high interest (2) and confidence (2)**	**Subject**	**Mark**
1. Medicine or paramedical services	1. Pilot	1. Doctor	1. Mathematics and accounting industry	1. Doctor	1. SiSwati Home Language	**62**
2. Mathematics/accounting industry	2. Doctor	2. Accountant	2. Executive and management practice	2. Accountant	2. English First Additional Language	**55**
3. Information and communication technology	3. Scientist	3. Repairing computers	3. Information and	3. Computer repairing	3. Life Orientation	**62**

			communication technology			
4. Legal practice and security services	4. Engineering	4. Law making	4. Legal practice	4. Lawyer	4. Mathematics	**37**
5. Engineering and the built environment	5. Lawyer	5. Civil Engineer	5. Adventure	5. Forestry	5. Natural Sciences	**46**
6. Research	6.	6. Medicine	6. 6Word artistry	6. Engineer	6. Technology	**41**
7. Tourism, the hospitality, and the tourist transport industry	7.	7. Social, caregiving and community services	7. Tourism and hospitality	7. Paramedical services	7. Social Sciences	**41**
					Creative/Visual Arts	**54**

Note: Step 2: Please complete the following table by referring to your CIP answer sheet, MCM report, and school marks (you may also include other relevant information).

Extract for male participant number 33 (IP33)

Table 4.6.2(b)

Extract showing Step 3 and 4 of the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, summarising possible careers for male participant number 33 (IP33) that have emerged repeatedly as main career themes from their CIP and the MCM highest interest and confidence categories

Step 3: Identify your integrated main interest categories/ patterns (based on the information provided in the table above)		**Step 4: Where do you want to study after having completed Grade 12?**		
Interest Category or Field	**Summarised Possible Career Choices**	**University**	**University of Technology**	**TVET College / Private Training**
1. Engineering and the built environment	Medical doctor	X		
2. Information and communication technology	Civil engineer	X		
3. Entrepreneurship	Computer repairing		X	
4. Mathematics and accounting industry	Accountant	X		
5. Medical services	Lawyer		X	
6. Executive and management practice				

Note: Step 3: Identify your integrated main interest categories/patterns (based on the information provided in the table above). Excerpt for participant number 33 (IP33)

For male participant number 33 (IP33), Tables 4.6.2(a), and 4.6.2(b) above indicate that his first dream career in blue is medicine (doctor), his second choice in green is civil engineering, his third choice is information technology (computer repairing), and his fourth choice is accounting. The participant has shown a strong interest in medicine as his dream career and the other three choices as potential careers.

I conclude this section by providing a summarised explanation regarding the strategy followed in facilitating the processes of how the *MCM* and the *CIP* responses have been integrated using the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template. Four phases were followed in completing the template.

Phase 1: Eliciting the life story

This phase focused on eliciting the participants' life stories during which participants were given manual copies of the *CIP* and the *MCM* to complete at different intervals. The *CIP* consisted of four parts, where Part 1 required biographical details, Part 2 required career choice related questions, Part 3 required career category preferences/dislikes, and Part 4 required career story narratives. The *MCM* inventory consisted of a list of careers divided into Section 1 to 8 comprising 19 careers each, through which participants were to rate their interests and confidence levels respectively by scoring themselves between 0 and 2. In the interest column, each participant indicated to what extent are they interested in each career by scoring from 0–2, where 0 means definitely not interested, 1 means unsure, and 2 means definitely interested; and in the confidence column, participants indicated how confident they are that they have the abilities for a particular career by scoring from 0–2, regardless of their interest level in that career (i.e. focus only on confidence/ability regarding the particular career), where 0 means "I will definitely not be able to do the work", 1 means "Unsure", and 2 means "I will definitely be able to do the work." The scores obtained were then used to identify the participants' main themes or patterns in terms of their interest and confidence in each career. At the end of this phase, participants were allowed to share their stories that emerged from the *CIP* and discussed the reports yielded by the *MCM* in preparation for completing the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template.

Phase 2: Validating the life story

Participants were requested to complete the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template to assist them with integrating their career-related information and map up their career plans. Five steps were followed to complete this activity (see Table 4.6.3), including crafting their power statement, transferring information from their *CIP* answer sheet and *MCM* report

to the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, identifying their integrated main interest categories/patterns, indicating their desired fields of study and relevant institutions, and drawing up their personal career plans by integrating the information from the *CIP* and *MCM*. This was accomplished by the participants themselves working jointly with me, as I helped them to connect life themes as they integrated the career patterns that emerged from the *CIP* and the *MCM*.

Phase 3: Devising action plans

This phase focused on devising action plans through which participants were assisted to plan a thorough job analysis strategy and as far as possible to identify psychosocial and psychoeducational issues that could possibly impact their plans and how they would deal with them.

Phase 4: Obtaining feedback

Participants were allowed to reflect on their experiences and write down some notes on how they had experienced the intervention reflections and provide regular feedback to me, which helped to track participants' progress and help them improve where necessary.

Table 4.6.3

Summarised explanation of how the MCM and CIP responses have been integrated using the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template (Adapted from Maree, 2020, p. 196)

PHASE	STEP	DETAILED EXPLANATION
Phase1: Eliciting the life story		Participants completed the *CIP* and *MCM*, during which biographical information was also obtained. They also prepared themselves for their *CIP* stories and *MCM* reports.
Phase 2: (Authorising) Validating the life story		Once participants' stories have been elicited and their scores obtained, they were asked to complete the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template. This phase consists of the following five step strategy to assist participants in integrating their career-related information into a tangible career map or plan.
	Step 1	Steps are taken to craft an identity, value, or power statement

PHASE	STEP	DETAILED EXPLANATION
	Step 2	Participants were asked to transfer additional information from their *CIP* answer sheet, *MCM* report, and school marks to the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template.
	Step 3	Participants were guided in identifying their (integrated) main interest categories/patterns based on the information provided in the table compiled in Step 2.
	Step 4	Participants were requested to indicate the fields of study in which they want to study and where they want to study after completing school (some useful websites provided to help them obtain information about careers and tertiary training institutions).
	Step 5	Participants were assisted with drawing up their own personal career plan by integrating the information from all the above steps. To achieve this important aim, they were helped to complete the following sentence: I want to study (field(s) of study) so that I can (b) (here they allude to the personal meaning they want to derive from executing the associated jobs (s) (mission statement) and in the process (c) (here they allude to the social meaning and sense of purpose they want to derive from executing these jobs (vision statement).
Phase 3: Devising action plans to bring about action and forward movement	Step 1	After participants' life themes have been connected jointly by themselves and the researcher, their field(s) of study and career choice suggestions were concluded by helping them plan a thorough job analysis strategy. Participants were encouraged to make a concerted effort to consider the psychosocial and psychoeducational issues that were brought to light.

PHASE	STEP	DETAILED EXPLANATION
Phase 4: Obtaining feedback	Step 1	Participants were allowed to return home and requested to reflect on their reflections, write down how they experienced the intervention, and report back to the researcher regularly. This feedback helped to evaluate participants' progress and adapt the practice to better meet their needs.

Note: Adapted from Maree (2020, p. 196)

4.5.1.4 Value of education

The value of education is concerned with the participants' views regarding the impact of education in changing their individual lives. From my observations, I learnt that the participants' undesirable circumstances did not discourage them from setting positive goals for their lives; instead, their circumstances were used as a springboard to turn things around. They could not allow circumstances to describe them or shape their future negatively, as expressed in participant number 33's statement *"Don't let your past describe your future"* (*CIP*, IP33).

For this reason, education is viewed as a breakthrough to a better life and a step towards overcoming the challenges, not only in their personal lives but to their families and community as well, which is evident in a number of responses provided by participants number 34, 22, 32, and 3 below:

"I want to finish my studies and achieve my goal cause (sic) I want to get a degree that will make me a happiest person. Education is the key to successfully (sic), *working hard you a* (sic) *better person tomorrow, life is a changer of things."* (E, IP34).

"I must concentrate on my books so I can achieve my own goals." (E, IP,22).

"In the next five years, I see myself in the University of ..." (E, IP32).

"Education is the key to success." (B, IP3,4).

4.5.2 Theme 2: Career adaptability

The theme career adaptability and its four sub-themes are summarised in Table 4.7 below, followed by a brief description of each sub-theme, with relevant examples quoted verbatim from the participants' responses, which were collected through different data sources.

Table 4.7

Theme 2: Career adaptability and the four sub-themes: Concern, control, curiosity, and confidence

THEME 2: CAREER ADAPTABILITY				
Sub-themes	**Concern**	**Control**	**Curiosity**	**Confidence**
Descriptors	Involves the ability to plan for one's life within time perspective anchored in hope and optimism (Savickas et al., 2009). The individual's willingness to discover the self and take career decisions is of paramount importance in enhancing the level of concern.	Involves taking responsibility for one's own decisions and actions regarding the future (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). A high level of autonomy is necessary to maintain a high degree of control in an individual's career life.	Refers to having an inquisitive attitude, the ability to explore opportunities, and the interest in learning more about work. (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017) as well as taking risks.	"Implies believing in yourself and your ability to achieve what is necessary to realise your career goal" (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012, p. 339). It involves the assertiveness, determination, and ability to take personal career decisions which ultimately build self-concept and self-esteem.

The theme career adaptability refers to psychological strengths that influence self-regulation in coping with tasks, transitions, and traumas by incorporating the four 'Cs', namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Ginevra et al., 2018). From the participants' perspective, tasks and transitions relate to the individual's ability to make meaningful career decisions as they transit from the General Education Band to the Further Education and Training Band (Grade 9 to 10–12), whose mastery suggests adaptive behaviour. Therefore, the 'Cs' are constructs identified as sub-themes that emerged deductively by drawing evidence from the participants' narratives expressing concerns for future plans and willingness to explore personal strengths and weaknesses that could impact their career decisions.

Several comments were made by participants when completing the *CIP*, Section 2 in particular, and, the collages, timelines, and semi-structured focus group interviews[11] that related to the capacity to be in control of their lives, a concern for future, a willingness to explore opportunities and take calculated risks in decision making as well as a desire to learn more (inquisitiveness) and an assertive mind-set, which have been cited for clarity purposes. A number of participants indicated

[11] See Sections 4.5.2.1–4.5.2.4 below.

aspirations for pursuing various careers, so that they can make meaningful contributions to people's lives in their communities in the future, citing becoming teachers, medical doctors, pilots, engineers, nurses, plumbers, police, farmers, truck drivers, chartered accountants, and auditors. These kinds of aspirations were evident in the participants' concern for their future and their willingness to set goals as part of planning their future. I must mention that these were observed throughout the intervention activities. In the following comments, participants expressed their aspirations for doing electrical engineering, teaching, and auditing so that they can make meaningful contributions to their lives and to their community at large as such. Most participants had an opportunity to link their hopes and dreams with their desired careers as illustrated in the following comments made by participants number 17, number 1, and number 15 who stated the following:

"l like to work with electricity and have electricity at homes; I like children a lot; I like to teach people about my knowledge; I don't like fraud" (reasons for liking electrical engineering, teaching, and auditing) (B, IP17,2).

"… because there are many chances for you to die in the sea, because if you break your hand, you wouldn't work again." (reasons for not liking ship captain and artisan) (B, IP17,2). Participant displayed self-awareness, likes and dislikes, capabilities, and incapabilities.

"I like to help the community from crime, to help illness people (sic), to give children education, to build the building in our community." (B, IP1, 2).

When responding to the question why they liked certain careers, in this case dentistry/nursing/pharmacy or pilot, and social work, traffic policing and journalism (as raised by her), participant number 1 expressed the following:

"…so that I can heal people's teeth; to teach those who need good knowledge; to heal people who are not feeling well." (B, IP15, 2)

"I want to help people who are in pain; I know how to check cars; I know how to drive a helicopter; I love the news of people; I love to clean the yet (sic) yard." (B, IP1, 2).

4.5.2.1 Concern

Concern implies being optimistic about life and the ability to plan for one's future (Savickas et al., 2009). Participants' concerns in this sub-theme were related to their ability to explore their personal strengths and weaknesses and the willingness to discover the self and take career decisions that shape their future. Most participants had a chance to express their interests and set their desired goals to be achieved in their future lives.

The following comment was shared by one participant when presenting feedback during the pre-intervention group discussions to express their desire for more knowledge to be able to plan for their future.

"Children must know much about their careers or something that he/she will be use to do (sic) [before deciding on their career choices]." (A, GB 1, 37)

Other comments indicating the concern for setting goals to guide their actions were raised in different activities and continued to resurface throughout the intervention activities. Participants number 34 and 16 mentioned the importance of hard work and being educated in order to achieve their goals and become what they wanted in life.

"As a person, you must have a goal to follow till you achieve it (goal). I have learned not to listen to my friends when they give bad advice, because you end up doing nothing with your life." (goal setting, self-exploration, and discovery) (F, IP34)

"I want to finish my studies to get a degree that will make me a happiest person." (E, IP34).

"I will try to work hard to become what I want in life and change my family's background." (F, IP16)

It was also interesting to note that the participants did not only express concern for their own future lives but also shared their parents' concerns, which were shown through encouraging their children to study and work hard and by emphasising the importance of becoming educated in order to have a brighter future, as indicated in the participants' responses to Part 1 of the *CIP* question, "What did your parents advise you to study?" While some provided relevant responses citing the careers their parents advised them to pursue, such as nursing, teaching, medicine, engineering etc., others indicated that their parents encouraged them to study hard and emphasised the importance of education instead of mentioning careers. The statements below were drawn from participants number 3 and 30, illustrating the parental advice received:

"They (parents) said that I must study hard because my future is in my hands." (B, IP30, 1)

"… yes, they advised because that now you won't get a job if you don't have matric." (B, IP3, 1)

4.5.2.2 Control

The sub-theme "control" can be defined as the individual's ability to maintain a high level of autonomy, internal decision making, and self-determination as well as how much one attributes one's actions to successful endeavours (Stoltz & Barclay, 2012). Within the context of this study, "control"

describes how self-assured and motivated individuals are by making their own decisions about their lives and being accountable for their own actions. This could be seen as participants progressed with the intervention activities, when they gradually became aware that they were capable of controlling their own lives and shaping it into who they want to become. Most of them conveyed messages that they realise the role they themselves play in making appropriate choices, not only for their careers but in life in general. This was also evident in their improved participation in the remaining sessions, the interest they showed, and how they expressed what they were doing was of benefit to themselves, hence, they no longer cared about those who were no longer attending. I was encouraged to observe that some of them felt personally inspired to focus on learning more and gave their best as a sign that they have taken control over their learning process (H, 16,119–12). Here are a few of these comments made by participant 18, 16, 23, and 26, indicating that they learnt to take charge of their own lives:

"I have learned that I have to believe in myself, trust myself, have confidence. I realized that I don't have to live my life to make people happy. I have to live my life truthful, love myself just the way I am." (F, IP18)

"*Do not beg someone to be present in your life, if she doesn't, just walk away and focus on your own life."* (high sense of control and confidence over life events) (F, IP16)

"*Never depend on someone else. Do what your heart desires. Take good advice from people who want the best for you (control). Don't rely on other people, learn to stand on your own. Never trust other people cos (sic) they change. Be careful whom you push away, bcos* (sic) *some of them never come back* (control over own life). (F, IP23)

"*I learned to deal with my own problems, not depend on other persons*" (control over own life). (F, IP26)

"*I am a captain of my own ship."* (E, IP24) (Probably referring to an urge to be in control of the life circumstances that might come her way or arise in her journey towards achieving her desired goals).

4.5.2.3 Curiosity

Curiosity can be defined as "the ability to possess interest in experiencing the world, the different types of work in particular" (Stoltz & Barclay, 2012, p. 77). In this study, I understand curiosity as an ability to explore opportunities in different environments, taking calculated risks, and venturing into the unknown. Risk-taking and inquiry behaviours foster a sense of inquisitiveness about and interest in the world of work. Curious people tend to imagine themselves in various situations and roles, which is critical for career exploration. Conversely, lack of career curiosity limits the individual's level of exploration and prompts unrealistic aspirations and expectations about the

future. As such, the participants in this study expressed their thoughts on displaying exploratory behaviour and how they felt about their envisaged future. At the same time, I also learnt that most participants felt very confident about facing their future, regardless of what it could hold, hence they were able to display their interests in exploring possibilities and risk-taking fearlessly as indicated in the following statements mentioned by participants number 18, 23, and 26.

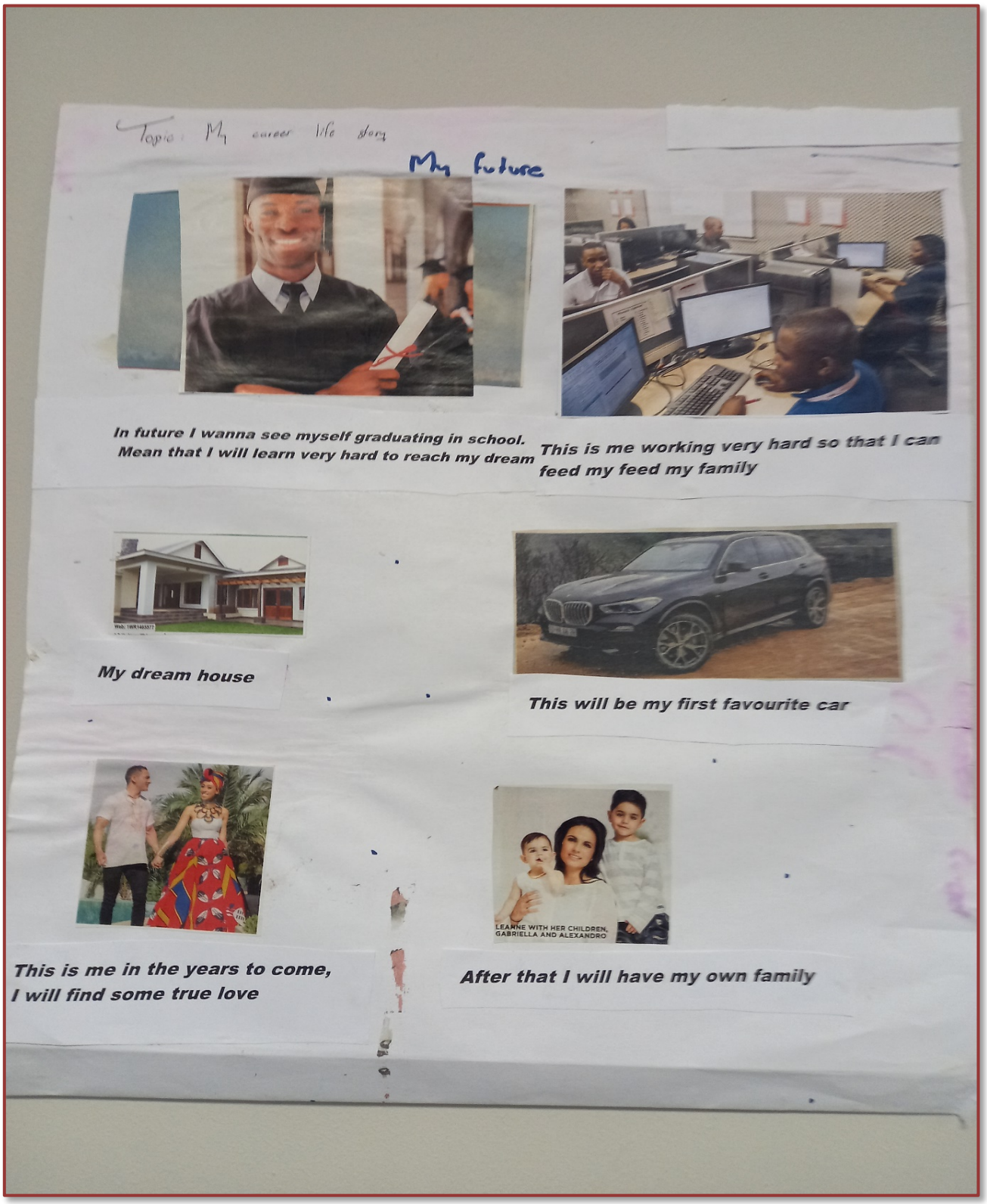
"*I like to explore things (to fly); to teach children to know how to feel to be a learner; I like to work hard"* (B, IP18, 2), (willingness to explore opportunities and unlock the unknown world).
"I like to find out more about and become good at practical work like using my own hands" (B, IP23, 4), (curiosity/willingness to explore life opportunities).

Another participant's curiosity can be seen in her narratives in which she shared a title of own life story if she were asked to write one, namely *"The road never travelled"* (B, IP26, 4), indicating that she is not afraid of venturing into the unknown.

The participant coded IP30 used the collage below to express his interest in exploring life opportunities and the confidence he had, no matter what it took to get there. He expressed his wish to have better education (see the graduation picture in Figure 4.1 below), the beautiful house in which his family would live, the elegant car he wished to drive, and the kind of work he saw himself doing, with a computer as he states that: *"This is me working very hard to feed my family;" "In future, I wanna (sic) see myself graduating in school, meaning I that I will learn very hard to reach my dream."*

Figure 4.1

Collage portraying curiosity about exploring life opportunities for a better life



The yearning for better knowledge in life was also expressed by the participant coded IP33 in his timeline where he shared about the lessons learnt in life, stating that:

"*Learning from others is better than making mistakes. Ask if you do not know, do not act as if you know."* (F, IP33)

"*I want to explore the world and learn new things."* Also evident in the participant's motto: *"Wisdom through experience."* (B, IP16, 4), which is a sign of optimism and willingness to explore opportunities and to unlock the unknown world.

4.5.2.4 Confidence

In this study, confidence is perceived as the assertiveness, determination, and ability to take personal career decisions resulting in a positive self-concept and self-esteem (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Therefore, individuals with high confidence are self-assured and able to face tense social situations with resolve and courage. My observation from the participants' responses and their responsive behaviour as recorded in my reflective journal (H, 16, 117–121) suggests that a high level of confidence can be related to a high degree of personal understanding, positive self-concept, and high self-esteem. Comments expressed by participants number 18 and 33 from the *CIP* and participant number 32 from his collage cited below suggest that they were determined to achieve their career goals regardless of obstacles that might be experienced along the way. These comments are affirmed by Neureiter and Mattausch (2017), who define confidence as one's capacity to stand by one's own aspirations and objectives, even in the face of adversity, thus empowered to overcome challenges while constructing one's own future.

"… I am kind and I am a go-getter, and if I do something wrong, I can face the consequences" (B,1P18,4), **(**participant express that she is always willing to take risks).

"Don't let your past describe your future." (B, IP33,4) (sheer determination)

"I work very hard to get a gold medal and a trophy in sports," a sign of determination, and confidence in himself that he can achieve desired goals no matter what comes his way, thought of winning not just a medal, but a gold one, and he knows he can make it (E, IP32).

4.5.3 Theme 3: Career choice influences

The third theme represents the participants' perceptions regarding the influence of significant others, socio-economic factors, politics, and technological advancement in career decisions. The perceptions were drawn from the participants' responses in different sections of the *CIP*, their reflections and comments in the collages, timelines, the pre-intervention group discussions, and the post-intervention semi-structured focus group interviews. It was interesting to note from the

participants' comments that they seemed to have insight into the hardships faced by young people in South Africa, such as the high unemployment rate, lack of exposure to a variety of career opportunities, financial constraints, and the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. I noted through their comments, mentioned repeatedly during the pre-intervention group discussions, that technology seems to replace manual work, thereby increasing the unemployment rate (see Section 4.5.3.4). Zunker (2016) agrees with this notion that each of these factors plays an important role in the selection of career alternatives. With that insight in mind, participants had to reflect on their personal abilities and strengths and link them to their aspirations as part of planning and setting goals to be achieved in their future career lives. The three sub-themes that emerged from the third theme are summarised below:

Table 4.8

Theme 3: Career choice influences and the four sub-themes: Significant others, Socio-economic factors, Politics, Advancement in technology

THEME 3: CAREER CHOICE INFLUENCES				
Sub-themes	**Significant others**	**Socio-economic factors**	**Politics**	**Advancement in technology**
Descriptors	The influence of families, peers/friends, teachers, and role models	The impact of financial support, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment	The influence of corruption and fraud	Extinction of some careers and emergence of new careers due to technological development

4.5.3.1 Role of significant others

The sub-theme "significant others" pertains to the social impact of people whom the participants engage with on a daily basis in various contexts. As social beings, our attitudes and behaviours are constantly influenced by others and ultimately shape the way we think and perceive life (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017). This was evident in the participants' reference to the contributions made by their friends, family members, and role models as people they look to for guidance when making decisions or faced with challenges.

- **Family members:** Siblings, parents, and relatives have the biggest influence on the individuals' career development, since they are involved in the child's upbringing, during which certain norms, values, and beliefs are instilled both formally and informally as part of

the rearing process. Most participants indicated that parents, siblings, and immediate relatives are people they normally look to for advice when faced with challenges.

It should be noted though that in many instances, cited in the table below, the advice provided by parents seems to have been expressed as their desires for their children (since they are not based on the child's interests, strengths, and abilities but rather on what they want their children to become; as a result, some advice may not necessarily be congruent with the learner's dream career).

It is also concerning to note that some participants indicated that they have never received any advice from anyone regarding career and subject choice or what to study; hence, they were compelled to pursue their career aspirations by themselves. However, there are two interesting scenarios that were presented by two participants (IP29, who wants to be a doctor/nurse, and IP34, who wants to be a chartered accountant) that attracted my attention. In these two cases, there is consistency in the parents' and teacher's advice and the participant's own dream career, which suggests that, indeed, significant others do have an influence on learners' career decisions. What is of particular importance here is the concern and wishes that parents have for their children's future lives, even though children may not follow them precisely as can be seen in the responses extracted from Section 4 of the *CIP*. For them (parents), the desires expressed are considered to be the best advice based on the careers that they would love to see their children pursue.

It is also noteworthy that no trends or patterns were evident in the participants' responses, which means that the participants' family members pursued a variety of careers. The table below presents examples of some advice participants have received from their parents and teachers regarding career choices.

Table 4.9

Family career trends, parents and teachers' advice, and participants' dream careers

Participant	Parents' advice	Teachers' advice	Participants' dream careers	Career trends in the family
IP16	Mother advised me to study Economic Management Sciences, so I can be an auditor.	Advised me to be a teacher.	Pharmacist	None
IP17	Never advised	Never advised	I want to be a doctor.	None

Participant	Parents' advice	Teachers' advice	Participants' dream careers	Career trends in the family
IP18	Never advised	Never advised	I want to be a pilot.	None
IP26	My parents advised me to study dentist *(sic).*	My teacher advised me to study chemical engineer.	To be a doctor	No, my relatives choose different careers.
IP29	My mother wants me to study and be a doctor.	My teacher said I need to study very hard so that I will be a chartered accountant or electrical engineering *(sic).*	To be a doctor	Yes, nurse job
IP31	I was never advised	Not advised	To be a doctor	None
IP32	They said study hard [so] I will become something one day.	To work hard to prove my dream	To be a police *(sic)*	None
IP33	Not yet advised	Not yet	Pilot	None
IP34	My mother advice *(sic*) me to be a police officer because she thinks it suits me.	They advise me to be a chartered accountant because a can fit *(sic)* and I love doing Accounting and Mathematics.	I want to be a chartered accountant.	My father is a teacher.

- **Friends:** People of the same age group play a major role in shaping one another's views, opinions, and perceptions, either positively or negatively and the reasons why individuals make certain career and life choices (Bett, 2013). It is a common practice for young people to share ideas regarding their career goals, life aspirations, and general ideas regarding their surroundings. In the process, they get to know each other better and learn of each other's identity and interests, strengths, and weaknesses, and ultimately help each other in making decisions. This became evident in the trust the participants displayed towards one another as

they helped one another to choose pictures and phrases, which they believed described one another's career goals and aspirations. At the same time, I was inspired by how much they appreciated one another as people on whom they can rely in times of need, as expressed in these comments made by participants number 10, 26, and 3 who stated the following:

"My friends … … (friends' names), *bcos they guide me about my life and they say I must achieve my goal."* (B, IP10, 4)

"My friend … (friend's name) *she taught me how to treat other people.* (B, IP26, 4)

"Friend: cos she is buying some present for my birthday, and she makes me happy with the present that were bought for me." (sic) (B, IP3, 4)

It is worth noting that some participants were able to learn from experience that peer influence might also have a negative impact on their lives, hence they had to be cautious involving such friends when making important decisions, as expressed in the examples below by participant number 33 in his timeline and participant number 34 during the semi-focused group interviews.

"I lost many friends due to my bad attitude and responding badly to adults" (F, IP33). It is important to note that the same experience mentioned in the timeline was also cited by the participant in the CIP. *"…Friends, they always give me negative thoughts."* (B, IP33, 4), regarding lessons learnt that he once associated with bad friends, such that at one point in his life he found himself without friends around him:

"What … (participant name) said is true, because you know, we as friends we mislead each other, because personally, I have realised that you find that I am doing well in the subjects done in class 10A, then I influence others to come with me, then in time you find that I pass well and move on, whilst the others do not, and remain behind, that is not right because I have misled you to follow me to class A because I know what I want, and you also know what you want, maybe your career is different from mine." (G, IP34, 144–150, 5)

- **Role models:** Young people would generally identify themselves with successful people they admire in their communities and those with whom they share similar aspirations (Mtemeri, 2020). In this study, people who are perceived as prominent figures from different walks of life were cited as role models by participants, and they looked up to these people due to good deeds they have done in their communities. These include teachers, local pastors, sports stars, actors, and singers, to whom some felt they can easily relate because of the personal meaning derived from their interactions. Others preferred to cite their family members as their role models, either because of their success or as people they look up to when they face challenges.

Examples of participants' comments demonstrating the influence of role models in career decisions where they state that:
"Mr Style, he sings the songs that I love." "My teacher, Mr …, he makes a lot jokis (sic)t in the classroom." (B, IP32, 4). "*Trevor Noah, to make people laugh and smile."* (B, IP38, 4). *"My teacher …, shows how to find studies not difficult to you; My Priest …, bcos he teaches me how to be with God."* (B, IP, 33, 4). *"Social worker, she helps people how to care take of themselves, and they give orphans food."* (B, IP29, 4). "*Teacher: He brings a smile to other people."* (B, IP23, 4). *"Nelson Mandela, mommy and dad, cos he fought for my life and he fought for my rights."* (B, IP24, 4) "*Mbappe, he makes me to love football, he is strong, youngest player now at PSG."* (B, IP32, 4) *"My brother, Sipho: he is a hustler, he's got a good job but fights for his business to be successful."* (B, IP35, 4) *"My mother: she is not a quitter, she's a fighter." "My sister: she always keeps on going whether it is good or bad."* (B, IP31, 4) *"My mother, she teaches me how to respect or behave to the elders. My sister, taught me how to respect other people's property."* (B, IP26, 4) *"My mother, my soccer team, Mr Singwane, they have made me the person I am and now I am a better person because of them they are my role models."* (B, IP34, 4)

4.5.3.2 Socio-economic factors

The participants raised different socio-economic factors impacting negatively on their career decisions, including financial support, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment. These factors were perceived as social barriers towards the achievement of their career goals and must thus always be taken into consideration whenever career choices and decisions are made.

- **Financial support:** A lack of money was perceived as a major obstacle to achieving the desired goal; the participants repeatedly stated that they were determined to pursue their studies in different fields at tertiary institutions, but the lack of financial support remained an undesirable barrier. This concern was raised during the pre-intervention group discussions, where the need for adequate qualifications was incidentally evoked. Unfortunately, it still requires strong financial muscle to pursue studies, as stated by participants:

"Different families, some of them they could not afford money to send their children to school, therefore the children are being transferred to work (sic) [preferred to look for work]" (A, GB, 12–13,1). (A, GB 1, 37).

"You have to have more qualifications and if you are not privileged coming from a poor family you won't have money to go to University." (A, GA, 1, 5–6).

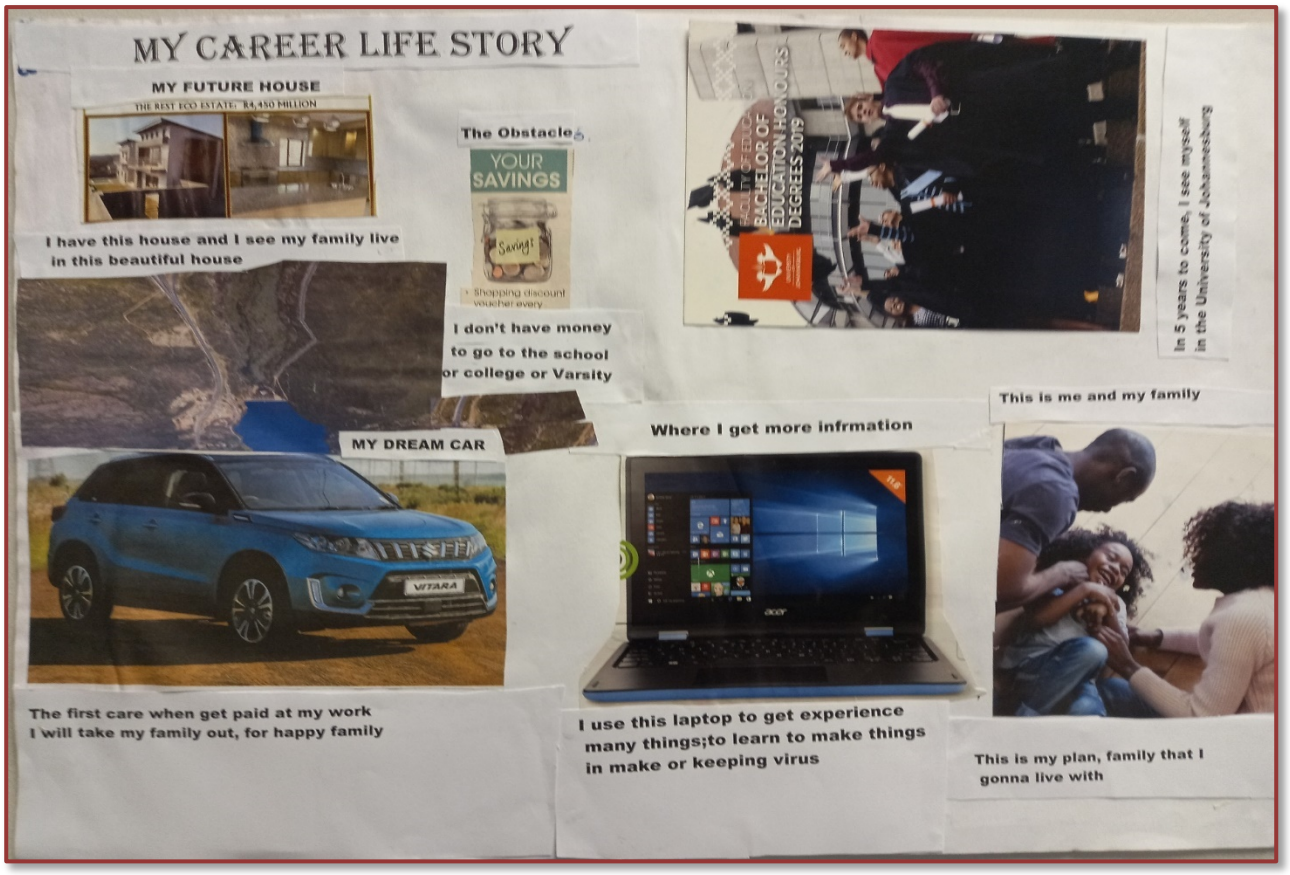
The impact of financial support was further emphasised through the collage below (Figure 4.2) in which the participant expresses his wish to pursue his studies at an institution of higher learning by displaying a picture of a graduation event and stating, *"In five years to come, I see myself in the University of Johannesburg."* At the same time, he also displays a picture with a collection of coins, representing his wish to have money to pay for his studies, and states:

"I don't have money to go to school or college or varsity."

It is very unfortunate to note that most learners go through similar experiences in which a lack of financial support becomes a barrier towards achieving their career goals. However, it is interesting to note that the participant remained optimistic and continued to plan for his future (see the dream car, beautiful house, and happy family in the collage) and promised himself to do further research and obtain more information. Apparently, the participant is very interested in the field of technology, hence the picture of the laptop he wished to use to search for information and scan viruses to enhance its functionality ("*I use this laptop to get experience many things, to learn to make things or keeping virus* (sic) [take out viruses])" (see the collage in Figure 4.2 below).

Figure 4.2

Collage portraying the impact of financial constraints on the achievement of career goals



❖ **Unemployment:** Participants expressed great concern regarding the high rate of unemployment and the scarcity of jobs countrywide. Sadly, during the pre-intervention discussions, the participants also expressed the concern that their access to quality education and health services would be compromised by a lack of funds to pay for such services. One group mentioned that *"many people are educated but they don't work, what can be seen is poor jobs, poor education and poor health care"* (A, GF, 70–72,2). In essence, this notion painted a gloomy picture of the future careers of young people, which suggests that, as they plan and set goals, they should remain mindful of the joblessness and consider their employability rather than lifetime jobs by becoming more adaptable and acquiring skills to regulate and manage themselves in the absence of stable employment structures (Maree, 2015a).

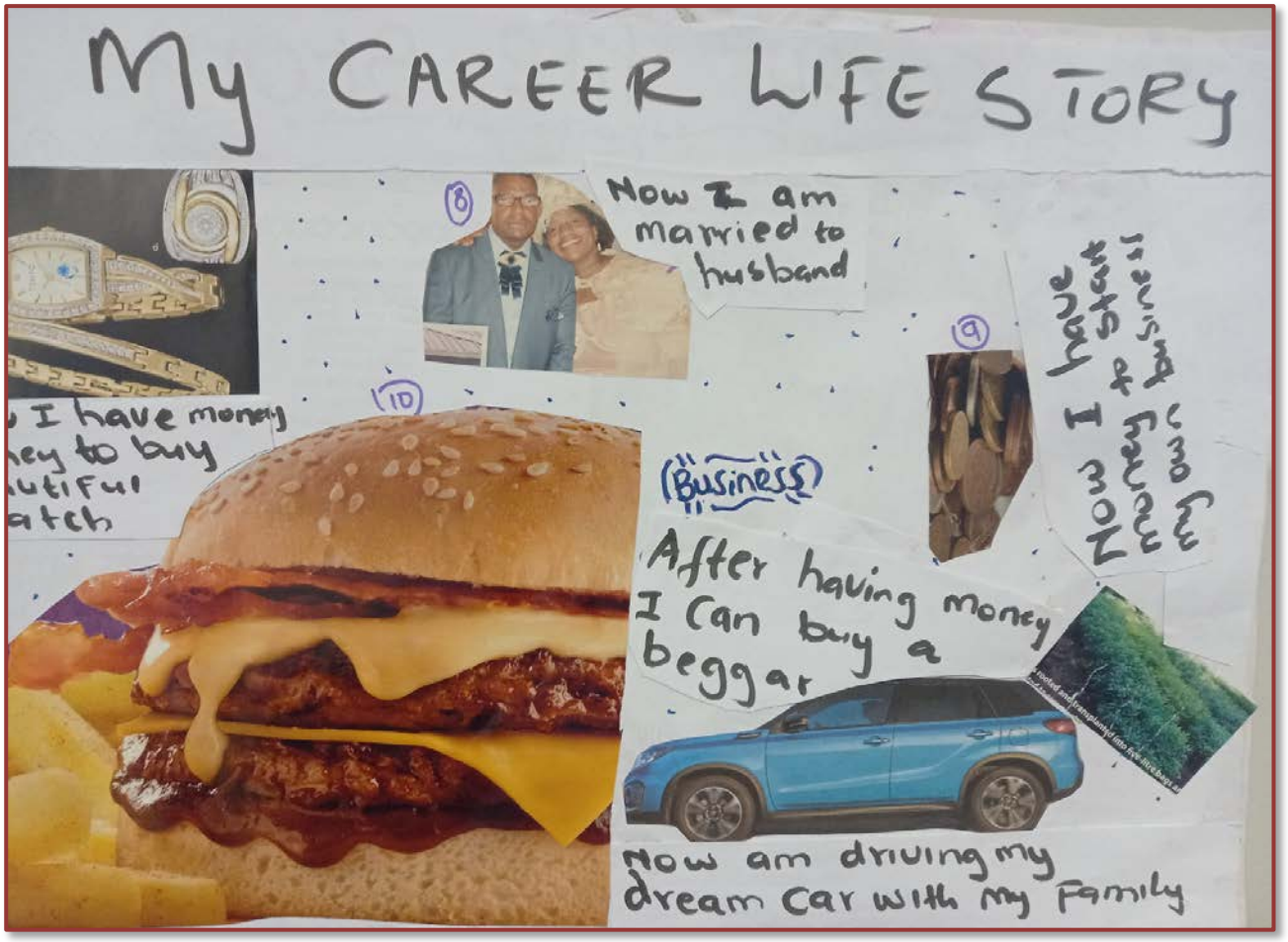
From the above comments, I learnt that the participants somehow had the insight that career choice is not just a *"by the way once off event"* requiring interests and abilities but rather a process influenced by a combination of different factors. Patton and McMahon (2014) concur with this notion and state that career development should be based on its recognition of the importance of a wide

range of influences on career choice rather than focusing on a single factor and acknowledging the importance of context in the social learning process and promoting individuals' career decision making.

- **Poverty**: Poverty is one of the most devastating conditions the participants had to face in their daily lives; however, it is encouraging to note that they did not succumb to the effects thereof. Instead, they perceived the situation as an opportunity to set goals that would improve their lives in the future, including that of their families and the community. This kind of response to the challenging social conditions is an indication of the resilience the participants have developed. Most importantly, they were not in denial of the direness of the situation but looked beyond it; one participant mentioned in her comment that the most hurtful experience she had in her life was *"… going to school without eating (sic) [without having eaten], no money, and sleeping without eating. I don't want to see other children being abused in this manner"* (B, IP17, 4). The same idea is reinforced by a similar expression in participant number 26's collage (Figure 4.3) in which she used pictures displaying the kind of life she would to like to live, and the things she would like to have by the time she could overcome the major financial challenges coming her way. These include getting married and establishing a family of her own, having her own assets (a gold watch and her dream car), picture of food (a burger) to indicate her longing to enjoy the type of food she anticipates being able to afford by the time she starts working. She also stated in the collage that she would start a business and make money (picture of coins) to buy everything she wished to have (E, IP26). What stood out for me in the collage is that the participant did not want to bury herself in the pit of poverty but wanted to rise up to pursue her goals and the new life (writing up her new life story).

Figure 4.3

Collage depicting the kind of life the participant desires to live in future if they "can manage to overcome major financial challenges" (a supposition confirmed by their verbal comments, such as the one provided here)



- **Insecurity:** Insecurity is one of the most noticeable elements of the participants' collages, wherein they expressed different fears which ultimately seemed to be a threat to their career decision making. It was concerning to note that every time the participants discussed their future, they would also express a fear of either sickness, death, accidents, or insecurity, not only in the presence of their own surroundings but in the community at large. These kinds of insecurities could hinder the achievement of their dreams. Examples of such expressions are contained in each of the collages (Figures 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7) presented in the subsequent pages below.
- **Fear of sickness:** In this collage (Figure 4.4), the participant saw herself with a prosperous future, having graduated from a tertiary institution, owning her own home, enjoying time with friends, and travelling. The phrase *"I am graduating, and is a Faculty of Education"* written alongside the picture of the graduation ceremony reinforces her vision of success, while her

wish to explore life can be seen in the map showing the places she would wish to travel, in which she wrote *"Now am travelling because I always wanted to see places that I don't know."* However, she feels that her fear of sickness could be an obstacle in her journey towards her future career life (E, IP26), as illustrated in the phrase *"These are challenges that could happen through my life"* depicted through a picture of a nurse/dentist attending a patient to portray her fear.

Figure 4.4

Collage portraying participant's dream career and insecurity (fear of sickness), depicted by the picture of a patient being attended by a nurse. In Figures 4.5 and 4.6, the participants express their fear of accidents, injury, and death as obstacles to achieving their goals.

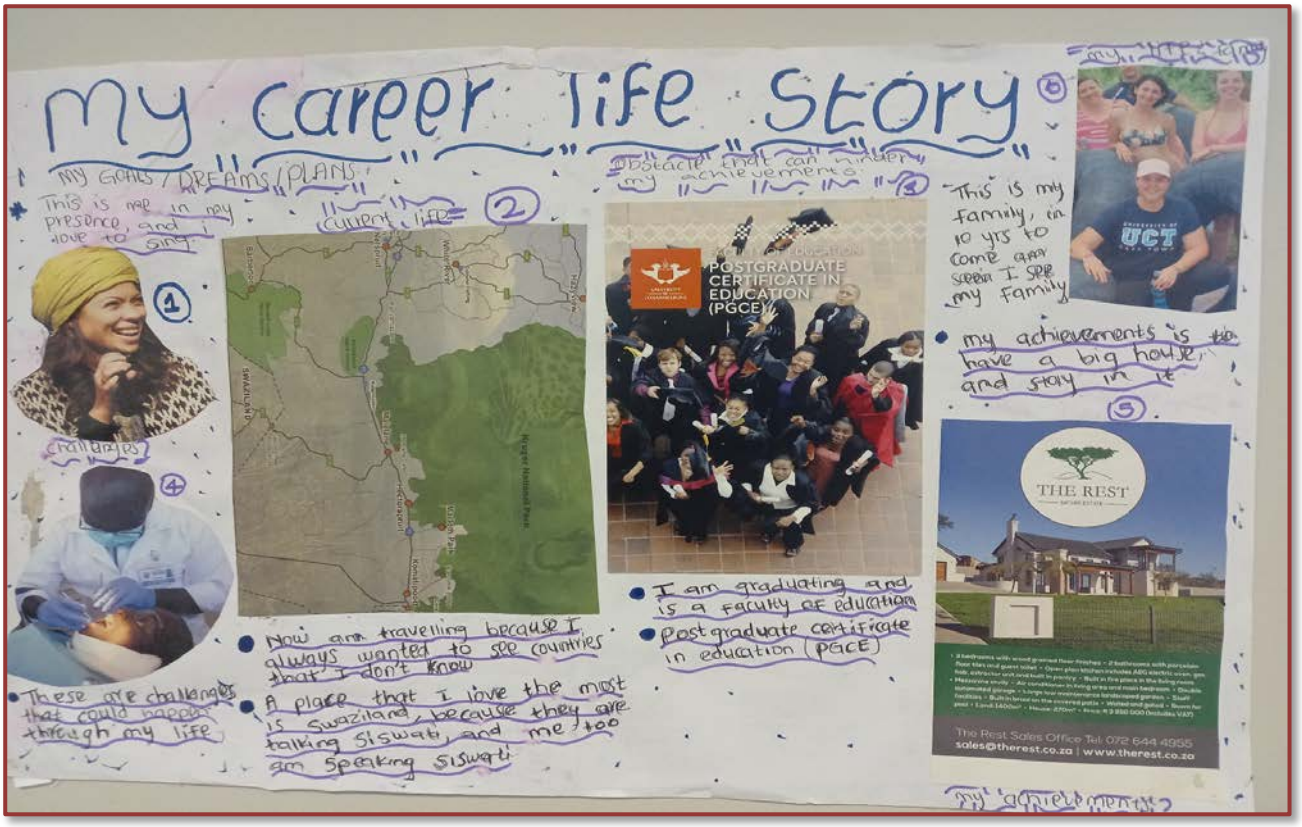


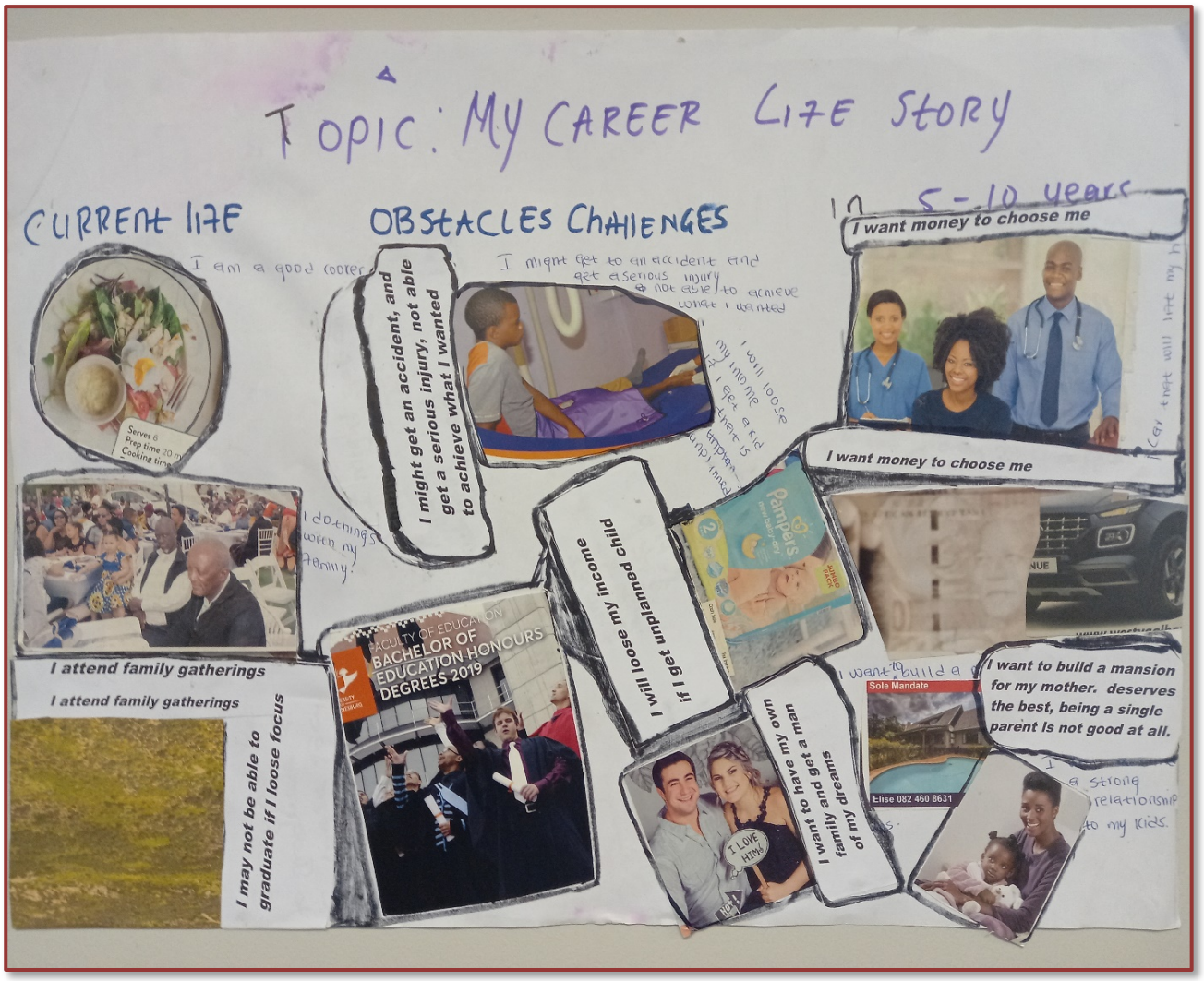
Figure 4.5

Collage showing participant's insecurities (burnt house and car accident) as obstacles to achieving her career goals

In the above collage (Figure 4.5), participant number 16 used the picture of a burnt house and a car that has been wrecked in an accident to express her greatest fears, emphasised in the phrases "*I could die or burn inside my house or burn inside my family's house"* (feeling of insecurity in her own surroundings); *"I can die in an accident without achieving my goals"* (fear of the unknown). With such a feeling, the participant would need some kind of consistent assurance to remain motivated in her life plans. From the pictures in the collage, I learnt that her dream career is to become a nurse or a farmer, to own her own house, and to travel to different places as her hobby, but her feeling of insecurity could impact her negatively and hinder her from achieving her goals.

Figure 4.6

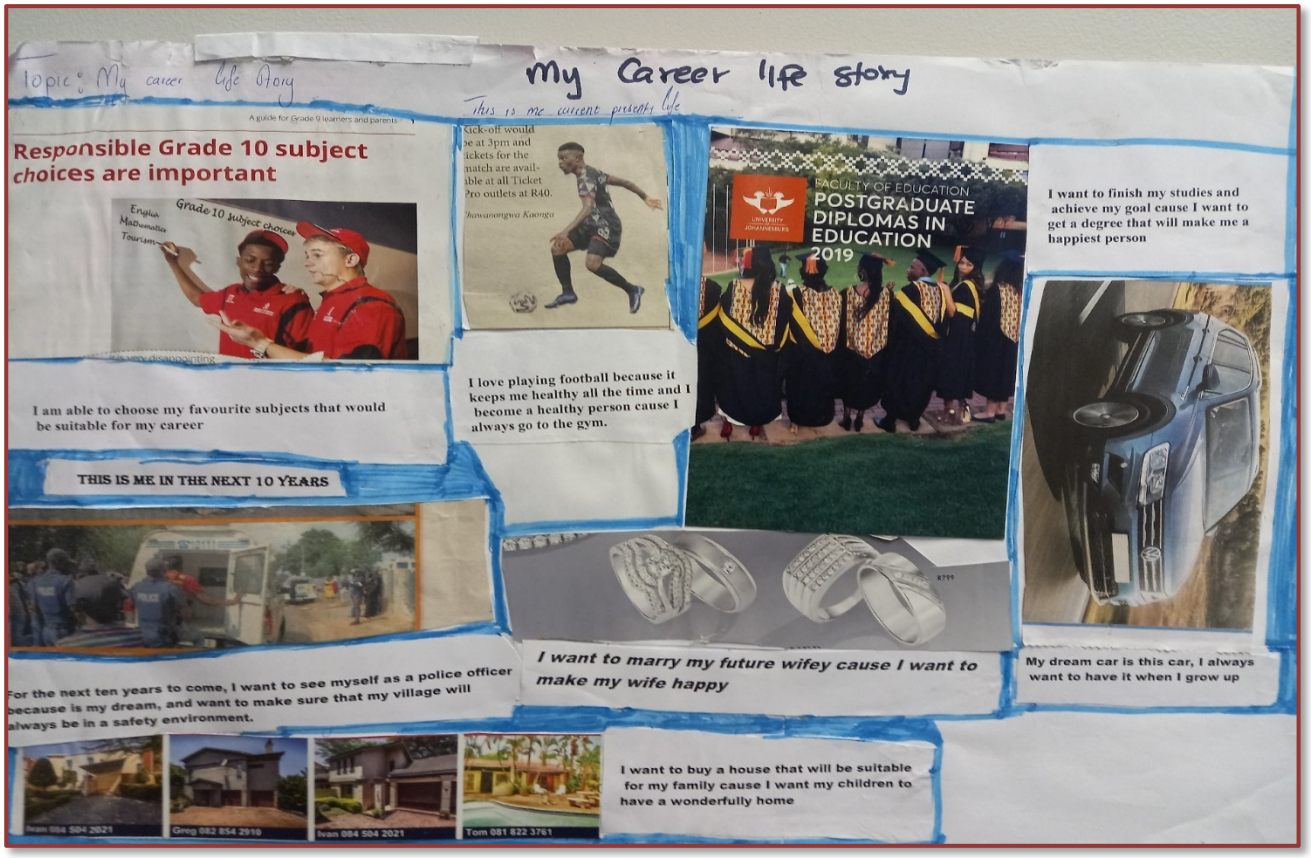
Collage showing participant's insecurity (picture of a patient in bed) as an obstacle to her career goals



In the collage above (Figure 4.6), participant number 20 expressed her wish to pursue her studies and live a wealthy life, stating, *"I want money to choose me;"* however, she also expresses the feeling of insecurity (fear of accidents/unforeseen injuries) depicted through the picture of a patient seated on the bed, alongside which she wrote *"Ï might get an accident, and get a serious injury, not able to get what I wanted."* Notwithstanding the fears expressed, it is encouraging to note that the participant recognised the fact that she had a responsibility to take care of herself as a teenager, and not to lose focus in order for her wishes to come true. She used the picture of diapers to illustrate her fear of an unwanted pregnancy, writing *"I will lose my income if I get an unplanned child"; "I may not be able to graduate if I lose focus."* What stands out in this collage is the participant's persistence in achieving her goals, regardless of the uncertainties that might arise along the way.

Figure 4.7

Collage portraying participant's "dream career" (as he explained) in policing (as seen in the picture with a group of police officials in uniform at work) and his endeavours to promote safety in the community (just as the police in the picture are busy working in the community)



❖ **Community safety**: This collage (Figure 4.7. above) illustrates that the lack of safety in the community was considered as a threat to the participant's future career endeavours. Although none of the participants explicitly mentioned the sub-theme "lack of community safety", some of their expressions allude to this concern. For example, participant number 34 used a picture to express his desire to become a police officer in order to promote a safe community, writing: *"For the next ten years, I see myself as a police officer because it's my dream, and I want to make sure that my village will always be in a safety* (sic) [safe] *environment"* (E, IP34). Another security factor is seen in the three pictures of beautiful houses he wished to build to enhance safety in his personal environment, thus he states: *"I want to buy a house that will be suitable for my family cause* (sic) *I want my children to have a wonderful home"* (E, IP34).

4.5.3.3 Politics

Participants discussed politics as another factor influencing their career choices. Considering the unstable political climate that prevailed in the country at the time of conducting this study,

participants cited with great concern the impact of corruption and fraud as limiting factors that impeded equal access to job opportunities and opportunities to further their studies. During the pre-intervention group discussions, participants indicated that they felt very discouraged by corruption in which certain individuals who are connected to high-profile officials in one way or another are favoured, placing them at an advantage over others. One group stated, *"If you want a job you have to have connections with people who will help you get the job"* (GA, 3–4, 1), consequently, the rate of poverty and unemployment will always remain high. Another group mentioned that, in extreme cases, some individuals may even become victims of sexual manipulation in their attempts to secure a job.

4.5.3.4 Advancement in technology

Participants also discussed technology as a factor influencing their career choice and decision making. The onset of digitisation has far-reaching effects in that the emergence of new digital careers and the extinction of other careers should always be taken into consideration. The comments made clearly indicated that participants had insight into the impact of technological development and the Fourth Industrial Revolution:

"They use technology (machines) instead of hiring people to work" (GA, 2, 1); *They must also think that when they use much technology the careers can also disappear (sic)"* (GB, 28–29, 1). Therefore, it must be acknowledged that, as technology continues to advance, information travels faster and people rarely stay in one career for a lifetime; thus, careers continue to evolve along with social and economic conditions (Wilson & Hutchinson in Eliason, 2014).

4.5.4 Theme 4: Impact of the career construction intervention

The fourth theme represents the participants' views on the benefits of having participated in the career construction intervention programme. These benefits are presented as sub-themes that emerged from the in-depth, inductive–deductive analysis of the post-intervention semi-structured focus-group interview transcripts, *CIP* narratives (Part 4 in particular), and the timelines from the intervention group. The four sub-themes identified include self-construction, the power of personal mottos, optimism, and the Life Orientation experience through which the participants' personal reflections indicate their realisation that they are capable not only of shaping their own lives but also mastering external circumstances as well. It is worth noting that participants displayed an improved sense of self and the ability to manage their set goals in pursuit of their future career aspirations. The four sub-themes are summarised below, followed by a detailed discussion in the subsequent sections.

Table 4.10

Theme 4: Impact of the career construction intervention and the four sub-themes: Self-construction, The power of personal mottos, Optimism, Life Orientation lessons experience

THEME 4: IMPACT OF THE CAREER CONSTRUCTION INTERVENTION				
Sub-themes	**Self-construction**	**The power of personal mottos**	**Optimism**	**Life Orientation lessons experience**
Descriptors	Self-exploration, self-reflection, confrontation of the painful past, making meaning of lived experiences, and courage to shape the future	Intrinsic motivation, realisation of personal strengths and abilities, appreciation of life and seizing opportunities	Valuing, appreciation of, and seizing opportunities; love and care for family; change current life circumstance for the better	The role of Life Orientation in the learners' education and career choice as well as the impact thereof on their personal lives and recommendations to enhance effectiveness

4.5.4.1 Self-construction

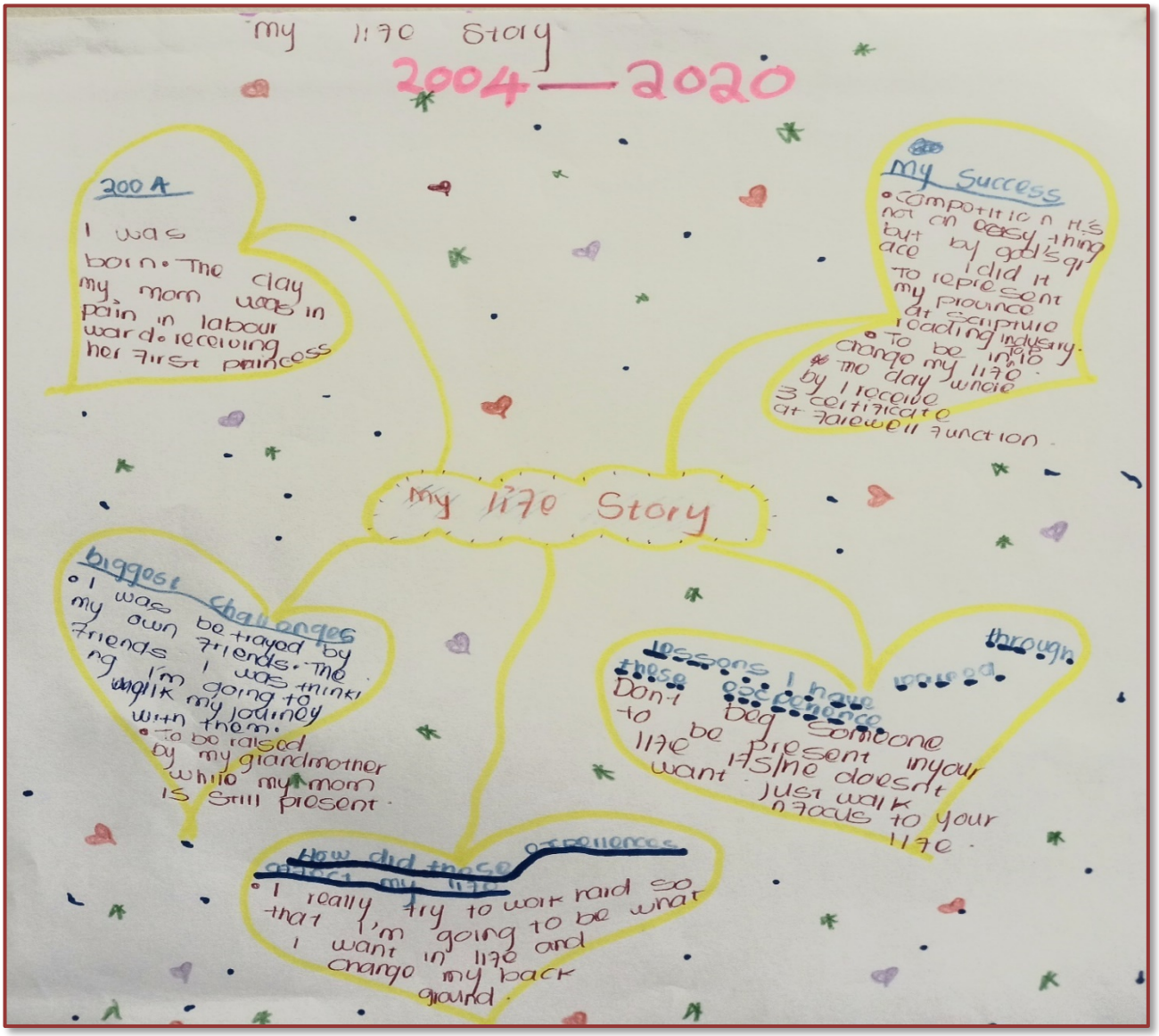
Hartung (2007) maintains that self-construction emerges when people participate in activities that help them explore life experiences, so that they know how to adapt to environmental changes and understand why they behave the way they do. The participants' active engagement with the collages, timelines, *CIP* narratives, and post-intervention semi-structured focus-group interview transcripts allowed them to relate their personal experiences and reflect in order to understand themselves better and, in the process, confront their painful past and exciting moments, so that they could make sense of those experiences and gain the courage to shape their own futures (Maree, 2013). Through these activities, participants were able to reflect on their personal lives and become more familiar with themselves, and they ultimately displayed confidence in facing the future with courage and simultaneously started charting their career prospects.

The timelines in Figures 4.8. and 4.9 below provide examples of how participants used their painful past experiences to craft a new positive view of life, a concept expressed by Maree (2013) as "turning pain into gain" by sharing their challenges, lessons learnt, and achievements through those experiences. It was encouraging to note the increased sense of self-knowledge and self-worth gained by participants through their shared experiences, which helped them set their new life goals as

displayed in their individual timelines. The picture in Figure 4.8. below illustrates how the participant benefited from drawing her own timeline, which helped her to revisit her past experiences and use them to construct a better future.

Figure 4.8

Timeline portraying how participant used her previous painful experiences to construct her future



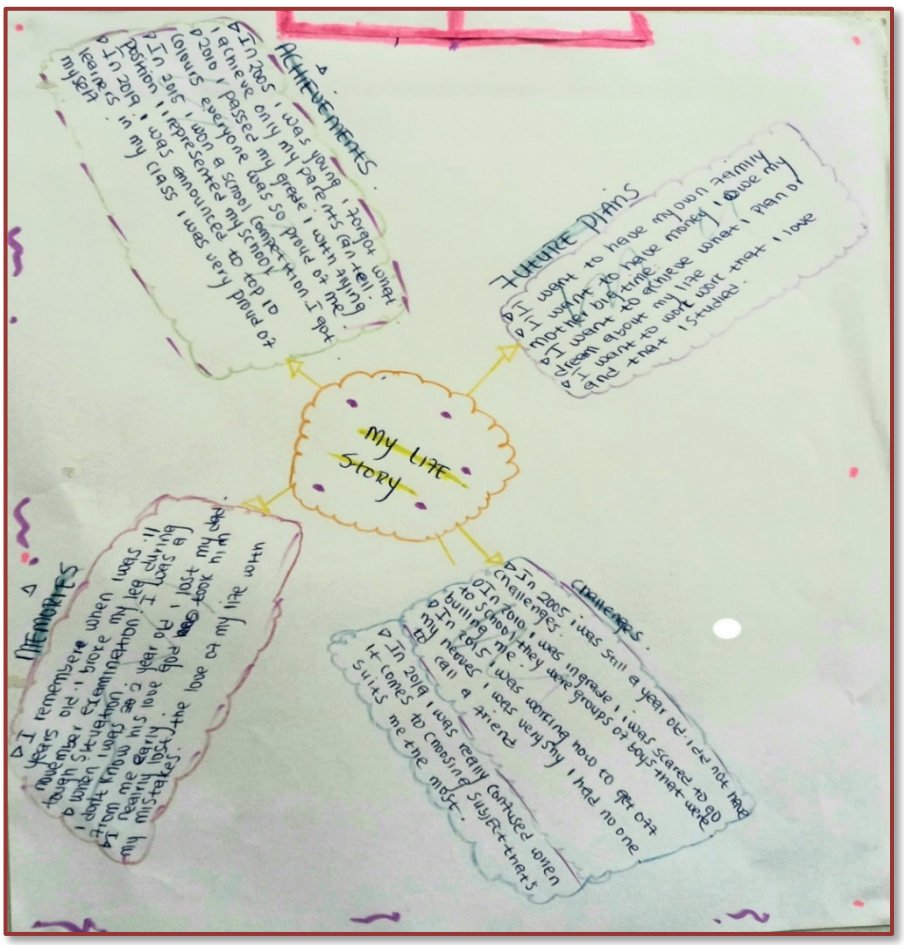
Timeline portraying how participant used her previous painful experiences to construct her future (i.e. having been betrayed by her friends whom she trusted, and the hurt of being raised by her grandmother while her biological mother was alive, did not stop her desire to reach her goals, as seen from the statements, *"I was betrayed by my own friends"* and *"To be raised by my grandmother while my biological mother is still present"* F, IP16).

The participant is confident in her positive view of life, despite all the pain she previously endured: *"I really try to work hard so that I can become what I want in life."* Building on previous successes (being in the top 10 at a scripture reading competition and certificate awards) also helped her gain a high sense of control and confidence over life events, stating, *"Do not beg someone to be present in your life, if she doesn't, just walk away and focus on your own life"* (F, IP16).

- **Self-exploration:** Participating in the timeline activity offered participants an opportunity to explore their personal lives more in-depth by confronting their own pain and reflecting on their successes and building on them to craft a brighter future. Figure 4.9 below illustrates how participant number 20 learnt to master social responsibility to care for others, regardless of several hurts experienced at an early age, as expressed in her verbal statements, *"I want to have my own family." "When I was 11 years old I broke my leg, when I was 2 years, I lost my dad, I don't know his love, God took him from me early"* (F, IP20). From these statements, it can be said that the participant was able to build on the knowledge of her previous achievements to plan for her future (passing grade with flying colours and winning the school competitions).

Figure 4.9

Timeline illustrating how participant learnt to master social responsibility to care for others regardless of experiencing several painful events at an early age



- **Self-discovery: Learning from the best:** The process of self-discovery is regarded as an important construct, as it enables participants to take another look at themselves and make amends for their previous mistakes, as confirmed by Corey (2013), who states that individuals can make decisions about the future as they become aware of how the past has influenced the present. This can be seen in the comments by participant number 33, who indicated that he had once not treated other people well by talking back to both adults and friends, and he later felt remorse for his behaviour *"I had a problem of giving a bad response to adults, even to my friends, and I started losing some of my friends due to my bad attitude"* (F, IP 33). It is interesting to note the impact of self-regulated learning and the heightened awareness that stems from realising the importance of learning from others, as he also states *"don't act like you know, whereas you don't know, learning from others is better than to do mistakes"* (F, IP 33)

4.5.4.2 Power of personal mottos (narratives)

A personal motto is a wise saying that people believe in and that resonates with them, and they use it as guidance (Savickas, 2011b). By completing Part 4 of the *CIP*, participants were able to verbalise several of their favourite mottos in pursuit of certain values they believed were important in shaping their lives. The following mottos were repeatedly mentioned: *"Education is power"; "Education is the key to success"; "Time is money;" "Time wasted will never be regained;" "Where there is a will, there is a way;" "Strength is unity"* [B, IP03; B, IP06; B, IP10; B, IP20; B, IP31; B, IP23; B, IP25; B, IP49; B, IP50]. When asked to motivate these expressions, participants indicated that they believed that they obtain more knowledge through education and can change their lives for the better. The use of time at their disposal and self-motivation were regarded as the most important driving forces in the achievement of their career goals. Participants expressed the importance of sheer determination and remaining focused on their goals, learning from their own failures/mistakes, and being accountable for their actions: *"What you reap is what you sow"* (B, IP23); *"You never know what you have until it's gone"* (B, IP20); *"When days are dark, friends are few"; "Don't let your past describe your future"* (B, IP33); *"Wisdom through experience"* (B, IP18).

It was also noted that the themes that emerged in the participants' responses regarding their favourite magazines, books, movies, TV programmes, websites, and apps cohered with those that emerged from their favourite mottos. These include themes of a strong character to face adversity, patience, persistence, and sense of responsibility, which suggest an increased awareness and understanding gained through the intervention activities. The following statements, among others, were made: *"Never let your guts down", "History never describes a future"* (B, IP33); *"Never give*

up; patience pays" (B, IP30). *"Imphela ngatalelwa kuphumelela (Born to succeed indeed)* (B, IP3). *"Sometimes you have to toughen up and stand for yourself"* (B, IP23).

It is worth noting that few negative themes were expressed without a sense of hope for a better future. *"What went wrong with my life"* (B, IP23). *"When days are dark friends are few"* (B, IP33). *"Iyinsizi zalomhlaba"* (this hurting world); *"When my friends betrayed me"; "The day I lost my grandmother"; "I could have done better"* (B, IP20).

From these statements, it can be said that the opportunity to share their desired personal mottos enabled participants to make sense of those mottos as driving forces in setting and achieving their life goals.

4.5.4.3 Optimism

Throughout the career construction intervention, participants expressed a high degree of hope regarding their future aspirations, which was demonstrated through the improved ability of self-control and high confidence. Participant number 16 expressed her wish to improve her family's current life circumstances for the better, and the assertiveness to pursue her goals until it is achieved by stating *"I will try to work hard to become what I want in life and change my family's background"* (F, IP16). Participant number 34 on the other hand expressed his optimism by emphasising the importance of following one's goal until it is achieved: *"As a person, you must have a goal to follow till you achieve it one day. I must give myself enough time to study and know what I want in life because time is clocking just like clockwise watch*" (F, IP34). Some participants made courageous statements displaying good insight into their experiences, whether good or bad, and the understanding that their future lies in their hands. These include statements such as *"I learned that I have to believe in myself, trust myself and have confidence"* (F, IP18). *"The lesson that I have learned is that I have to deal with my own problems, the problem must be my own, and not another person's problem."* (D, IP26)

4.5.4.4 Experience of Life Orientation lessons

This sub-theme emerged from an in-depth inductive analysis of the post-intervention interview transcripts. Two sub-themes were further identified relating to the participants' experience of the Life Orientation lessons, namely the role of Life Orientation in the learners' career choice and recommendations for improvement, as discussed below.

i. Role of Life Orientation in learners' career choice

Participants had an opportunity to share how they experienced the Life Orientation lessons during the post-intervention semi-structured interviews. Their responses suggest that they felt as

though the provision of career information was very limited during the Life Orientation lessons. Nevertheless, they appreciate the positive impact on personal development and the knowledge on religion; however, much still needs to be done with regard to career development, as expressed in these statements:

"To a certain extent it does help you understand yourself…, but in terms of careers it (LO) is not assisting us well because it does not provide us with careers information." (G, IP33, 7, 201–203)

"Life Orientation should not only focus on the self, but also expand to provide more knowledge about careers. Less time be spent on physical education outside, but in career education. Currently, very little career information is provided in LO, we spend much time outside playing and less time on career education." (G, IP34, 7, 226–229).

"For me Mam, I think it helps a bit, that you know how do we deal with life circumstances in the community, and what to do when there are cases of rape, abuse and so on, *but very little information is provided regarding careers information."* (G, 7, 210–212).

ii. Recommendations for improvement of Life Orientation lessons

In response to the question regarding recommendations to improve Life Orientation lessons, the participants suggested increasing the number of Life Orientation lessons per week, engaging in educational excursions to make the subject more practical, capacitation of Life Orientation teachers, and changing the perception of the Life Orientation subject.

- **Increasing the number of lessons per week:** Several participants indicated that the number of Life Orientation lessons a week is inadequate, since only two lessons are offered, covering both curriculum content and physical education. Participant number 19 from one group stated, *"I think it will be good to learn LO every day because LO teaches us about life, and to know what you want in life"* (G, IP19, 8, 245). Another participant expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the amount of time spent on certain activities over others, stating *"currently, very little career information is provided in LO, we spend much time outside playing and less time on career education. They teach us about different religions and the issue of rights and cases of abuse that we must report them* (G, IP34, 7, 228–230).
- **Educational excursions to make the subject practical:** Participants expressed the need for educational excursions, so that they can be exposed to a variety of careers in different fields. When asked to elaborate this point, it became clear that they were referring to career exhibitions and job shadowing programmes, which would expose them to real-life job experience. Participants 33 and 32 stated, *"They must also make it practical like going on trips to learn*

more things" (G, IP33, 07, 209). One participant expressed the need to be taught about options for skills-oriented careers. *"Maybe, kufuna basifundzise nemapractical skills careers maybe kuncono"* (perhaps they must also teach us about the skills-oriented careers, maybe they are better) (G, IP32, 6, 200).

- **Capacitation of Life Orientation teachers:** Participants also expressed concern regarding the Life Orientation teachers' lack of confidence to in facilitating career guidance, and they unanimously suggested the need to capacitate their teachers in that regard, stating *"We are asking if you will still assist our teachers when we come back, because now it's already late- so that they assist other learners, especially those who did not participate in the programme because they do not have the knowledge that we already have about careers"* (G, 7–8 240–243).
- **Perception of the Life Orientation subject:** It was interesting to note that the participants were aware of some negative perceptions that learners have towards Life Orientation, as expressed in the following comment: *"We need to take the subject more seriously"* (G, IP6, IP29 and IP38, 08, 250).

This striking comment is a wake-up call to the DBE to consider adding value to the Life Orientation subject by improving the way in which it is presently perceived by most learners.

4.6 SUMMARY OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

This section provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes based on a comparison of those that emerged during the pre- and post-intervention analysis. The themes presented are based on the most prevalent comments received from the participants as they shared their experiences at different stages of the career construction intervention programme. As is evident from the preceding discussion, the data obtained revealed an increase in participants' knowledge about a variety of careers and their interest in learning more about careers compared to the initial stages of the intervention programme. The themes are summarised in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11

Summary of themes and sub-themes of the career construction intervention programme

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME	PRE-INTERVENTION THEMES	POST-INTERVENTION THEMES
Theme 1: Career development	Career exploration	Participants were very reluctant to participate in the intervention programme in the early stages and thus struggled to share the potential careers they wanted pursue. This was evident in the high level of disciplinary problems that occasionally arose during our first encounter.	There was a remarkable improvement in the disciplinary problems and the willingness to participate. Participants were able to share their thoughts regarding the possible careers they wished to pursue.
	Subject choice	Lack of understanding that subject choice is one of the most significant factors in career choice.	Increased awareness that not only interests and abilities are important for career choices, and several factors, including technology, socio-economic changes, and subject combination, shape one's career.

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME	PRE-INTERVENTION THEMES	POST-INTERVENTION THEMES
	Career knowledge	Several participants displayed inadequate knowledge about a variety of careers (jobs) available in the labour market.	Increased career knowledge and decisiveness in the participants' listed career preferences after completing the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template.
	The value of education	Initially, participants could not see the value of education in their lives as they were discouraged by political influences on the lack of equal funding for learners' studies.	Education was seen as a breakthrough to a better life and a step towards overcoming challenges, not only in their personal lives but in their families and community as well.
Theme 2: Career adaptability	Concern	Lack of individual career plans indicated that participants had little concern for their future career lives.	Heightened concern enabled them to set goals for their lives.
	Control	Initially, participants struggled to convey that they are aware of the role that they themselves play in making appropriate choices, not only for their careers but for life in general.	Participants became aware of the fact that they are capable of controlling their own lives and shaping it into what they want it to be.
	Curiosity	Lack of curiosity limited the participants' ability to explore career opportunities in different environments and to venture into the unknown. Generally, participants struggled to express their need to achieve personal growth.	It was only after the intervention activities that participants started showing an interest in learning more about careers and expressed their desire for more knowledge.

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME	PRE-INTERVENTION THEMES	POST-INTERVENTION THEMES
	Confidence	Participants struggled to portray adequate self-knowledge as they struggled to describe their areas of development (strengths and weaknesses) in Section B, Part 4 of the *CIP* narratives. A number of them left blank spaces, suggesting poor self-confidence.	Participants expressed a high degree of personal understanding, which is evident in their expressions indicating that they feel very confident about facing their future, regardless of what it may hold, and can take risks fearlessly.
Theme 3: Career choice influences	Significant others	Participants acknowledged the significant role that family members and relatives play in the decisions they make in general. However, they raised concerns that such support rarely focuses on career matters; as a result, they find themselves pursuing their career aspirations by themselves.	Participants' shared experiences indicated that parents, siblings, and immediate relatives are people they normally look to for advice when faced with challenges, although the kind of advice provided by parents is mostly expressed as their desires for what their children should become in the future.
	Socio-economic factors	Different socio-economic factors impacting negatively on career decisions in general were raised by participants during the pre-intervention group discussions, where they mentioned a lack of financial support for further studies, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment. These factors were perceived as social barriers that impeded the achievement of their career goals and thus must be kept in mind whenever career decisions are made. As a result,	It was encouraging to note the sense of resilience the participants had already developed during the post-intervention group discussions, which was evident in their interest to continue planning and set goals while remaining mindful of employability careers in order to combat joblessness by becoming more adaptable and acquiring skills to manage themselves

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME	PRE-INTERVENTION THEMES	POST-INTERVENTION THEMES
		these factors somehow raise feelings of insecurity in their struggle for individual career plans.	in the absence of stable employment structures. From this kind of attitude, it can be said that the participants were not in denial of the dire situation they faced but looked beyond it.
	Politics	During the pre-intervention group discussions, participants expressed their deep concern regarding the unstable political climate in South Africa at the time of this study, relating to corruption and fraud in the interest of political gains by high-profile officials, which impact negatively on equal access to job opportunities.	Learners remained concerned, even after the intervention programme, that the impact of politics on education will always be a thorny issue that hampers their access to career opportunities, except for those who happen to have connections with high-profile officials, which gives them an advantage over others.
	Advancement in technology	Participants shared ideas indicating that they had insight into the impact that technological developments had on future career aspirations, including the Fourth Industrial Revolution.	A definite resolve to consider new digital careers and the extinction of obsolete careers during their career planning.

MAIN THEME	SUB-THEME	PRE-INTERVENTION THEMES	POST-INTERVENTION THEMES
Theme 4: Impact of the career construction intervention	Self-construction	Most participants were not aware of the influence their subjective identities and personal experiences have on shaping their future career lives. Through the intervention activities (timelines, *CIP* narratives, and pre- and post-intervention semi-structured focus group interviews), they had an opportunity to reflect on their lives and relate their personal experiences to help them understand themselves better	An increased sense of self-knowledge and self-worth gained through their shared experiences and confidence in setting their new life goals and charting their career prospects.
	Power of personal mottos	Participants were unaware that verbalising their personal mottos can have a profound influence on shaping their career lives, as these reflect their belief systems and values.	Participants used their favourite mottos as guidance on deciding about their career lives.
	Optimism	Some participants were able to share some kind of hope regarding their future aspirations, regardless of the challenges that could arise.	Participants expressed a strong assertion to pursue their goals until they achieved them, and the desire to improve their lives for the better, thus understanding that their future lies in their own hands.
	Experience of Life Orientation lessons	Participants felt that the provision of career information during the Life Orientation lessons was very limited, and the number of lessons per week is insufficient.	All participants agreed on the need to improve the quality of Life Orientation lessons and the number of lessons per week.

	Recommendations to improve Life Orientation lessons	Complaints raised included the amount of time spent on sports, lack of exposure, and learners' negative perceptions regarding the Life Orientation subject.	All participants recommended the introduction of educational excursions to make the subject more practical, capacitation of Life Orientation teachers, and the need for learners to change their negative perceptions of Life Orientation.

4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, the qualitative results of the research study were presented according to the various themes and sub-themes that emerged from the in-depth inductive–-deductive and iterative data analysis process of various data sources from both the pre-and post-intervention stages of the data generation process. All data sources were analysed by means of thematic analysis. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were provided for all the themes and sub-themes and supported by participants' verbatim quotations. The summary of themes and sub-themes is presented in Table 4.9. In Chapter 5, the results are discussed critically by relating them to the theoretical framework of my study and the literature I reviewed in the earlier chapters.

CHAPTER 5: RELATING THE FINDINGS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH TO EXISTING LITERATURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss my research findings as reported in Chapter 4 and compare them to the existing literature on group-based career construction counselling and its effectiveness in enhancing the career development of learners in rural areas. I base the above-mentioned approach on the recommendations provided by Jebb, Parrigon, and Woo (2017), who argue that researchers should strike a balance by avoiding applying one approach to the exclusion of all others.

The discussion of existing literature first focuses on the themes and sub-themes identified **inductively, namely career development, career choice influences, and the impact of the intervention on the participants' career development**. Next, I discuss those themes and sub-themes that emerged **deductively** from my qualitative research data. As seen in Chapter 4, the four constructs of the *CAAS*[12], namely **concern, curiosity, confidence, and control, as well as the overall theme, namely career adaptability**, were used deductively (I sought evidence of the existence of these four sub-themes as well as the main construct [theme] in participants' observations (Maggiori et al., 2015; Maree, 2012).

As mentioned above, comparing my findings with existing literature paved the way to explain whether the findings in my study concur with or differ from the findings of previous studies. I also report on findings in the current study and identify, interpret, and broaden any new and emerging trends that previous studies had not reported on. It is worth mentioning that there are currently limited publications on career development in the field of career construction counselling, as it has not been widely researched within African contexts at this stage. Patton and McMahon (2017) affirm this limitation by emphasising the need for more research on young learners' career development in order to help them realise its influence on their future working lives.

In the following section, the themes and related sub-themes identified in Chapter 4 (Table 4.9) are discussed[13] with the intent of answering the research questions and relating outcomes to the existing literature, as discussed in Chapter 2. Additional literature is cited where possible. Next, I discuss the critical reflections on my study, which includes the experience of the Life Orientation lessons and the impact of the intervention programme, where after I end the chapter with concluding remarks.

[12] Career Adapt-Abilities Scale – South African Form (Maree, 2012).
[13] The summary of themes and sub-themes of the career construction intervention programme are presented in Table 4.9 on pp. 157–162.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO EXISTING LITERATURE

In this section, I explore the results of the study based on the themes and sub-themes that emerged from eight data sources, as identified in Table 4.1, namely the group discussions, *CIP*, *MCM* inventory, Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, semi-structured group interviews, collages, timelines, and my reflective journal and observations.[14] Where possible, the themes and sub-themes are linked to determine the influence of the group-based career construction intervention on rural learners' career development.

I did my best to ensure that the findings that cut across the two data gathering phases, namely before and after the intervention programme, are compared in order to give prominence to the changes (if any) in the participants' perceptions after taking part in the intervention programme.

In the section below, I elaborate on the themes and sub-themes that were identified inductively from qualitative datasets as discussed in Chapter 4. This is followed by a close examination of the deductively confirmed themes.

5.2.1 Career development

Research has shown that group-based career counselling designed specifically for the South African context can be effective in enhancing high school learners' career development and promote career decision making. This assertion is confirmed by Miles and Naidoo (2017), who examined the effect of a group-based career intervention programme on the career decision making of high school learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and found that their career maturity and decision-making skills have increased. In another group-based life design intervention study with unemployed youth (also in South Africa), Maree (2021) found that the participants displayed positive change in their career lives, had improved self-understanding, and a broadened life perspective.

Similarly, the participants in my study were surprised by how substantially their self-perception has changed after participating in the various activities of the career construction intervention. Four sub-themes emerged inductively under the career development theme, namely career exploration, subject choice, career field knowledge, and the value of education, and are discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Career exploration

In my research findings, career exploration refers to the active engagement of learners in activities in which they explore career information by themselves, thereby increasing the likelihood of them wanting to know more, developing their self-concept, and conducting further research on a

[13]All eight data sources are listed in Table 4.1, along with the data referencing and coding system on pp. 103–104.

variety of career options in order to make informed choices. The more learners are exposed to different situations and experiences, the more they learn about the world around them and start planning for their goals. The participants' explorative engagement in various activities in this study, particularly the collages, *CIP*, *MCM* inventory, and the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, allowed them to gain in-depth knowledge and insight regarding career categories and specific careers in each category.

During these explorative engagements, participants investigated their interests and abilities, relating them to their desired careers in order to make informed career decisions. In so doing, they also provided detailed explanations of what they wanted to achieve and the reasons for their choices. Several studies have highlighted the importance of promoting career development at early stages in the individuals' lives (between the ages of 14 and 24). This was the age of the participants in my study at the time of the intervention; a stage during which individuals explore the self and different vocational options and acquire the keystones of career adaptability (Hartung et al., 2008; Savickas, 2019b). The importance of career exploration resonates with Super's (1957, 1990, 2013) career development model in which he emphasises the importance of an exploration stage (also called the crystallisation stage) as a critical stage in which individuals accomplish certain tasks. During this stage, adolescents are also expected to gather information about themselves and various occupations to learn more about the world of work and to determine what kind of work they might pursue in accordance with their ability levels (Hartung in Brown & Lent, 2013; Kidd, 2007; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).

The presumption that explorative engagement leads to increased career development was also affirmed in my research when participants expressed their excitement as they worked on the collages and the timelines through which they explored their desired careers, set goals, and highlighted potential obstacles and explained how they would overcome them. The participants' understanding of different career categories is also evident in their increased career knowledge and improved career development, which I believe resulted from their active interaction with the *CIP* questionnaire and the *MCM* inventory.

5.2.1.2 Subject choice

Several secondary school learners are not aware that the subjects they choose as they transition to Grade 10 have a huge impact on their future career. They do not seem to understand that their subject set in Grade 10–12 has a powerful impact on their ability to enter their desired careers, and they often only discover this when they want to enrol at institutions of higher learning. Regrettably, the vast majority of South African learners (especially learners from impoverished

areas) are not properly informed of the fact that that their ability to enter certain careers is determined by the completion of specific subjects (Mahlangu, 2011; Maketekete, 2022; Naidoo et al., 2019; Streicher, 2021).

This assertion links to my study, as I noted this in my participants before they took part in the activities of the intervention programme. Some of them could not relate relevant subjects to their desired careers, as they displayed sheer confusion when they completed Parts 2 and 3 of the *CIP* on career choices and categories. Some participants' responses to the career choice questions versus the subjects they liked and/or disliked contained contradictory statements (i.e. the careers mentioned did not relate to the subjects required for admission to particular fields of study). Some of the participants failed to provide reasons why they liked or disliked certain careers and subjects, while several of them left blank spaces regarding their career preferences. This is evident in the examples in Table 5.1 below, which show inconsistency in participants' responses regarding their career preferences. For instance, in her response regarding career preferences, participant number 1 mentioned social work, teaching, and nursing as her preferred careers but repeated the same careers for careers she disliked, which indicates a lack of understanding. On the other hand, participant number 24's responses displayed confusion and a lack of awareness regarding the impact of subject choices on her desired careers, as she mentioned in Part 2, Section 4 that her dream career is to become a doctor, yet she dislikes Mathematics and Natural Sciences, which are core subjects for this career.

Table 5.1

Extract from Parts 2 and 3 of the CIP transcript showing inconsistency in the responses of participants number 1 and 24 to the career choice and category questions

1. Biographic details	**Female Participant 1** **Age: 16**	**Female Participant 24** **Age: 165**
Part 2: Career Choice Questions	**Career Choice Questions**	**Career Choice Questions**
4a. Three favourite subjects	SiSwati Home Language, English First Additional Language, and Mathematics: [48%, 50%, & 38%]	SiSwati Home Language, English First Additional Language, and Life Orientation [78%, 58%, 68%]
4b. Least favourite subjects	Natural Sciences, Technology, and Social Sciences: [28, 15%, & 10%]	Mathematics, Natural Sciences, & Social Sciences [40% 53%, 40%]

1a. Five careers liked	Social worker, teaching, singer, nurse, writing poems	Doctor, teaching, social worker, pilot, farmercist *(sic)* (pharmacist or farmer)
1b. Single reason per career choice	Bcos I like to help some people; To give people education; cos I sing music; cos to help people who are sick; cos to read poems	Cos I like to help people who are sick; I want to share my knowledge to other people; Bcos I don't want to see other people treated badly. I like to take care of animals
2a. Three careers liked least	Social worker, nurse, and teaching	Journalist, advocate, police
2b. Reasons for not liking per choice	Cos some people they want help; cos they want molding *(sic)*, some people want education *[seems do not understand]*	Bcos I don't like to speak; I don't like to speak lies; cos I don't like to run
3. Teachers' advice?	To learn to sing; teacher	\To study my books
4. Your dream career?	To be a singer	To be a doctor
Part 3: Career Categories	**Part 3: Career Categories**	**Part 3: Career Categories**
6 Careers liked	ICT, Marketing, Arts	Arts and Culture; Practical-Creative; Mathematics/Accounting; 4. Tourism Industry; 5. Marketing
6 Careers disliked	Research; social, care giving	Engineering and built environment; ICT; medical/paramedical; research; word artistry; practical technical

Such a state of confusion is characteristic of career indecision that is not unique to participants in this study. This is a situation faced by most learners in marginalised communities who are unable to access career counselling services. The reasons for this phenomenon include the following: (1) career counselling is quite expensive (Dabula & Makura, 2013; Maila & Ross, 2018; Maree et al., 2022; Maree, 2022a; Pillay, 2020); (2) Life Orientation fails in its attempts to facilitate satisfactory

career guidance in classrooms (Diale, 2016; Modiba, 2017; Mosia, 2011; Sefotho, 2017; Pillay, 2020); and (3) the lingering legacy of apartheid still impacts poor communities especially. The latter statement has been documented and highlighted in the literature on South African career education and the fact that it has historically focused only on the White elite population (Bantjes et al., 2016; Maila & Ross, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2021; Smit et al., 2015; Watson & Fouche, 2007; Watson, 2010; Watts, 2009). The aforementioned statements are also confirmed by Nong (2016) and Visser et al. (2021), who found that the lack of career guidance was most severe in townships and rural areas with poor socio-economic conditions and low exposure to career information, because it is not at their disposal.

There was significant improvement after participants completed the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template,[15] which is when they started to realise how certain subjects were linked to their preferred careers. As the study progressed, they also began to realise the need to perform well in those subjects they deemed relevant for their desired careers, as expressed by one participant when completing the *CIP*, *"…my favourite subjects are Mathematics and Natural Sciences with good performance of 60%-80%. I can study a degree in MBChB in a University to become a Doctor (sic-Medical Practitioner) … go to an Aviation/Flight school for Pilot, University of Technology to study Mechanical Engineering"* (B, IP26, 2). This participant was able to clarify why relevant subjects and a certain level of performance are required for him to pursue his desired career options, which are also not confined to one option, thus indicating enhanced career development.

The findings in this study confirmed that subject choices in high school are crucial in learners' career development; therefore, addressing the matter early in Grade 9 can offer numerous benefits to young learners, including enhanced "self-knowledge, career directionality, insight into their life-goals and confidence to attain their career aspirations" (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Chinyamurindi, 2016; Rabie et al., 2021; Streicher, 2021; Jäckel-Visser et al., 2021). As mentioned in the preceding discussion, learners must be afforded appropriate opportunities for self- and career exploration in order to maximise their potential and make informed career decisions and plan their goals accordingly.

This view supports the views expressed by Jordaan et al. (2009), Mnyaka (2016), Morris (2019), and Nong (2016), who advised learners to set goals for what they want to achieve in the year after finishing high school, as it is instrumental in guiding their actions towards fulfilling their future career needs. These authors further maintain that individuals with specific and challenging goals tend

[15] Tool for integrating individuals' career information into a concrete career plan by reflecting on themes that emerged during the exploration activities (*CIP* and *MCM)* and their meaning (see p. 122-123).

to perform more successfully and productively than those without such goals; as such, they engage in goal-directed behaviour which they themselves initiate, adjust, and uphold (Gati et al., 1996; Paixão & Gamboa, 2017; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). Recent studies have also confirmed the need for career guidance teachers and counsellors to support learners by exposing them to various career fields, so that they can make informed career decisions (Che, 2022; Cook, 2016; Dabula & Makura, 2013; Magere, 2022; Maketekete, 2022; Maree, 2020; Mnyaka, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Pillay, 2012). Such support would help to provide learners with the opportunity to experiment and determine the direction they can take to pursue their studies.

The literature has also shown that many undergraduate students do not finish their studies within the prescribed period and are thus compelled to switch courses and/or drop out due to inappropriate career decisions that are linked to incorrect subject combinations in high school, largely because career guidance and counselling are non-existent (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Maila & Ross, 2018; Ngoepe et al., 2017; Pillay, 2020). These findings highlight an urgent need for educationists and career counselling experts to create initiatives that will address the outcry for receiving adequate career guidance and education in Black schools, especially within resource-constrained (South) African contexts.

5.2.1.3 Career fields

My observations during the pre-intervention group discussions revealed that some of the participants in the study had limited knowledge of the different career fields (career categories) before they participated in the career construction intervention programme. They also did not understand that certain careers are classified into specific career fields. However, during the intervention, there was a significant improvement in the participants' knowledge of different career fields. This was evident in the consistency of their career choice patterns when they completed the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template, which allowed them to synthesise career patterns that emerged from completing both the *CIP* (Parts 2 and 3) and the *MCM* inventory (Maree, 2020).

The Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template allowed each participant to clearly prioritise their dream careers in which they have both high interest and high confidence levels. What is of particular importance here is the ability to identify an (appropriate) career and classify it within its relevant category, which reveals the participants' insight into career fields and enhanced career development as seen in female participant 23 (IP23), who listed her dream

careers in this manner: first choice is psychology, second choice is journalism, third choice is law (magistrate), and the fourth choice is auditing.[16]

PRIORITY	CAREER PREFERENCE	CAREER FIELD (CATEGORY)
First choice	Psychology	Medical and paramedical services
Second choice	Journalism	Word artistry
Third choice	Magistrate	Legal practice and security services
Fourth choice	Auditing	Mathematics and accounting industry

Career fields constitute a group of career categories from which a variety of careers can be selected to enable learners to make informed career decisions. These include health and medical sciences, architecture, and engineering, natural sciences, business, finance and human resource management, social sciences and education, law, public safety and security, information and communication technology, as well as arts, culture and entertainment (Hattingh & De Jong, 2013; PACE, 2021). Put simply, career fields represent the different economic sectors/industries available in the world of work and help individuals to organise themselves according to preferred sector(s), since each career field has unique requirements and duties associated with specific professions (Nong, 2016; Ogilvy et al., 2014; Rooth et al., 2011). Clearly, the appropriate knowledge and understanding can help individuals construct their career lives more adequately by identifying career fields that are in line with their interests and abilities.

Based on the participants' responses regarding their career preferences in the *CIP*, it became clear that most of them struggled to make appropriate career decisions because they did not know what the different career fields entailed or the different personalities (values, interests, and abilities) that are associated with the different careers. Gati et al. (1996) and Magere (2022) emphasise that such individuals experience developmental decision-making difficulties that are classified into two categories, namely a lack of information about the self-proclaimed career preferences ("What do I want?") and perceived capabilities ("What can I do?"), which ultimately reflect the individuals' uncertainty about the present and the future. To assist clients experiencing developmental career decision-making difficulties similar to those experienced by participants in this study, Savickas (2016, 2019b) and Savickas and Pouyaud (2016) argue for a career construction paradigm as an intervention that will assist clients in designing their lives for the 21st century and concentrate on identity, adaptability, and life stories instead of personality and scores. In so doing,

[16] Detailed illustrations on pp. 123–127, Tables 4.6.1 (a), 4.6.1. (b), 4.6.2 (a), and 4.6.2 (b) on extracts of participants' completed Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template.

individuals will be able to construct their own career lives more adequately by using their own narratives to promote self-understanding.

The findings in this study are congruent with that of recent South African literature studies in career construction counselling that most secondary school learners do not have adequate knowledge about careers and thus find it hard to make informed career decisions (Ajayi et al., 2022; Che, 2022; Cook, 2016; Magere, 2022; Maree, 2020b). These authors first emphasised the need to, for instance, expose learners to career programmes (thus enhancing the psychological self as the social actor (McAdams, 2013, 2015). Moreover, in this regard, these authors argue in favour of providing opportunities which will help learners obtain sufficient self- and career knowledge (enhance the psychological self as social actor even further). Second, they argue in favour of helping learners "act in accord with self-determined plans, rooted in decisions, choice, and goals" (McAdams, 2010, p. 177) and promoting the psychological self as motivated agent (McAdams, 2013). Third, they recommend that steps ought to be taken by facilitating (self- and) career construction counselling to bolster the psychological self as autobiographical author, which relates to clarifying their narrative identity, that is, "an internalized and evolving story of the reconstructed past and imagined future that aims to provide life with unity, coherence, and purpose" (McAdams, 2010, p. 171). It is only by promoting the three layers of their psychological self that learners are enabled to clarify their future career aspirations, enhance their career decision-making abilities, and, ultimately, clarify and craft express, viable mission and vision statements. Interventions of this nature will, of course, also promote learners' knowledge of different career fields, which is necessary to guide their subject combinations from Grade 10–12.

Based on the findings referred to above, I must emphasise that an authentic career counselling intervention entails integrating information about oneself and the world of work in developing a clear understanding of the self and learners' central life themes, which is connected to relevant aptitudes, interests, abilities, skills, attitudes, values, ambitions, achievements, and other related qualities (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2017).

5.2.1.4 Value of education

Participating in the qualitative intervention techniques, namely making the collages and the timelines, enabled the participants in my study to identify education as one of the things they value most in their lives. Through the collages, the participants explored their life goals and shared their views regarding their desired future careers, while drawing up the timelines enabled them to share their stories depicting significant obstacles that are likely to arise through their life-career journey and how to overcome them. As they reflected on their goals, the participants increasingly emphasised

that it is through education that their goals can be achieved. It also became clear from their responses that they viewed education as a breakthrough to a better life and a step towards overcoming challenges, not only in their personal lives but also in their families and the community. Gradually, I became aware that these were indicators of the participants' increased career development and heightened awareness regarding self-knowledge, as can be seen in these examples: *"… in future, I wonna see myself graduating, I will learn very hard to reach my dream (E, IP30).", "… I want to finish my studies and achieve my goal cause I want to get a degree that will make me the happiest man"* (E, IP34), and *"… I dream to be a doctor so I want to help my community"* (F, IP22).

My study confirmed that collages and timelines can be used effectively to actively engage clients in the counselling process to design their future career lives through sharing their stories and identifying their values (Cochran, 2007; Guichard, 2022a, 2022b; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Hartung & Vess, 2016; Savickas, 2015, 2019b; Savickas et al., 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2006). From a career construction perspective, scripts (collages and storylines) are viewed as sources of promoting career adaptability and flexibility in new settings, as these are used by counsellors to compile clients' narratives into simple and easily comprehendible life stories such that clients themselves are ultimately able to create their own career lives (Chen, 2009; Cook, 2016; Pienaar, 2017; Venter, 2019).

5.2.2 Career choice influences

Four sub-themes that evolved inductively under the theme career influences are discussed in this section, namely the role of significant others, socio-economic factors, politics, and the advancement in technology.

5.2.2.1 Role of significant others

Following the implementation of the career intervention programme in this study, several participants identified the influence of significant others as a contributing factor in individuals' career decision-making process. Significant others include friends or peers, family members, teachers, and role models, who were repeatedly mentioned by all 15 participants as people they looked to for advice when faced with difficulties relating to different types of decision making, including career choices. This finding is in line with Cook (2016), who conducted a similar study using a group-based intervention programme and found that interactions with other individuals can help to support the development of individual identities based on the assumption that, while participants narrate their own stories, they tend to hear their own voices and the voices of others, and in the process they are able to construct their own lives and pave their own careers (Cochran, 1997, 2007; Savickas, 2013a, 2015a). This notion supports claims made in the literature that careers are deliberately formed

through social interactions, rather than developing naturally or spontaneously (Hartung & Vess, 2016; McDowall & Peake, 2012). In my study, all participants expressed how they relate to their parents, teachers, friends, and role models regarding their career choices.

i. Role of family members

Parents, siblings, and relatives have the biggest influence on individuals' career development due to their primary involvement in the children's upbringing (Ajayi et al., 2022). Parents in particular undoubtedly play a significant role in assisting their children as they grow their careers, which is evident in instances where many young people frequently take their parents' advice into consideration when making decisions regarding their career and education (Ikonen et al., 2018). Research has discovered that children's perceptions of job alternatives, career choices, and goals are influenced by the assistance provided by their parents during career development. Children ask questions, watch their parents in their professional settings, and interpret the career information that their parents provide (Ajayi et al., 2022; Buzzanell et al., 2011).

In contrast, most participants in my study revealed that they were compelled by circumstances to pursue their career aspirations on their own, because they had never received any form of career and/or subject choice advice from their parents.[17] However, some participants expressed appreciation for the moral support received from their parents, which was expressed as words of encouragement such as telling them to study hard, expressing that they should pass their grades with good marks, and emphasising the value of becoming educated so that they can live a better life and change their family circumstances. Such circumstances reflect the harsh realities experienced by families in marginalised communities where people lack access to basic career counselling services and exposure to a variety of jobs (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Matshabane, 2016; Mesa, 2013). This further suggests that there is a need to capacitate parents from disadvantaged backgrounds in preparing their children for their future career prospects, as it can be unfair to expect them (parents) to provide meaningful career development support to which they themselves have never been exposed.

ii. Role models

Role models are people with whom individuals identify because they appear to have specific traits or characteristics that those individuals admire (Mtemeri, 2020). Young people's career intentions are greatly influenced by their role models, because they tend to adopt professional behaviours that align with those of their role models. Research has found that role models have a

[17] See Chapter 4, Table 4.8, pp. 142-143 illustrating family career trends, parents and teachers' advice, and the participants' dream career.

crucial role to play in helping young people build their career goals and imagining their future objectives, since young people become motivated and inspired through the insightful advice that their role models offer on how they should pursue their career ambitions (Valero et al., 2019). In this study, all 15 participants were able to identify key figures from different walks of life whom they believed had an impact on their career aspirations, including church, political, and community leaders; managers in organisations; artists; athletes; friends; relatives; teachers; and parents.

The participants indicated that their identification was based on the personal qualities, traits, and abilities[18] portrayed by these role models, which serve as motivation for what they hope to accomplish in their future lives. The findings in my study show that young people look up to their role models for motivation. These findings support those of Chinyamurindi (2016), Garcia et al. (2019), Herrmann et al. (2016), and Matshabane (2016), who discovered that people seek to emulate their role models' accomplishments, talents, and attributes.

The study also revealed that most of the participants were well aware of the role their teachers need to play in guiding them towards their career prospects, but they expressed dissatisfaction regarding their teachers' inability to execute this responsibility. When asked whether they had received any advice from their teachers in preparation for their Grade 10 subject choices, four participants indicated that they had never received any advice in this regard.[19] This observation is in line with the concern already raised in the preceding discussions[20] that Life Orientation teachers fail in their endeavours to facilitate satisfactory career guidance in classrooms (Diale, 2016; Mosia, 2011; Sefotho, 2017), leaving learners inadequately prepared to face the world of work with confidence (Maketekete, 2022; Naidoo et al., 2019; Spaull, 2015; Streicher, 2021). Matshabane (2016) concurs with these researchers by indicating that the reality of providing career counselling in many low-income communities across South Africa is hardly an option amid issues of poverty and limited access to resources. However, it is encouraging to note that participation in the career construction intervention programme has enabled the participants in this study to reflect on their career goals and enhanced their abilities to develop their career plans, which is evident in their vision and mission statements.

iii. Influence of friends

The influence of friends was described by all participants as being both negative and positive. Those who viewed friends as having a positive influence described them as systems of support in times of need. Five participants described their friends as advisors, motivators, and helpers in times

[18] Excerpts on role models' discussions can be found in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3.1.
[19] Excerpts from participants in Chapter 4, Table 4.8.
[20] See Section 4.5.4.4(i), Chapter 4 regarding the role of Life Orientation in the learners' career choice.

of need, and this facilitated the sharing of ideas, information, and resources among themselves. On the other hand, peers can have a negative influence, including being disrespectful, mob thinking, misleading career decisions, and a negative attitude towards life. One participant shared how he was misled by his friends to take subjects he did not want to take because of peer pressure, while another participant said she lost several friends due to her own bad attitude.[21] However, having participated in the career construction intervention has helped them believe in themselves and discover that one is responsible for one's own behaviour.

5.2.2.2 Socio-economic factors

The socio-economic conditions that prevailed at the time when this study was conducted were perceived by most participants as barriers that could hinder the achievement of their career goals and limit their access to a variety of occupations. These barriers include a lack of financial support, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and politics. The high rate of unemployment and poverty in the community setting in which the participants lived gave rise to feelings of hopelessness and despair as they were rife at the time. Similar observations were identified by Che (2022) in his study on the influence of life design based counselling on learners' career indecision; young people who are exposed to unemployment early on tend to develop negative attitudes regarding their future career trajectories. As a result, they have a limited knowledge of a variety of career trajectories that are available in the labour market, and some of them may resort to other lucrative ways of making money such as drug dealing and gangsterism as this could be the most accessible way to earn an income in their immediate environment (Ajayi et al., 2022; Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Ramjit, 2015; Streicher, 2021).

Lack of money to continue studying after high school and the feeling of insecurity due to crime and corruption exacerbated by the unstable political climate at the time were the main issues raised by some participants as barriers to their occupational goals and aspirations. Such experiences greatly influence the individuals' perceptions regarding career choice decisions, in that they tend to look for occupations that would be regarded as solutions to the challenges identified in their communities. From their perspective, pursuing a particular career is one way to bridge those gaps. This explains why one participant expressed his idea of becoming a police officer to promote a safe environment in the community in which he lived, while another participant indicated that she would like to be a social worker to help people solve their problems. The impact of politics and corruption were cited by all five groups of participants during the group discussions prior the intervention, where they expressed their discouragement due to the corruption and fraud that are committed by high-

[21] Excerpts from participants in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3.1.

profile officials when employing people in certain workplaces. Such corruption hinders the youth's chances to access job opportunities in a fair and just manner. My findings are consistent with those of Albien and Naidoo (2017), Jonck (2015), Maila and Ross (2018), Modiba and Sefotho (2019), and Naidoo et al. (2019) that learners in secondary schools (Grades 9 onwards) still have unequal access to competent career services.

One group mentioned that in extreme cases some job seekers become victims of sexual manipulation in favour of getting jobs.[22] These claims support the view that South African society is driven by the fulfilment of personal desires rather than the needs of the people, which conflicts with African traditions (Ajayi et al., 2022; Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2011). For these reasons, South Africa's attempts to implement equal access to career development services remains bleak, even though the country is over 20 years into democracy. Smit et al. (2015) found that, even if students from impoverished backgrounds complete high school and matriculate, their chances of finding jobs are significantly reduced by high unemployment rates and the exorbitant prices of further education which prevent them from pursuing tertiary studies.

Consequently, disadvantaged youth tend to typically have a more pessimistic outlook on the future than their more economically advantaged counterparts (Purtell & McLoyd, 2013). Existing literature on the perception of factors limiting the post-school transition for underprivileged rural matriculants also emphasise that learners do have dreams and aspirations but economic conditions often prevent them from fulfilling their aspirations (Maila & Ross, 2018; Streicher, 2021). Despite the challenges and barriers the participants face in achieving their career goals, a number of them came to the realisation that these barriers can be overcome by taking initiative to control them as they moved through the stages of the intervention. Based on the responses obtained through the semi-structured interviews after the intervention, as well as the thoughts they expressed in the collages and timelines, the participants seemed to have greater confidence and felt more capable of overcoming the challenges they faced.[23] This finding is supported by Maree (2013, 2022), who demonstrates that people can be assisted in turning their areas of weakness into strength *(turning pain into hope).*

It is also argued in the literature that, due to the global developments, economic challenges, competitive job markets, and job insecurity, the most essential survival skill that people need in the workplace is adaptability. Developing adaptability will help young people to grow their employability skills to embrace job transitions, because they are no longer guaranteed of stable employment in the rapidly changing and undefinable world of work at present and in the future (Cardoso et al., 2018; Pillay, 2020; Savickas & Pouyaud, 2016). The more young people are guided

[22] Excerpts from participants in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3.3.
[23] Excerpts can be found in Chapter 4, Sections 4.3 and 4.7.

towards mastering these skills (adaptability and employability), the more equipped they will be to survive in the uncertain job market in the future (Maree, 2015c; Savickas, 2015a), and the greater the possibility of seizing multiple jobs and careers instead of remaining in one job throughout their lives (Roythorne et al., 2016).

5.2.2.3 Advancement in technology

Participants also talked about how technology can affect their decisions regarding the types of jobs they can pursue. It became clear from their responses during the pre-intervention group discussions that they had mixed feelings regarding the impact of digitisation. Some of them feared that the birth of new digital occupations would eliminate some careers in the job market and further increase the unemployment rate, which was at its peak at the time of this study. Other participants' comments clearly indicated that they understood that they could control the effects of technological advancements and the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing themselves to adapt to new technology and become highly technologically skilled professionals[24] (Butler, 2018).

This finding is consistent with those of Gati and Kulcsár (2021) and Lent and Brown (2020), who contend that economic and technological changes have significantly altered the nature of the labour market, leaving some people uncertain about their career choice out of concern that they will not be able to find employment or that their positions will be eliminated. The implication of these findings regarding the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is that young people should be prepared to work in environments that are considerably different from the "traditional" workplaces that were defined by hierarchical organisations and be ready to accept nearly any form of occupation in order to survive in the challenging economic environment (Butler, 2018; Maree, 2021; Prisecaru, 2016). As the demand for even more technologically skilled professionals will grow, it will require people who are flexible and adaptable.

Notwithstanding the occupational structures in which workers find themselves, career counselling researchers, theorists, and practitioners have a responsibility to advocate for every worker's right to decent work (i.e. opportunity to choose and carry out work that is productive, meaningful, and fulfilling [Guichard, 2013, 2022b]).

5.2.3 Impact of the career construction intervention

The discussion under this theme and its related sub-themes is based on the opinions expressed by the participants regarding the effects of having taken part in the career construction intervention

[24] Excerpts of participants' comments in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3.4.

programme. These effects are discussed in more detail below as sub-themes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive analysis of the post-intervention semi-structured focus-group interview transcripts, *CIP* narratives (Parts 2 and 4 in particular), and the timelines from the intervention group. The participants' responses were based on questions regarding the benefits they reaped from the career construction programme, what they liked and disliked about the programme, as well as recommendations they made to make the programme more effective. The four sub-themes that emerged are self-construction, the power of personal mottos, optimism, and the Life Orientation experience, as discussed below.

5.2.3.1 Self-construction

Self-construction occurs when individuals engage in activities that allow them to analyse their life experiences so that they can learn how to adapt to changes brought by external circumstances and comprehend why they behave in certain ways (Guichard, 2005; Hartung, 2007; Savickas, 2013b). Participating in the career construction intervention sessions enabled most participants in my study to use storytelling to explore their interests and abilities, discover their strengths and weaknesses, and set their career goals. As a result, most of them showed increased levels of self-understanding, growth, and the capacity to make informed career decisions that are consistent with Maree's (2022a) theory that comprehending the relationship between people's life purpose and their related career preferences requires addressing their needs, so that they can experience a sense of purpose and meaning in their careers.

These findings regarding the participants' development after the intervention provide evidence of the effectiveness of the constructivist career counselling approach employed in this study, namely Cochran's (1997, 2007) narrative career counselling (storytelling), and Savickas's (2005, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) construction theory of life designing, each of which places an emphasis on understanding clients' values or constructs (i.e. the way they see the world) (Maree & Morgan, 2012; Sharf, 2013). Through the intervention, most of the participants were able to examine their own unique life-career narratives, which enabled them to create meaningful work lives, make decisions, and develop coherent career plans, which is evident in one participant's comments during the semi-structured interviews: *"… After participating in this programme, I have gained because when I was in grade 8, I did not know what I wanted to become…. but now I feel confident because I am aware of my capabilities, that's why I have chosen Software Engineering."*

Following the storied approach, two participants demonstrated that they benefited from creating their own timelines, as it helped them to revisit painful past experiences and used them to construct a new positive view of life. The first participant expressed how she learnt to master social

responsibility to care for others, regardless of several painful events she experienced at an early age, *"I want to have my own family, I want to have money, I owe my mother big time* (social responsibility), *I want to achieve what I plan or dream about my life. I want to work-work that I love and that I studied"* (positive view of life). As stated above, the challenges she went through did not stop her plans for a brighter future, which is evident in her statement, *"When I was two years old, I lost my dad, I don't know his love. God took him early."*[25] The second participant also shared similar sentiments, despite her challenging past, *"I really try to work hard so that I can become what I want in life."* This participant built on previous successes to demonstrate her resilience and mastery over life events (she was awarded a certificate for being in the top 10 for a scripture reading competition). The findings in this study revealed that resilient people can overcome obstacles and interruptions to achieve their career goals, and, as such, they take ownership of their actions and are dedicated to continuing their professional development. This finding is in line with those of Del Corso (2017) as well as Hartung and Cadaret (2017), who found that it is critical for high school learners to develop the necessary attitudes, beliefs, and competencies as they attempt to make sense of their lives and improve their career resilience.

The storied (narrative) approach is relevant within the African context of this study as it acknowledges people's socio-cultural and historical backgrounds and revives the tradition of group storytelling as well as the spirit of Ubuntu (respect for human dignity), through which individuals learn to build their own careers, selves, and identities as they tell and/or enact stories in the place where they live and work (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Watson, 2017; Savickas, 2012, 2013b; Savickas, 2019b). This premise is supported by Magano's proposal (2018) for indigenising counselling interventions by incorporating historical methodologies (such as engaging the client in an informal singing or dancing session) to include marginalised children.[26] Employing such techniques in African counselling sessions should enable people to communicate effectively and meaningfully in terms of their emotions and potential job interests by using their own language, which will put them at ease and make them feel less apprehensive when discussing their stories (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Maree, Ebersöhn, & Molepo, 2006; McIlveen & Patton, 2007). Constructivism is of particular interest in my study, as it facilitates the understanding of career development and meaning-making for Grade 9 learners as they relate their individual career stories (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Charokopaki, 2019; Stebleton, 2010). The participants were able to gather information about themselves by exploring their past, present, and future selves; as they did so, they

[25] The timeline in Figures 4.8 and 4.9 in Chapter 4 illustrate how participants used their painful past experiences to craft a new positive view of life.
[26] Detailed discussion on indigenising can be found in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2, titled career guidance and counselling in Africa.

were able to establish their sense of self and became increasingly aware of career opportunities and the world of work.

5.2.3.2 Self-exploration

Self-exploration within the context of this study entails the process through which participants examined their individual interests, abilities, and personal attributes to help them build their self-knowledge. I agree with many scholars who maintain that career development is not a once-off event but a process that evolves over time from early childhood through adolescence to adulthood (Gottfredson, 1981, 2002; Hartung, 2007; Roe, 1956; Super, 1994, 1996). It is thus necessary to ensure that individuals are exposed to a variety of career information and vocational opportunities at an early age (14–24 years) to promote their career development.

This notion of self-exploration is consistent with Super's (1994) first two developmental stages, namely the growth stage and the exploration stage, which have an impact on individuals' curiosity and self-exploration. During the growth stage, children's curiosity is high since they become eager to learn more about the world as they explore and gather knowledge to develop a deep understanding of who they are and how to use that knowledge to inform their vocational goals, which greatly aids in the development of their early careers (Briddick et al., 2018; Santilli & Hartung, 2022).

The second critical stage for self-exploration is the crystallisation stage (also called the exploration stage) during which adolescents are expected to develop a clear and stable vocational self-concept by reflecting on their career preferences and occupational fields (Hartung, 2013b; Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017). Through crystallisation, individuals gather information about themselves and various occupations to learn more about the world of work and determine what kinds of work they might pursue. As such, participants in this study were in Grade 9 (a critical transition stage for career and subject choice) at the time when they were afforded an opportunity to explore a variety of career preferences by engaging with the *CIP* and the *MCM* inventory.

As they progressed with the completion of Part 2 of the *CIP* activities on career preferences and their dream careers, increased knowledge regarding different career fields was displayed by some participants. Similar observations were made as they rated their interests and confidence levels respectively through the *MCM* inventory, which comprised 19 career categories. The explorative exercise was concluded by completing the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template[27] to assist them in integrating their career-related information and map up their career plans, including crafting their power statements.

[27] See chapter 4, table 4.6.1 (a and b) and table 4.6.2 (a and b), pp. 122–126.

Consequently, participants were able to rank their career themes chronologically as first, second, third, and fourth choices.[28] One participant exhibited an increased knowledge of careers as well as a better understanding of the attributes required for his dream career by stating: *"I can also take Engineering because I love to fix cars or airoplanes (sic: airplanes) and other things… my favourite subjects are Mathematics and Natural Sciences with good performance of 60%–80%. I can study a degree in MBChB in a University to become a Doctor (sic-Medical Practitioner), go to an Aviation /Flight school for Pilot, University of Technology to study Mechanical Engineering and a degree in Education to be a teacher or a Bachelor in Social work."*

It became evident that the participants who took part in my study developed an enhanced understanding of themselves and subsequently applied this understanding to guide their decisions regarding their careers. Throughout the various stages of the career construction intervention, participants investigated their skills, strengths, and interests. The way they personally related to their desired careers was positively impacted by their exploration. These findings are consistent with those of Briddick et al. (2018) and Santilli and Hartung (2022), who assert that, as people begin to explore the self, they learn more about themselves and the circumstances in their environments, which empowers them to make critical life decisions. Similarly, participants in my study demonstrated that their perception of potential careers was influenced by how they viewed their surroundings in connection to their sense of identity. My research supports the findings of earlier studies that participants' identities form during an exploratory process and may change in response to their career choices (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Di Fabio & Maree, 2015; Savickas, 2005, 2010). This perspective is also substantiated by authors such as Gad (2018), who emphasises the need for career counsellors to help people review emotions, thoughts, and early life experiences and evaluate the patterns they have developed over time. Maree (2016) also emphasises the need to provide children with career counselling in order to help them navigate their career and life trajectories.

5.2.3.3 Power of personal mottos

My study has revealed that the use of personal mottos as a narrative technique can help people advise themselves regarding how to go about attaining their future goals regarding who they are (self- and career identity), what they want to achieve (goal setting), where they would like to work the most, and how they want to use work to enable them to be(come) the most authentic versions of themselves in order to achieve life-career success (Santilli & Hartung, 2022; Savickas, 2019b). Participants in this study were able to articulate several of their favourite mottos, which they considered crucial in defining their lives, by completing Part 4 of the *CIP*. They used these mottos

[28] See tables 4.6.1 (a & b), 4.6.2 (a & b), and 4.6.3 in chapter 4 for detailed illustrations and the steps followed to complete this activity.

as a narrative to portray their personal life stories, which guided their actions and ultimately provided them with a clear view of themselves.

The statements above are supported by Savickas's (2011b, 2015) description of personal mottos as statements that clients believe in and employ as the best advice they have for themselves. This view is founded on the life-design counselling goal of helping clients recognise and value their personal wisdom by listening to their own voices. I concur with this perspective by considering Winnicott's (1969) idea that it is only the patient who knows the answers to their ailments. This perspective emphasises the idea that "clients are experts on the content of their own stories" (Savickas, 2015a, p. 11) as they use them to construct their lives (Guichard, 2022; Hartung & Vess, 2016; McMahon, 2017; Stebleton, 2010). Based on the principles and practices of career construction counselling, personal mottos were regarded as a powerful instrument through which participants in this study expressed their thoughts about themselves (narratives) to determine what they value most as they designed their lives. These narratives (expressed as personal statements) sustain them during periods of uncertainty and instability, which are prevalent in today's world (Santilli & Hartung, 2022). Most participants in this study were able to design their own lives by expressing personal statements that carry meaning relating to their goals and careers to be realised in their future lives as they engaged actively in the different activities of the intervention programme (Cardoso et al., 2014; Hartung, 2013a; Savickas, 2012). The statements articulated stressed the value of having unwavering resolve and remaining committed to their objectives as well as taking responsibility for their actions and learning from their mistakes.[29]

Based on the participants' statements, it can be concluded that the career intervention was beneficial in that most participants demonstrated increased self-awareness, strong character, and self-understanding, which is evident in their favourite mottos through which they expressed their self-beliefs (how they view themselves) and emotions about their future.

5.2.3.4 Optimism

Participants consistently portrayed a strong sense of optimism about their future goals as they advanced through different stages of the intervention, which was evidenced by their enhanced self-control and high confidence. Within the context of this study, optimism refers to the ability to remain positive and optimistic in the face of catastrophe **(**Stagman-Tyrer, 2014). Such individuals are described as having a high level of "psychological capital" or "PsyCap", which entails a continued optimism about life, while making progress and trusting that everything will work out for the best. During the intervention, some of the participants showed optimism as they were confident that they

[29] See Chapter 4, Section 4.5.4.2. The power of personal mottos (narratives**),** pp. 153–154 for examples of verbatim statements expressed by most participants.

had what it took to pursue their job aspirations despite setbacks and difficulties that could arise along the way. These findings corroborate Maree's (2019) conclusions regarding the value of life design counselling (based on career construction counselling) in fostering people's career resilience. Maree (2019) further contends that individuals' capacity for success in the workplace is reflected in how well they can adapt to significant changes in their work environment.

In a US study (Purtell & McLoyd, 2013) on the effects of involvement in a work-based anti-poverty programme, the children of those who participated showed favourable changes in their future orientation five years after the programme concluded. A significant increase in the children's career preparatory activities and a decline in their scepticism and pessimism towards the working world were reported. Although the authors (Purtell & McLoyd, 2013) reported their findings from a US perspective, the circumstances of the participants in this study are somewhat similar to those described in the above authors' study, and it is not surprising that their participation in the intervention had a positive effect on enhancing their perceptions, regardless of their adversities.

Many studies conducted in South Africa with participants from similar under-resourced contexts yielded positive results after various forms of support (other than the kind of intervention discussed in the current study) were provided, despite the socio-economic hardships they faced. Smit et al. (2015), for instance, used a resilience theory and asset-based intervention strategy to equip learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to recognise the risk and protective factors that may influence their decision making about the future (life after school). Five main themes emerged from the study: "hope for the future; relationship as assets and barriers to effective life planning; sense of responsibility, agency to plan own future; and increase in empathic awareness and willingness to help others" (Smit et al., 2015, p. 127). The results suggest that using visual mapping and photo voice (i.e. an asset-based intervention) helped students unlock latent resilience and enabled them not only to think more critically, realistically, and optimistically about their future life opportunities but also to ignite enthusiasm for taking charge to fully utilise their individual, family, and community resources.

In the same vein, Jäckel-Visser's (2021) study on the implementation of a self-directed career guidance intervention among high school learners living in low-income communities amid a global pandemic also revealed an enhanced positive outlook for the future with regard to career preparedness. The study concurs with Diale (2022) who found that tutoring is an effective teaching and learning tool for enhancing student retention and increasing their problem-solving skills, as well as their persistence, despite their historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Her study focused on the use of indigenous knowledge practices to support first-year African students in their career transition to higher education.

In my study, the participants' positive future orientation is reflected in the courageous statements communicated by four participants displaying insight into their experiences (whether good or bad) and the understanding that their future lies in their hands. Three of these participants used their timelines to express their assertiveness to pursue their goals in any circumstances life presents by stating: *"I will try to work hard to become what I want in life and change my family's background"* and *"I learned that I have to believe in myself, trust myself and have confidence."* The fourth participant used the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template to state that he had to take accountability for his own actions no matter what comes his way: *"…I have learned that I have to deal with my own problems, the problem must be my own, and not another person's problem."*

These findings are in line with Santilli and McLoyd (2013) who discovered that people who are future-oriented show more purpose and direction in pursuit of their professional goals and successfully complete their goal-directed tasks. As such, positive outlooks on the future help people feel more inspired to work towards their goals than their counterparts.

5.2.4 Experience with Life Orientation

Two sub-themes relating to the participants' experiences regarding the Life Orientation lessons are discussed in this section, namely the role of Life Orientation in the learners' career choice and the recommendations for improvement. These themes emerged when the participants reflected on how they experienced the Life Orientation lessons they attended as part of the daily curriculum facilitated in the school and are discussed below.

5.2.4.1 Role of Life Orientation in learners' career choices

The guiding question (among others) posed to the participants during the semi-structured focus interviews regarding the role of Life Orientation is*: "How would you explain the role of Life Orientation lessons in the exploration of careers information and decision making? Are they helping you make more informed career decisions? Are there any setbacks?"*

All 15 individual participants' responses revealed that they were not satisfied with the Life Orientation lessons offered by their teachers in the school, nor did they ever participate in career exploration activities of any form in class. Despite their appreciation of the inclusion of the subject as part of the school curriculum, they felt that the provision of career guidance is very limited as they spend a great deal of time on other topics such as religion, human rights, and physical education.

The participants' responses likely explain why learners in South African schools (public schools in particular) experience career indecisions at the time of exiting Grade 12 and find it difficult to pursue their educational goals in higher institutions of learning. It is clear from these findings that

the participants are not equipped with the necessary skills required to face life after Grade 12, including the world of work. These findings support a number of previous studies conducted on the lack of career guidance in South African schools and its influence on learners' career development (Albien, 2020; Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Che, 2022; Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Jäckel-Visser et al., 2021). As previously stated, Life Orientation is not taught effectively in schools and many Life Orientation teachers are not adequately trained (Dabula & Makura, 2013; Diale, 2016; Mosia, 2011; Sefotho, 2017).

5.2.4.2 Recommendations for the improvement of Life Orientation lessons

The participants in this study made the following suggestions to improve the effectiveness of Life Orientation in schools, namely increasing the number of lessons per week, engaging in educational excursions to make the subject more practical, capacitating Life Orientation teachers, and changing the perception of the subject. Below is a brief discussion in this regard.

i. Increasing the number of Life Orientation lessons per week

Most participants in this study suggested that the number of Life Orientation lessons should be increased from the two hours currently allocated per week,[30] so that all topics can be fairly taught without compromising others. It became evident from some of the participants' statements that this suggestion was based on the importance they attached to the subject. In their view, Life Orientation does play a critical role in shaping their personal lives (if taught well), as it helps them deal with dreadful life circumstances when they arise.

However, participants did emphasise the fact that career guidance as a compulsory aspect of Life Orientation receives little attention in their school; therefore, increasing the number of lessons could be beneficial in a way.

Literature on the implementation of Life Orientation teaching in schools has revealed that the subject is not allocated sufficient time to cover its curriculum content, yet teachers are expected to cover a number of topics, namely social and environmental responsibility, development of the self in society, democracy and human rights, careers and career choices, study skills, and physical education (Bromfield et al., 2013; DBE, 2011d; DHET, 2017; Diale et al., 2014; Jonck, 2015; Pillay, 2012). When comparing the amount of content to be covered with the allocated teaching time, it became clear that not all theoretical and practical content can realistically be completed in the allocated time (Kay & Fretwell, 2003; Maketekete, 2022; Manyau et al., 2018; Ramjit, 2015).

[30] See Chapter 4, Section 4.5.4.4. (ii), for participants' verbatim phrases regarding recommended changes.

Life Orientation is allocated two hours each week, one of which should be devoted to physical education (i.e. only 5% to 7% of the two hours are spent on career awareness or guidance activities). From this perspective, it is easy to see why it is difficult for Life Orientation teachers to cover all the topics efficiently (Mahlangu, 2011; Nong, 2016; Smit et al., 2015). These findings resonate with Albien and Naidoo (2016), who found that the Life Orientation curriculum currently offers limited opportunities for career development due to the time constraints and demands experienced by Life Orientation teachers as part of their teaching obligations.

ii. Engaging learners in educational excursions to make the subject more practical

Some of the participants expressed the need to be exposed to a variety of career fields by attending career exhibitions and job shadowing programmes, so that they can gain first-hand experience of their desired jobs and careers. In addition to the exposure, two participants expressed the need for skills-oriented (vocational) careers as an option for some individuals who might prefer vocational occupations. This recommendation is consistent with Holland's (1992, 1997) theory of personality and occupational types, which claims that individuals can be classified into one of six personality types[31] (Nauta, 2013; Sharf, 2013; Sheldon et al., 2019) that are used to define occupational contexts or environments, which are then categorised into corresponding individual personalities (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2017; Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

In light of what was stated above, I argue that school-to-work intervention programmes should be in place to allow learners adequate time for the kind of exploration (i.e. career exhibitions, job shadowing, and career talks) that results in both self-knowledge and knowledge of the working environment in order to help them make informed decisions (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Findings from the current study confirm the research by Jonck (2015) on learners' suggestions regarding how certain activities can be incorporated into the Life Orientation curriculum to improve the effectiveness of the career guidance they receive. The suggestions include inviting guest speakers to the school, making the subject more practical both inside and outside the classroom; increasing self-knowledge activities; incorporating job shadowing and site visits (university and college open days), skills development (such as study skills, Curriculum Vitae writing, and interviewing skills), and interactive and visual learning materials (showing videos about subject choices and career trajectories); and conducting workshops. I concur with Ngoepe et al. (2017) that exposing learners to career events such as expos can help bridge the information gap that is prevalent in most rural schools in South Africa.

[31] See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1.1 (ii) for a detailed discussion on the personality types.

iii. Capacitation of Life Orientation teachers

Most participants highlighted the need to capacitate their teachers in order to increase their knowledge on career information, as they felt discontent regarding the teachers' level of competence in facilitating career guidance during the Life Orientation lessons. This recommendation resonates with Maree (2012, 2013), who found that Life Orientation teachers are not well capacitated with the relevant skills to provide effective career guidance lessons and, as such, do not value it as the primary goal of their lessons.

In two different studies, Maree (2022a, 2022b reiterates the necessity of updating and modernising the Life Orientation subject content to incorporate modules on postmodern, integrated qualitative–quantitative career counselling, under the supervision of psychologists, which is preferable to attempting to guide children towards professional choices and aspirations from the archaic viewpoint of working in one job for a lifetime. The training should contain core instruction in the theory of psychosocial development in addition to the fundamentals of adaptive and contextualised career construction counselling. In cases where learners present issues outside of the teachers' areas of expertise, it is ethically appropriate to refer them to relevant health professionals. Previous research has revealed that many high school learners do not receive career guidance or any form of counselling from teachers advising them about post-secondary education (DHET, 2013; Maila & Ross, 2018; Pillay, 2012; Visser et al., 2021). There is therefore a dire need to retrain in-service Life Orientation teachers, not only in the facilitation of career guidance but also in career counselling, so that they can be able to meet the career needs of learners in South African schools (public schools in particular) (Maharaj, 2016; Modiba, 2017; Pillay, 2020).

According to Prinsloo (2007) and Seherrie and Mawela (2022), being considered "qualified" in Life Orientation since the time of curriculum reform in South Africa ranged from being a teacher in one of the former topics of guidance, religion studies, or physical education, the three-day Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) course, or attending a two-hour Life Orientation workshop. As a result, most teachers in general remained unqualified in the Life Orientation subject (i.e. could not take Life Orientation as a major subject during their pre-service training) and, consequently, the quality of the teaching of Life Orientation was compromised due to the quick fix interventions that implemented changes in a limited amount of time (DHET, 2011; Diale, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Stroebel et al., 2019).

I concur with the above authors' recommendation regarding the need for in-service education and training (INSET) programmes to retrain, reskill, and/or upskill Life Orientation and Life Skills teachers on how to incorporate career guidance in teaching Life Orientation. The above-mentioned authors also contend that such programmes could be in the form of a one- or two-year Advanced

Certificate in Education (ACE) / Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or a series of shorter courses spread out over a certain period of time. For the pre-service education and training (PRESET) of prospective teachers on the other hand, Life Orientation should be provided comprehensively as part of the Bachelor of Education graduate programme, including the mobility component (Van der Venter, 2017).

iv. Perception of the Life Orientation subject

Some of the participants expressed their concern about the need to address the negative perceptions many learners and most teachers (including those who do not teach the subject) have towards Life Orientation. This could be due to the fact that the subject is not counted in the Admission Point Score (APS) by a number of institutions of higher learning, therefore learners with such perceptions may not take the subject seriously (Jacobs, 2011; Modiba, 2017; Mosia, 2011). Findings from Cook (2016), whose participants expressed concern for their teacher's inability to recognise the significance of the Life Orientation subject, confirm the assertion presented by virtually all participants in the current study that the subject is not always taken seriously.[32]

In a study by Stroebel et al. (2019) on the question of why in-service teachers for physical education (a facet of Life Orientation) in South African schools need reskilling, they found that even school principals themselves do not value Life Orientation, which is evident in their tendency to compromise it during subject allocation in the timetable. They tend to allocate Life Orientation to anyone as a "filler" subject to ensure an even workload distribution among the teachers (Mosia, 2011; Van der Venter, 2009). In extreme instances, principals would allocate the subject to themselves, yet when evidence is sought of completed tasks, it is usually not available because they did not attend the lessons. It is quite concerning that these observations may not be unique to the authors' study context and may be the reality of most public schools in South Africa, which ultimately defeats the purpose of having the subject introduced as part of post-1994 curriculum changes.

5.2.5 Career adaptability

In this section, I discuss career adaptability as the main theme and the related four sub-themes, namely concern, curiosity, confidence, and control (four Cs), all of which were identified deductively from my research data. In the deductive approach, the researcher draws on a priori themes and sub-themes, which means that I perused the data looking for evidence or a lack of evidence of the existence of these themes and sub-themes. According to Savickas (2013b), the four Cs are dimensions through which adaptability is developed, and people would typically use them as

[32] See Section 4.5.4.4. (ii) in Chapter 4 for participants' verbatim perceptions of the Life Orientation subject.

resources and strategies of adjustment when facing change related to planning and career choice and the need to execute important tasks.

In addition to enhancing these four dimensions[33] during career counselling, they should help people create new attitudes (A), beliefs (B), and competencies (C) to broaden their careers and improve their adaptive and coping behaviours (Hartung, 2011; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Maree et al., 2018; Savickas, 2011b). Most of the participants in the current study displayed the willingness as well as the capacity to bolster control of their own lives and clarify and enact their goals for the future as well as a willingness to draw on potential strengths and manage weaknesses that could impact their career decisions.

These competencies enhanced their adaptability by enabling them to better handle challenges related to career decision making and transitions between school and the workplace. The results of the current study regarding the importance of adaptability in career development are consistent with those of scholars such as Ginevra et al. (2017), Maree (2018), Savickas et al. (2009), and Savickas and Porfeli (2012). These authors emphasise the crucial role of career adaptability in learners' success in the world of work as well as their ability to tolerate uncertainties and ambiguity as they design both their personal and career lives.

5.2.5.1 Concern

The majority of participants in the current study displayed a strong interest in their future after their participation in the intervention programme by expressing their passion for setting goals they wished to accomplish in the future. The participants' concerns about setting goals to direct their behaviour continued to emerge throughout various intervention sessions and are reflected in comments made by two participants in their respective collages and timelines, where they both emphasised the importance of acquiring the education they needed to fulfil their lifelong dreams and aspirations and become what they desired to be in life.[34]

All participants used the *CIP*, Part 1 in particular, to express their interest in the various careers they would like to pursue, such as teaching, nursing, engineering, aviation, etc. to make meaningful contributions (not only to enrich their personal lives but also to meet needs of the communities in which they lived).[35] The participants were also determined to be educated in order to see their parents' wishes fulfilled, which I regard as assuming the social responsibility of caring

[33] A detailed discussion on the four Cs can be found in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2.
[34] See Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2.1 for verbatim quotes on participants' desires for goal setting and achievement.
[35] See Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2. for examples extracted from the *CIP* regarding participants' interest in their future careers, and Figure 4.7 portraying a participant's dream career in policing to help his community.

for others[36] This observation resonates with Guichard's (2022a) view of work as fulfilling the meaning of task completion.

The finding on the strong interest about the participants' future aligns with research by other scholars such as Che (2022), Cook (2016), and Magere (2022), who reported an increased concern as participants showed a heightened interest as they reflected on their future. This assertion confirms Savickas's (2016) view that career construction counselling promotes reflection and reflexivity as part of change in individuals. While reflection entails the individuals becoming aware of themselves through self-observation (critically evaluating thoughts, beliefs, behaviours, and situations by deliberating on past and present experiences), reflexivity entails drawing on one's reflections to (re)kindle their hope for the future (visualising meaningful goals and believing that plans will yield positive results) (Hartung &Vess, 2016; Santilli & Hartung, 2022).

My conclusion in the current study is that participating[37] in the intervention programme has assisted participants in comprehending how their current interests (present) are essential to the accomplishment of their goals (future) and, consequently fulfilling their needs (Cardoso et al., 2016; Savickas, 1995).

5.2.5.2 Control

Most participants in this study revealed feelings suggesting that they were more empowered in having control over their personal lives as a result of their participation in the intervention programme. In Guichard's (2022) view, having a sense of control should be understood as a crucial means of adjustment towards achieving goals. As such, participants were able to convey messages indicating that they were aware of their own responsibility of making wise decisions in all aspects of life and not just career-related ones. Four participants expressed that the intervention has bolstered their belief in themselves and decreased their dependence on others.[38] The majority of participants stated that the intervention programme inspired them to assume responsibility for self-planning and being accountable for their own actions.

The latter observation supports previous life design studies (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Cardoso et al., 2014; Di Fabio & Maree, 2011; Pienaar, 2017) that showed an improvement in participants' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation after group career intervention. I contend with Pienaar's (2017) suggestion that the increased acceptance of responsibility after the intervention could have been boosted by the fact that the life design intervention was targeted at a particular group of participants who were familiar with each other. Being part of the group seems to have encouraged participants to

[36] See an example of a timeline in Chapter 4, Figure 4.9, illustrating how a participant learnt to master social responsibility.
[37] Examples in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.1 on participants' expressions, extracted from the semi-structured interviews regarding the impact of the intervention on goal setting.
[38] See Chapter 4, Section, 4.5.2.2 for verbatim phrases regarding personal control over circumstances.

express themselves more freely without fear of being ridiculed (Del Corso et al., 2015) and enhanced their ability to take charge of their career-related decisions by acquiring the strategies necessary for career adaptability. This assertion is also consistent with the findings of Hartung (2019), Hartung and Vess (2016), and Maree (2021) that structured group career counselling interventions seem to be more beneficial than unstructured group interventions.

5.2.5.3 Curiosity

Curiosity entails having an inquisitive mindset about one's future that encourages successful career exploration (Maree et al., 2018), allowing individuals to examine their educational and vocational possibilities and approach the future realistically (Savickas, 2013b). Being inquisitive regarding interest in the world of work is fostered through risk-taking and inquisitive behaviour; therefore, a lack of interest limits career exploration and leads to unrealistic hopes and expectations about the future. In line with this definition, some of the participants in this study demonstrated an increased level of curiosity by communicating ideas and feelings about their imagined future while engaging in a variety of exploratory behaviour that revealed details regarding themselves (i.e. who they are and the careers they aspire to pursue).

Three participants used the *CIP* to express their willingness to unlock the unknown world by exploring their envisaged life opportunities.[39] Another participant expressed confidence through a collage to accomplish his aspirations, no matter what it took.[40] Through these articulations, the participants demonstrated confidence in their ability to take risks in exploring opportunities in different working environments, regardless of what they could hold.

These findings concur with McLennan et al.'s claim (2017) that curiosity would generally propel individuals to shape their lives by exploring opportunities in various work environments in an attempt to answer the question *"What do I want to do with my future?"* Guan et al. (2015) support this view by stating that self- and environment-exploration activities are crucial for people to find relevant employment prospects, improve their employment status, and navigate the obstacles and challenges of career transitions. Therefore, by exploring their own interests, attitudes, and experiences, people can develop a clear understanding of who they are and how these internal characteristics will affect their future.

5.2.5.4 Confidence

Confidence in career construction entails developing problem-solving skills and self-efficacy beliefs in order to overcome obstacles and build a successful future (Savickas, 2013b). Individuals

[39] See Chapter4, Section 4.5.2.3 for verbatim quotations on exploring the unknown world.
[40] See Chapter 4, Figure 4.1 for a collage portraying curiosity about exploring opportunities for a better life.

with high confidence in their desired careers are likely to be self-assured and have strong perseverance as well as a hardworking attitude in their endeavours, while a lack of confidence causes hesitation and timidity in facing the future. Responses from most of the participants suggest that their participation in the intervention programme seemed to have increased their level of confidence, as reflected in their assertiveness and sheer determination to achieve their career goals, regardless of the obstacles that might be experienced along the way. Owing to this, the participants were inspired to envision a future for themselves that was free of the limits and difficulties (such as financial limitations, a lack of enthusiasm about studying, and goal setting) that could prevent them from realising their professional/career goals. This finding regarding the participants' increased level of confidence resonates with Hartung and Cadaret's (2017) assertion that individuals with high levels of confidence are self-assured and possess the fortitude and resolve necessary to handle challenging social circumstances. The finding also corroborates Hirsch's (2009) claim that adaptive people are most likely to experience a sense of empowerment.

5.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of my study by linking them to the literature on career construction counselling previously studied in Chapter 2 as well as newer literature based on the pre- and post-intervention themes and the sub-themes that emerged during qualitative data analysis by following an inductive–deductive approach. The themes and sub-themes generated in this study suggest that the career construction counselling intervention has improved the participants' career development and their ability to make career decisions, which complements the findings of other studies and existing literature. The participants demonstrated improved levels of self-construction, career exploration, self-knowledge, self-efficacy, and adaptability after their participation in the intervention programme.

In Chapter 6, the research study is summarised, and the research questions are reviewed within the context of the findings. This is followed by the discussion on the study's limitations and exploration of the ethical issues. I conclude the final chapter by reflecting on the study and making recommendations for further study and policy implementation.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide a summary of the study by relating the research questions to the findings of the study. The limitations of the study are then discussed, followed by a summary of the ethical principles that guided the study. Next, I discuss my personal reflections on what I would have done differently. Lastly, the chapter is concluded by discussing recommendations for practitioners, researchers, theorists, and policymakers.

6.2 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

6.2.1 Primary research question

The primary research question in the study was: *How does group-based career construction counselling influence the career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?*

Participating in the group-based construction counselling has helped to improve the participants' knowledge about themselves and career fields as well as their self-exploration, all of which played a crucial role in their career development and built their self-construction. The participants also gained a deeper understanding of the relationship between their lived experiences and future career goals. The impact of the group-based intervention could be seen in the participants' improved behaviour as they engaged in the career- and self-exploration activities by using storytelling to explore their interests and abilities in discovering their strengths and weaknesses and ultimately set their career goals. Signs of self-construction were revealed in the participants' descriptions of their lives as they formed distinct self-images and were inspired to take deliberate actions such as working harder to improve their academic performance and realise their life goals to improve their families' circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, the results regarding the participants' growth (career development) after the intervention provide evidence of the efficacy of the constructivist career counselling approach used in this study, namely Cochran's (1997, 2007) and Savickas's (2019a) narrative career counselling (storytelling)[41] and, especially, Savickas's (2008; 2011a, 2012, 2019b) construction

[41] See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.1 (i) for a detailed discussion of Cochran's narrative career counselling (storytelling) theory.

theory (a cornerstone of life designing),[42] which emphasises the construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and co-construction of clients' life-career stories.

The storied (narrative) approach is pertinent to the African context of this study, because it recognises people's socio-cultural and historical backgrounds, revives the tradition of group storytelling, and upholds the spirit of Ubuntu (respect for human dignity). Through this approach, people can develop their own careers and identities as they relate and/or enact stories in the settings in which they live and work (Watson, 2017; Savickas, 2019a). It is evident that the intervention described and implemented in this study has improved the participants' self-awareness, notably with regard to their attitudes, beliefs, and competencies (ABCs)[43] (including their preferences motives), and subjective identities, as well as their strengths and limitations. Consequently, this enhanced their understanding of themselves and their career choice as well as their ability to make informed career decisions.[44]

6.2.2 Secondary questions

The secondary questions in the study were divided into the following sub-questions:

6.2.2.1 Descriptive questions

i. *How can group-based career construction counselling inform intervention to promote career development of 15 Grade 9 learners from Lubombo Secondary School in the Ehlanzeni District, which falls under the Mpumalanga Department of Education?*

The group-based career construction intervention inherent in my study was intended to support learners from a typically rural setting to help them realise how their career and subject choices would affect their long-term career development. To avoid being perceived as an isolated programme outside of the school curriculum and the topic in the Life Orientation subject, the intervention programme was executed in partnership with the Grade 9 Life Orientation teacher in the school as part of an endeavour to link learners' personal growth and career development aspirations. In line with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and subsequently relating the findings of the current research to existing literature on enhancing the career development of rural learners through group-based career construction counselling Chapter 5, it became evident that the learners in my study (similar to many other learners in resource-constrained regions) were not being prepared adequately for life and work in the 21st century (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). This is the case despite the fact that introducing career construction counselling at an early stage (Grade 7–9) would help

[42] See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.1 (ii) for a detailed discussion of Savickas's construction theory of life designing.
[43] See Chapter 2, Section 5.2.5 for more details.
[44] See Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.3.1 for more details.

teachers to prepare learners to choose relevant subjects that will lead them to make informed career choice decisions taking socio-economic factors into consideration (Nong, 2016).

During the pre-intervention group discussions, the participants revealed that, in addition to a lack of information on career choices, what different career fields entail, and which personality traits are associated with different professions, they also expressed feelings of insecurity regarding the impact of unemployment and corruption as obstacles to their career choices, and such challenges require access to psychosocial career counselling, which is currently non-existent in schools. The influence of the intervention was also witnessed in the participants' improved self-understanding, which is reflected in their assertiveness to achieve their goals and their ability to construct, deconstruct, reconstruct, and co-construct their subjective realities through their narratives (Ruiters & Maree, 2022; Savickas, 2012, 2015, 2019b).

Given the limited resources and overcrowding in classes that are experienced in South African schools, where one-on-one counselling is impossible, implementing the group-based career counselling intervention can be a cost-efficient means to reach a large number of learners at a particular time in endeavours to enhance learners' career development. This confirms the literature reviewed in Chapter 5 of this study advocating that structured group career counselling[45] interventions can be more effective in facilitating typical group contexts (Hartung, 2019; Hartung & Vess, 2016).

ii. Which factors contribute to career development challenges among these learners?

The majority of participants in the current study perceived the role of significant others, socio-economic factors, politics, and the advancement in technology as prominent factors contributing to their career development. The influence of these factors are summarised below:[46]

- Socio-economic and political factors: Poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and politics were perceived by the participants as barriers to achieving their career goals that restrict their access to a variety of occupations. Having witnessed most graduates in their community struggling to obtain employment, they were hesitant to pursue career trajectories that matched their preferences, since they felt that their career choices were limited by these factors. Furthermore, participants cited a lack of funding to pursue their studies after high school as an obstacle to achieving their aspirations as well as a sense of insecurity brought on by crime and corruption, which is worsened by prevailing unpredictable conditions. These experiences significantly impacted on the participants' career choices in that they tend to opt for careers that would offer

[45] See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.5.2 regarding structured versus unstructured counselling.
[46] See Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.2.1–5.2.2.3, pp. 174–180 for a detailed discussion.

solutions to problems identified in their communities, as they felt compelled by those prevailing circumstances.

- ❖ The role of their significant others: The participants in this study reported that they were discouraged by the lack of support from their family members (parents, siblings, and relatives) and teachers; as a result, their limited career development could be ascribed to their lack of career exploration. Regarding friends, participants expressed both positive and negative experiences of support. Those who had positive experiences described friends as pillars of support in times of need, including career decisions, while those with negative experiences described friends as misleading them. Interestingly, all participants were able to identify several role models from different walks of life whom they believed had a positive impact on their career aspirations and made them more likely to adopt professional behaviours as they were inspired by their insightful advice and motivation.
- ❖ Technological advancement: Participants raised some concerns about the prospect that the Fourth Industrial Revolution may lead to the emergence of new digital jobs and the abolition of certain employment categories that currently exist in the job market. However, it was heartening to note that they demonstrated an understanding that the effects could be controlled by becoming ready to adapt to new technology and develop into highly technologically adept professionals.

In the light of these findings, I conclude that a lack of access to career counselling is having adverse effects on the study participants' career development and their ability to set future career goals. Therefore, interventions of this nature are vital to expose learners to career construction counselling to equip them with adaptability skills and help them become more adaptive and overcome challenges related to life transitions and employment issues. Such engagements would also maximise opportunities for learners' access to career exploration, self and career construction, and the ability to make informed career decisions by considering their own career preferences, skills, and personality traits.

6.2.2.2 Explorative questions

iii. What were the main differences between learners' pre-and the post-intervention themes and sub-themes?

There were several notable differences between the pre-and post-intervention themes and sub-themes, which were demonstrated through the participants' comments and behaviours as they progressed through the stages of the intervention. Themes and sub-themes that emerged during the

pre-intervention group discussions include a lack of information on career fields and self-awareness (self and career identity), hopelessness and despair, insecurity, and inadequate self-knowledge.[47] The participants' comments indicated that most of them did not understand that, in addition to the socio-economic factors raised, their interests, abilities, weaknesses, and personality traits also play a vital role in the career-choice and decision-making process; as a result, they struggled to set clear career goals. They also displayed a lack of understanding of the connection between subject combination and career choice as critical determinants for their future career trajectories as they transitioned from the General Education Band (Grade R–9) to the Further Education Band (Grade 10–12).

The themes and sub-themes generated during the post-intervention semi-structured interviews revealed a remarkable improvement in the participants' career development, which was evident through their increased self- and career knowledge[48]and the ability to set clear, achievable goals. This followed the participants' exposure to the processes of choosing a career through which they explored their career preferences, skills, capabilities, and shortcomings. The identified post-intervention sub-themes include improved self-efficacy, self- and career exploration, and adaptability skills, which could also be seen in the participants' deeper understanding of who they are, their self-motivation, their hope for a bright future, and increased control over adverse circumstances that could impede their career goals. In addition, participants' comments at the end of the intervention displayed a clear understanding of the impact of subject choice on their career aspirations. This finding was supported by the literature reviewed in this study stating that the ability to enter particular careers are strongly influenced by specific subject combinations as a prerequisite for those careers (Maketekete, 2022; Naidoo et al., 2019; Streicher, 2021).

iv. How did group-based career construction intervention by means of the conduits of narratability, career adaptability, and intentionality influence learners' career development?

By engaging in the career construction intervention programme, the participants demonstrated improved narratability, which was evident in their ability to create new identities in relation to their career trajectories. As part of a lifelong self-construction process, most participants used their narrative abilities to express their innermost thoughts and feelings more clearly (narratability), and eventually their sense of identity, capacity for making informed decisions, sense of purpose (intentionality), and their sense of hope for the future were enhanced.

[47] See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.2 for a detailed discussion.
[48] See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1. 3 on career fields and 5.2.3.1 on self-construction.

The intervention also bolstered the participants' adaptability by improving the four dimensions (competencies)[49] regarded by Savickas (2016a, 2019b) as resources and adjustment techniques utilised by individuals when facing change related to planning and career choice decisions. As such, their concern for the future and their sense of control were increased, which was demonstrated in their abilities to set the goals they wished to accomplish in their lives. The participants' sense of control over their own lives was expressed through increased acceptance of responsibility for bearing the consequences of their own actions and decisions.

The intervention also increased the participants' curiosity to share their aspirations while engaging in a range of exploratory behaviours that revealed information about themselves such as their personalities and desired careers. Self- and career exploration enabled them to become more adaptable and connect their personal lives with the world of work (i.e. manage career transitions). Subsequently, the increased level of confidence became evident in the participants' determination to achieve their career goals, regardless of what the future could bring. In support of Savickas and Pouyaud (2016), I believe that, with the intervention implemented in this study, participants will be more sufficiently equipped to design their lives and be ready to manage career transitions in the 21st century.

6.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations and procedures as detailed in Chapter 3[50] were adhered to through the entire research study:

- **Permission to conduct the study**: Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria; the Head of the Mpumalanga Department of Education issued written permission to conduct the study; and the Principal of Lubombo Secondary School (Annexure A, B, and C) granted written approval as well.
- **Informed assent and consent**: Written permission to participate in the study was obtained from the research participants and their parents or guardians. To ensure transparency, the purpose of the study was explained both verbally and in writing and the research methods and procedures were also clarified in advance, including the fact that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time.

[49] See Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.5.1–5.2.5.4 for a detailed discussion.
[50] See detailed discussion in Section 3.8, Chapter 3.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**: Participants' real identity was by no means disclosed in order to prevent them from being traced; instead, to ensure anonymity, codes were used to report data. This practice will be maintained even long after the research is complete.
- **Honesty and trust**: I ensured honesty by maintaining a healthy researcher–participant relationship throughout the research study.
- **Protection from physical and psychological harm**: I always ensured both physical and emotional safety for all participants, and a psychologist was always available during the intervention sessions to provide professional counselling in case the need arose. However, no participants needed counselling services, as there were no adverse effects.
- **Social value:** Care was taken to ensure that the research problem and the implemented interventions did not only benefit the researcher but also addressed the participants and the target community's needs. Therefore, I remained sensitive to the traditional values and cultural practices of the community.
- **Communication of results**: The findings were shared with the participants for verification in order to avoid any misinterpretations.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The following factors were considered limitations in the current study, as discussed in Chapter 3:[51]

- The data in my study was gathered from a small group constituting 15 participants from a low socio-economic rural background; thus, it is questionable if the results would have been the same if it was carried out in a different socio-economic setting.
- The study's generalisability was limited by the participants' purposeful (non-random) sampling, which could have been generalised to other circumstances had it been a randomised-controlled study involving much larger and more diverse populations.
- Due to lack of funding and inadequate resources (lack of computers and access to the internet at the research site), manual copies of the *CIP* and the *MCM* inventories were used, which raises questions as to whether the findings would have been the same if the online version had been used.
- The participants' low proficiency in the English language also raised uncertainties as to whether the intervention would have yielded the same or different results if participants had used their home language to express their insights in their responses.

[51] Detailed discussion in Chapter 3, Section 3.9.

Although rigorous quality assurance criteria were followed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of my study, the subjective nature of the qualitative data used in this study necessitated a subjective analysis and interpretation (i.e. themes and findings that emerged from the data sources were influenced by the researcher's interpretations rather than imposed before data generation), as such, the findings could be interpreted differently by other researchers.

6.5 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH STUDY

In this section, my personal thoughts on this study are summarised. I discuss the findings that were anticipated, those that were not anticipated, those that surprised me, and those that disappointed me.

6.5.1 Anticipated findings

The participants' responses confirmed my expectation that the career construction intervention programme can be successfully employed in group settings similar to the context in which I conducted my research to enhance learners' career development by improving their sense of self and helping them obtain deeper insight into the world of work. As anticipated, the use of narratives during the intervention enhanced the participants' self- and career identity and helped them find meaning and purpose in the difficulties they faced. I had anticipated the lack of career guidance support by Life Orientation teachers in schools; thus, it was not surprising that the participants had little knowledge regarding the world of work and that educating them about various careers should enable them to make informed career decisions and provide solutions to any kind of challenges presented to their lives at any given moment. Owing to the impact of the career counselling intervention, it was expected that the participants' career choices would be influenced by their desire to address the needs identified in the communities in which they reside. In addition, I anticipated that the participants' language proficiency[52] would be a challenge, since their home language was siSwati.

6.5.2 Unanticipated findings

Although there was a substantial improvement in the participants' behaviour towards the end of the intervention, the lack of enthusiasm and disciplinary problems they displayed at the early stages of the intervention had not been envisioned. This could have been because they did not realise the value of the programme at that stage (they were not accustomed to the kind of intervention I facilitated). I also did not foresee the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which gave rise to several restrictions that limited access to public services, including access to schools; as such, contact with participants was completely lost for many months. The untimely breaks at certain intervals, even after the recess, were unfortunate, because I repeatedly had to take a step back to remind

[52] A detailed account can be found on pp. 91–92 on dual roles, Section 3.9, Chapter 3.

participants where we were before resuming the next session. As a result, the study period took longer than anticipated and the participants' consistency was interrupted such that most of them lost interest and withdrew from the intervention. Notwithstanding the circumstances, the fact that the few participants who stayed remained deeply committed to the very end, despite the demotivating influence of those who left, was something I did not expect. Hence, I was impressed by the high degree of resilience (in terms of career choice) displayed in their sheer determination to face the future no matter what it held.

6.5.3 Surprising findings

I was thrilled to witness the participants' excitement when they completed the Integrative Career Choice and Construction Conversation template by using colours to highlight those careers that seemed common (synthesised career themes) as identified in both the *CIP* and the *MCM* inventory. It was amazing to discover how this kind of activity helped participants to understand their career preferences and self-identities and how it made them feel optimistic about their future. I also felt a sense of relief in realising that none of the participants experienced deep emotional distress that would have required psychological intervention. I could not believe that the group-based narrative approach encouraged participants to share their personal stories and career-related information in such a sincere manner, which ultimately helped in the co-construction of their life-career choices. It is hoped that the group-based intervention will contribute to the learners' development of self-awareness and increase their chances of interacting and connecting with others in similar settings.

6.5.4 Disappointing findings

I was disappointed by the untimely withdrawal of several participants (which reduced the number of participants from 50 to 15). The participants likely left because they could not relate the value of the programme to the curriculum of their other school subjects. As such, the programme could have been perceived as a waste of time, since it did not subject them to the formal assessment normally done in other subjects. I would have loved if they stayed until they discovered the impact of the programme, just like the others did at the end. I was also disappointed by the fact that my research could not be finished within the prescribed duration due to unforeseen circumstances.

It was frustrating that I had to abandon my intention to conduct the research with a mixed-methods design due to time constraints (mostly caused by the Covid-19 pandemic). The lack of career guidance provision by Life Orientation teachers, in spite of the DBE's attempts to infuse it into the Life Orientation curriculum, was also disheartening.

6.5.5 What I would have done differently

While I am grateful for the positive impact that the intervention programme had in enhancing the participants' career development, I felt bad that the planned intervention did not go as originally intended due to the contextual factors that arose. I would have loved to have a one-on-one conversation with those participants who left early to explore the reasons why they abandoned the programme. This would have offered an opportunity to get to know them better, understand their plight, and provide relevant guidance regarding self- and career exploration.

6.6 WHAT THE FINDINGS MEANT TO ME PERSONALLY

As I conclude this study, I feel very humbled by having discovered that learning is a lifelong process. Coming this far was like an "aha" moment which unearthed the realities of the research mentioned repeatedly by several presenters during the induction sessions, as they took us through the research journey at the beginning of this study. It was only at this stage that I understood that research is not a straightforward process, but rather a zig-zag, winding one, just like putting puzzles together. As Corbin and Strauss (2015) rightfully state, similar to a miner, the researcher digs deeper into the ground to discover the treasures hidden beneath the surface, and I had to do the same.

Given the severe, traumatic circumstances that prevailed during the time of this study due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic,[53] I was compelled to significantly alter and adapt my intended research techniques to enable progress. I occasionally felt entirely overwhelmed by those challenges as they affected the research process, but I soon discovered that I should embrace this intellectual challenge as it shaped my own learning, and I also derived satisfaction from the use of various research techniques that were dictated by the changes.

Despite all the challenges, I personally feel that I have developed significantly in terms of both my personality and my understanding of people who are subjected to challenging conditions on a regular basis. I have worked incredibly hard on this dissertation for more than three years, making sacrifices along the way, but also gained a great deal. I went through periods of both happiness and despondency, and I often became aware of the daily challenges that my study's participants encountered.

At a professional level, my development has been remarkable, as I had to read extensively and become familiar with a wide range of topics related to career construction, adaptability, and career development. I have gained knowledge that I am already applying in my capacity as a

[53] A detailed account can be found on pp. 94–96, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1, Impact of Covid-19 within my research context.

registered career development practitioner,[54] and I have no doubt that it will help me make better decisions and advance my practice in the future.

The greatest honour has undoubtedly been working with my supervisor, an internationally renowned expert in the career counselling field, whose utmost professionalism and commitment to his work have always served as a source of inspiration, especially on occasions when I was hesitant of my capacity to finish my studies. I have advanced greatly over the past five years, and I will always treasure this experience.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided based on the current study's research findings. Here, it is essential to address matters at the following levels: (i) the meso-level, involving collaborative research with various stakeholders in different socio-economic strata, and (ii) the macro level, focusing on policy-level considerations.

6.7.1 Recommendations for improvement of practice

- I recommend that career construction counselling be introduced as part of enhancing the career guidance programme that is currently in place in the South African education system. While great strides have been made to include topics such as "career choices, the self/personal well-being and the world of work" in the Life Orientation curriculum (Grade 7–12), it is an undeniable fact that the current approach has not been effective in promoting the learners' career development, as (at best) it only provides general career information, rather than equipping them with the skills to navigate future career and life trajectories.
- The successful implementation of career construction counselling requires adequate training of Life Orientation teachers as practitioners responsible for offering career guidance in schools (at the time of this study) to ensure that the programme is facilitated effectively. For this reason, extensive research in the field of career counselling has called for an urgent need for in-service training programmes through retraining, reskilling or upskilling of Life Orientation teachers, so that they can handle the delicacies in this subject as it extends beyond the classroom content to the life realities that learners face in their daily lives.
- It is recommended that practitioners wishing to practice group-based interventions in educational contexts similar to this study consider creating opportunities for additional one-on-one sessions, where participants can freely express their thoughts and feelings and ask questions which could have been challenging in a group context.

[54] I am registered with SACDA (see Section 2.2.3.2., p. 34, Career guidance and counselling in the democratic South Africa).

- Given that career development is a process that progresses through stages, I strongly recommend that career interventions be introduced as early as Grade 7–9, as it is a critical stage for self and career exploration which prepares them for subject choice and future career prospects as they venture through Grade 10–12 and beyond. In so doing, learners will be afforded ample time to consider their interests and potential careers without feeling rushed to make decisions about their future.
- Involving university experts at various levels in the training and upskilling of Life Orientation teachers should be negotiated and commence expeditiously.

6.7.2 Recommendations for future research

- With the advancement of technology and the increasing reliance on online platforms for sourcing information, further research should explore how the use of digital platforms influence career decision making in order to meet the needs of the unpredictable, fast-changing world of work.
- I suggest that future research interventions focus on how learners with special educational needs (such as disabilities and intellectual impairment) can be supported to access career guidance and counselling services, as they are currently excluded or receive little attention in this regard.
- It has also become important for future research to focus on the indigenisation of career counselling to heed the call in previous research that socio-cultural and economic backgrounds must be taken into consideration, since it can be challenging to share certain traumatic experiences within certain contexts.
- Future research could also explore how Life Orientation teachers view their responsibilities for supporting learners in venturing their career trajectories.
- Training of all Life Orientation teachers in the administration of the career counselling cross-culturally is a sine qua non.

6.7.3 Recommendations for policymakers

In light of the study's findings described in Chapter 5 of this study, policymakers in the DBE are urged to consider the following recommendations:

- Advanced pre-service training for Life Orientation teachers to become career development practitioners as they are responsible for the provision of career guidance to learners within the South African context[55] (guided by the Competency Framework for Career Development

[55] See Chapter 3, Section 2.2.3.2 on career guidance and counselling in South Africa.

Practitioners in South Africa). Presently, there is a shortage of adequately trained Life Orientation teachers, which leads to the ineffective instruction of learners. Closer collaboration between stakeholders at primary, secondary, as well as tertiary training level is key in this regard.

- ❖ Increase the number of hours allocated to Life Orientation per week to enable teachers to cover all topics fairly without compromising any of them. In addition, researchers have recommended updating and modernising the subject content to incorporate modules on postmodern career counselling, which is necessary to meet the job transition needs dictated by the 21st century. More specifically, increasing the number of hours devoted to career development is essential.
- ❖ Promote accessibility to career counselling services at no cost to parents and learners by ensuring that every public secondary school has a professional school-based counsellor who will not only take care of learners' career educational needs but also their psychosocial needs. This will also help schools to stay abreast with the latest developments in the counselling field.
- ❖ Involve and communicate with parents and other caretakers regularly in matters related to career development; this collaboration should be fostered and advanced at all levels.

Lastly, I have sadly witnessed the following phenomenon unfold repeatedly in research and related matters: Researchers would visit schools, conduct their studies, and publish their findings without deeply engaging with the various realities (e.g. social, cultural, contextual, and economic) in different areas, and they would never follow up or provide feedback to schools and communities. This lack of involvement is simply unacceptable.

6.8 CONCLUSION

I sincerely hope that the research I have conducted and the report I have written will contribute to the advancement of career development for rural learners through group-based career construction counselling. This not only includes the participants in my research but also all learners who are currently excluded from mainstream education and lack access to progressive career counselling services. Growing up and living in the very context that this research addresses has deeply impacted me. I have witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of poverty, limited employment opportunities, and lack of resources within this context. It has always been my aspiration to make a meaningful contribution, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant it may appear to others.

The encouraging feedback received from participants, parents, and colleagues following the intervention serves as a rewarding validation of my efforts and affirms the usefulness of the research. In closing, I would like to quote Savickas, who once stated, "use my strategy or devise and use your

own, but you need to have some way to listen for valid stories; not veracity" (Savickas, 2016b, n.p.). Additionally, Savickas (2002) reminds us that career construction counselling interventions "must continue to innovate, not stagnate" (p. 185). It is precisely this spirit of innovation that I sought to achieve: advancing career counselling in arguably one of the most desolate, disadvantaged, and marginalised regions of the world.

6.8.1 Sequel to this research

In September 2023, I organised a hybrid follow-up event to assess the long-term impact of my research on the participants' career development through a group-based career construction counselling intervention. The organising and coordination of this event took a significant amount of time and effort, mainly due to the challenges of aligning participants' schedules. However, I managed to successfully recruit nearly all of the original study participants.

The outcomes of the follow-up intervention were both enlightening and inspiring. Overall, the feedback received from the participants confirmed that the participants had greatly benefited from the intervention. To be more specific, all the learners provided evidence of having clarified their career choices and were either pursuing further education or participating in enrichment courses to enhance their prospects of gaining admission to their desired fields of study. In essence, their social agency was significantly enhanced in the medium term (McAdams, 2013; Savickas, 2019a).

Furthermore, participants expressed not only a clearer sense of purpose but also the determination to pursue their goals despite facing considerable obstacles in many a case. All participants articulated an increased sense of self-belief, positive attitudes toward their studies and future prospects, and made mention of the hard work they had done to acquire new skills—an evident enhancement of their motivated agency (McAdams, 2013; Savickas, 2019a).

In addition, all participants reported an improved sense of gratitude for having had the opportunity to express themselves openly (narratability) and felt motivated by the telling of their life stories in order to find meaning in their chosen fields of study. They also expressed a strong desire to make a positive impact in their communities and other similar challenging contexts, which aligns with the concept of enhancing their autobiographical authorship (Maree, 2022c; McAdams, 2013; Savickas, 2019a).

Lastly, all participants revealed sharing a deep motivation (intentionality) to realise their dreams and were working hard at translating their intentions into actions, i.e. embodying the concept of turning intention into action (McAdams, 2013; Savickas, 2019a).

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ANNEXURE A: REQUEST LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO THE MDOE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

8 October 2018

The Head: Education

Mpumalanga Department of Education

Ikhamanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park

PO Box X11341

Mbombela

1200

RE: CONSENT FOR PHD RESEARCH AT LUBOMBO AND PHUMULA SECONDARY SCHOOLS UNDER EHLANZENI DISTRICT.

I am currently enrolled for my PhD (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which life construction counselling can be facilitated to enhance Grade 9 learners' career development.

For the purpose of my study, I will require two classes of Grade 9 learners, one from Lubombo secondary and the other from Phumula secondary school. Both classes will be asked to complete a Career Adapt-Ability questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the career intervention programme (i.e. pre and post-test) while they continue to attend their Life Orientation classes as part of their school curriculum. The class from Lubombo will participate as an intervention group, while Phumula Secondary will take part as a control group. For this reason, only the learners from Lubombo secondary will be requested to participate in the career construction counselling programme during which they will be asked to complete two tests, namely the Career Interest Profile (CIP) and the Maree-Career Matrix (MCM) to assist them explore their career interests. Furthermore, learners from Lubombo will also be asked to take part in the semi-structured focus group interviews during the life construction-intervention programme.

1

Participation in the study will be voluntary and the learners will be informed that they are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time. Informed consent will be obtained from both the learners and their parents. The learners' identities will be protected, their privacy respected and all the information will be managed confidentially.

Your favourable consideration of my request for permission to conduct my research at Lubombo and Phumula Secondary schools will be appreciated. Further to this, the naming of both schools in my research is requested.

Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela
Researcher
08/10/2018
Date

Prof. J.G. Maree
Supervisor
Date

DECLARATION

Herewith I, the undersigned, grant Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela permission to conduct her research study (as discussed and stipulated in the letter) at Lubombo and Phumula Secondary Schools.

Head: Education
Mpumalanga Department

Date

ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM MPUMALANGA DOE: HOD

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ms Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela
Email: t.mahlalela@education.mpu.gov.za;

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: THEMBELIHLE NANCY MAHLALELA

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your research project reads: **"Enhancing the career development of grade 9 learners in a rural school through group-based career and life construction counseling"**. I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476/5148 Or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS MOC MHLABANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

06 / 11 / 18
DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

8 October 2018

Attention: The Principal: Ms PE Tindi

RE: CONSENT FOR PHD RESEARCH AT LUBOMBO SECONDARY SCHOOL

I am currently enrolled for my PhD (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which life construction counselling can be facilitated to enhance Grade 9 learners' career development.

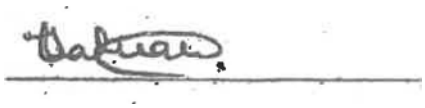
For the purpose of my study, I will require one class of Grade 9 learners from the school who will be asked to complete a Career Adapt-Ability questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the study (i.e. pre and post-test) while they continue attending their Life Orientation classes as part of their curriculum. The same group will be requested to participate in the life construction counselling programme during which they will do career exploration activities and complete two tests, namely the Career Interest Profile (CIP) and the Maree-Career Matrix (MCM) to assist them explore their career interests. Furthermore, twenty learners will be selected to take part in the semi-structured focus group interviews as part of the intervention programme.

Participation in the study will be voluntary and the learners will be informed that they are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time. Informed consent will be obtained from both the learners and their parents. The learners' identities will be protected, their privacy respected and all the information will be managed confidentially.

Your favourable consideration of my request for permission to conduct my research at Lubombo Secondary School will be appreciated. Further to this, the naming of your school in my research is requested.

1

Yours faithfully



Thembelihle Nancy Mahlalela

Researcher

Prof. J.G. Maree

Supervisor

DECLARATION

Herewith la the undersigned grant Thémbelihle Ñancy Mahlalela permission to conduct her research study (as discussed and stipulated in the letter) at Lubombo Secondary school

Ms. PE Timbi

Principal

27/05/2019

Date

ANNEXURE D: PARTICIPANTS CONSENT/ASSENT

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

8 October 2018

Title of the proposed study: Enhancing the career development of rural learners through group-based career and life construction counselling.

Dear participant

You have been invited to participate in a research project aimed at exploring the extent to which group-based career and life construction counselling can be facilitated to enhance Grade 9 learners' career development. My intention is to create an opportunity for rural learners to reflect to their own experiences and discover knowledge about themselves so that they are able to make appropriate career and subject choice decisions that are meaningful to their lives, and to consider career opportunities that are relevant to the global changes in the world of work.

Participation in this research project will involve the following:

- Discussions with you to establish your understanding of "career" "career and subject choice" "career construction" and "life construction".
- Three questionnaires will be administered in separate sessions *(The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale, the Career Interest Profile and the Maree-Career Matrix).*
- To facilitate quality assurance, the *Career Adapt-Ability Scale* will be administered twice, before and after implementing the intervention programme.
- The career construction intervention will be conducted simultaneously with the Life Orientation lessons for nine sessions within the school.

The following guidelines will direct my attempts to facilitate group-based career and life construction activities that will enhance learners' career development:

- Exploring the extent to which group career construction counselling can promote career development to learners from a typical rural community.
- Exploring the concepts of "career construction" "career choice" and "subject choice".

- Completing career exploration activities that promote self-knowledge during Life Orientation classes which entail making collages and timelines.

Please note the following:

1. If you do not understand a certain term or statement in a question, or when you cannot answer a question or respond to a statement because you have not actually experienced the situation, feel free to ask the test administrator for an explanation.
2. Bear in mind that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. You are requested to answer all questions, and not leave out any of the questions.
3. The sessions will be recorded by means of audio-tape and the *verbatim* transcriptions of the conversations will be typed, analysed, and quoted in the final dissertation.
4. The data obtained from the participants will be used solely for research purposes in a **completely anonymous and confidential manner.**
5. You are assured that your identity and responses to the questionnaires will be regarded as **extremely confidential at all times and that they will not be made available to any unauthorised user.**
6. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any stage.
7. There is no known risk involved in the research and there are no costs involved.
8. Possible benefits include the fact that your participation will probably promote your ability to make informed career and subject choice decisions so that you are ready to face any challenges in the World of work presently or in the near future

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent and to confirm your compliance with the project and your involvement.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

You are more than welcome to contact me with any further queries on the following number: **082 437 1440**. Should you wish to speak to my supervisor, Prof. J.G. Maree, I will gladly supply his contact details upon request.

_____	_____
Ms. TN Mahlalela	**Prof. J.G. Maree**
Researcher	**Supervisor**

ANNEXURE E: PRE-AND POST- INTERVENTION GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pre-intervention group discussions guiding questions

1. In your groups, briefly discuss the challenges in the World of work.

2. Briefly suggest solutions to the challenges you raised: what can be done to address these problems?

Post-intervention semi structured group interviews questions

1. What have you gained from participating in the career construction activities you have engaged in throughout the programme?

2. What is it that you liked most about the programme? What is it that you did not like? Any suggestions to make the programme more effective?

3. Give a brief description of the most important aspects to be considered in constructing your own career life. How do you understand the meaning of career construction?

4. Do you know of any factors that could impede your career decision making for your future life? What kind of help would you need to accomplish this?

5. How would you explain the role of Life Orientation lessons in the exploration of careers information and decision making? Are they helping you make more informed career decisions? Any setbacks?

6. How would you like the Life Orientation lessons to be improved in your classes?

7. Briefly share how you felt at the earlier stages of the programme when we first met, and how do you feel now–when you think about your future?

8. Any recommendations?

ANNEXURE F1: PRE-INTERVENTION GROUP DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPTION

Description of the different font colours for themes in brackets:

- **Blue: 4IR impact on jobs**
- **Orange: Socio-economic impact including unemployment, poverty**
- **Deep red: Political influence (corruption)**
- **Red: Lack of career knowledge due to lack of career guidance**

GROUP A:
Question1: Challenges in the world of work
*****Most people are uneducated * They use technology (machines) instead of hiring people to work (Influence of digitisation of work-due to 4IR) * If you want a job you have to have connections, people who will help you get the job (Influence of corruption). You have to have more qualification and if you are not privileged coming from a poor family you won't have money to go to University (poverty) *If you are disable (e.g. you cannot walk) you won't be someone you wanted to be
Question2: What can be done?
-People must stop bias (that if you black women you are not supposed to work (unemployment) -People must be allowed to work those jobs (unemployment) they are willing to work -Those people who are disabled must be given a chance to work jobs that they feel comfortable to do -People who are not working must be hired: expecially (sic) those people who have qualification and have grade 12 certificate -If people are poor (poverty) but they have grade 12 qualification–must be given a certain amount per month since they are breadwinners

GROUP D:
Question1: Challenges in the world of work
-People are educated aint working because of racism (unemployment)

- There are opportunities in the country the problem is they hire outside people instead of S.A. citizens -People are working but they earn less money -Fraud in hiring people (identity problem) (Influence of corruption). -Sexual manipulated before getting job (Influence of corruption).
Question2: What can be done? -Developing new skills and working stations -People can be educated about what to do when overcoming the challenge (lack of knowledge /information regarding careers) -Must not hire outside people they must hire the youth of this country -Everyone who has a degree must have a job -When you are forced to have a sexual manipulation the victim must report it(corruption)

ANNEXURE F2: EXTRACT FROM THE POST-NTERVENTION SEMI-STRUCTURED GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. What have you gained from participating in the career construction activities you have engaged in throughout the programme?

22 [IP 24]: Since last year you started teaching us Mam, I did not take it seriously, I [22] 23 thought we were just playing, I took it as a game, I used to write just for the sake of *writing 24 (Aah! bengibhala nje, ngingakutsatsi serious, bengibona ngatsi mdlalo nje*…], But you kept 25 on coming, but I regarded it as a waste of time, but now I understand that choosing a career is 26 not a once of thing, but a process, such that a person can change every day, today I think this, 27 tomorrow that, that's why the careers I had chosen last year are no longer the same now, even 28 the subjects that I had thought to take - I have changed because now I understand that a I have 29 to consider subjects when choosing a career, you do not just choose.
30 [IP26]: what I have learnt is that, you have made realize what I want in life 30 now, 31which I did not know before. Even me, I also did not take you seriously in the beginning 32 *("vele bengingavisisi nekutsi kwentekani, bengimane ngenta nje*…), but now I realise that I 32 33 have to take a decision to become something in life. That is why now, I have also changed 34 35 what I wanted and chosen something else.
37 [IP34]: I have gained because when I was in Grade 9 I did not know what I wanted 38 to become and I was not aware of my capabilities, I was just coming to school but now that I 39 am in Grade 10 and this programme is helping me realize my stand in terms of careers. Now I 40 know that I do not have to confine myself to one choice because you don't know which one 41 will succeed, and as I continue with the subjects that I have chosen, I feel confident that they 42 are appropriate because I realize that am not that kind of person who can be conquered easily, 43 I want that if I fail, I must know the reasons that caused my failure. Now that I am in Gr.10, I 44 have thought of two careers to pursue, since am still going to Gr.12- I don't know what will 45 happen.
46 [IP32]: Myself Mam, in fact I already knew what I wanted in life but was not 47 sure about the career itself, so when you started teaching us you helped me understand better 48 about the career that suits me, *that's why now I know very well what I want in life.*

2. What is it that you liked most about the programme? What is it that you did not like? Any suggestions to make the programme more effective?

60 [IP34]: What I have liked with the programme is that it has helped me realize my 60 position 61as a learner, what I want in life and how can I achieve my goals, and also realizing 62 that there are many jobs out there which I did not now. What I did not like with the programme 63 is that it came as a surprise, I did not expect it, but most of the things I have liked.
64 Facilitator: okay, cool. What suggestions would you have to make the programme more effective?
66 IP34: My suggestion would be that now that I have learned, I can now be able to share with 67 others in grade 10 that the choice of subjects is very important for a career choice, that they 68 must *be careful because not all subjects lead you to the career you want,* but at least one can 69 always change in Grade 10 and 11and 12.
73 [IP24]: what I liked about the programme is that I learned that in life I do not need to 74 rely on other people, my choices/destiny should not be determined by another person because 75 people might lead you astray. Also, that our parents should not decide for you, for instance, 76 they say 'we want you to be a doctor, and me mam, I don't like to be doctor with all my *heart 77 (kutsi batsi okay, ube ngudokotela, budokotela vele mine ngiyabunyanya, angivani nekubona 78 ingati, and i Maths angiyitsandzi"* (facial expression show strong contempt). What I did not 79 like with the programme

is when I was required to write about hurtful experiences in my life, 80 "*Eish! I did not like it Mam, you see.*
81 Facilitator: would you mind sharing with us why you did not like it?
82 IP 24: Ky, (low voice). Eish, it made me feel painful mam, as if the experience is taking place 83 again (*beyingivisa buhlungu mam, as if lentfo yenteka kabusha futsi, manje kubuhlungu 83 83 84 kakhulu loko)*
90 [IP26]:what I liked with this programme is that it has helped guiding me in choosing 91 subjects that I want for my career, like now, I have managed to choose subjects that will help 92 me reach my goal, for instance, I want to be a Doctor ("*kusho kutsi nje, nanyalo ngikhonile kutsi ngikhetse emasubjects lekumele ngiwafundze, latawukhona kutsi angisite, maybe ngifuna uba ngodokotela, nje .. sengiyati kutsi kufanele ngente waphi masubjects").94*
95 [IP22]: what I liked with the programme is that it has made me to participate in career choice, and to realize that it is important to be determined in life. 96
97[32] : what I liked is that I have learned that there are many careers out there, because you know mam, we grew up knowing that the only careers available are jobs like Doctors, Police, Nurses, things like that, but now I know that we are not limited. 99

3. Give a brief description of the most important aspects to be considered in constructing your own career life. How do you understand the meaning of career construction?

119 [IP33]: I think finding information about careers is very *important (kahle kahle vele kumele kucale yona i-information-ngiyo lebalulekile, kumele kucale yona, bese kuta… kuta … eish eish,.. angati kumele ngiyibeke kanjani] bese kuta ngalendlela wena, eish …ngingayibeka njani nje? ungayo kutsi unayo yini i-care or unema-anger issues se eh.. nguloko nje]. Line 123*
Facilitator: If I understand you well, do you refer to the strengths, abilities, likes and dislikes maybe? [124-125]
[IP32]: Yes, mam. Isn't that you must know yourself, whether you will manage to do what you thought of choosing. Line 126 -127

4. Do you know of any factors that could impede your career decision making for your future life? What kind of help would you need to accomplish this?

134 [IP33]: what I have noted is that some people usually don't do things that make them happy, instead, they do things to make other people happy, like foreinstance when you are friends, since well at school there is class A, B and C in Grade 10, you find friends saying, okay let us all of us go to class A , we will pass all of us, we will refer/copy from each other in order to pass easily so that we will soon finish school , so you find that one of us remain behind (fail) *(eh. Asambeni sonkhe siye ka-class A, sitawukopisana, sitawusheshe sicedze sikole, umanifika ka A- selomunye uyasala). Se-maybe labanye bazama zame lapha nalapha, kpdvwa nabafika ka Gr.12 bayahluleka. So, sometimes akukho right kutsi ulandzelele umngani wakho, makatsi uya ka C, nawe uya ka-C, so loko akukho right vele*). This means that it's not the right thing to follow your friend when he/she says she goes to class A /C. Line 143
144 [IP34]: what XXXXX said is true, because you know, we as friends we mislead each other, because personally, I have realised that you find that I am doing well in the subjects done in class 10A, then I influence others to come with me, then in time you find that I pass well and move on, whilst the others do not, and remain behind, that is not right because I have mislead you. Therefore, it's not right because you find that I have misled you to follow me to class A because I know what I want, and you also know what you want, maybe your career is different from mine indicated that friends can mislead you sometimes to choose inappropriate careers, and parents too, maybe they say they want you to be a Chartered Accountant, and you do not want that. That too, results in people landing in choosing inappropriate careers. *Line 164*

165 Facilitator: Oh ... okay I see, now I would like to know that in case you come across such a situation, how will you deal with it? For instance, a parent says to you "I want you to become a Doctor, and you do not want to be a Doctor".*167*
168 [IP26 and [IP24] (simultaneously): Eish … (Mam, kumatima) it's very hard. Eh… mine ngingamane ngimyenge Mam *(laughing)* I can pretend that agree with them, whereas I know, am not there. *170*
195[IP24, IP34 & IP32], : you have helped us Mam, all along as we grew, we always thought the only available careers are Doctor, Nurse, police and teaching, nothing else, and in life Mam, many a times ukhula utsi ufuna kuba ngu Nurse/ngu Dokotela/Police ngala kubo Grade1 ngisa phasa kahle ngabo level 7, masesifika kaGr,10 Mam, sesitfola bo level 2, nabo 1, ngalowomzuzu nawubona umuntfu alimele uyakhala wena, mara ufuna kuba ngu Dokotela. Maybe, kufuna basifundzise nalokwema practical skills, careers maybe kuncono.200

5. How would you explain the role of Life Orientation lessons in the exploration of careers information and decision making? Are they helping you make more informed career decisions? Any setbacks?

201[IP33]: to a certain extent it does help you understand yourself, who you are, where you come from, and where you heading to, because it also teaches about Religion, *but in terms of careers it is not assisting us well because it does not provide us with careers information. 203*
Facilitator: okay, .. but I would like to understand how the LO Subject assists you in career decision making? *204-205*
IP33: truly, Mam, *it does not assist us much, cos* out of 100, I can give it 30%, it does not provide us complete information, it just guides us , like it helps you realize if there are wrong things you are doing that may impact to your life negatively, since it teaches much about yourself. *"They must also make it practical like going on trips to learn more things"*
[IP24]: mine Mam, *I think iyasita kancane, like sati kutsi how do we deal with life circumstances in the community, and what to do when there* are cases of rape, abuse and so on, *but very little information is provided regarding careers information. 210 -212*
Facilitator: okay. I see, If I hear you well, you are saying so far LO only assist you in your personal life, including how to deal with life experiences, and through Religion, we learn how to tolerate each other and live in harmony in our diversity. *213-215*
[IP34]: I also want to indicate that LO is a complicated subject cos it talks about your personal life and things you always see happening at home and in the community, things like if you are being abused or you witness your father always fighting/abusing your Mom, you won't like it, it is hurting, such that you sometimes feel like not wanting to learn the subject, but I have to bcos it's part of life. As a result, I end up not liking the subject because it touches personal experiences including the influence of peer pressure, and on the other hand if we do not get full support from parents and friends, it feels like you are just attending school just for sweet. *216-222*

6. How would you like the Life Orientation lessons to be improved in your classes?

226. [IP34]*:* Not only focus on the self, but also expand to provide more knowledge about careers. Less time be spent on Physical Education outside, but in career education. Currently, very little career information is provided in LO, we spend much time outside playing and less time on career education. They teach us about different religions and the issue of rights and cases of abuse that we must report them. *230*

7. Briefly share how you felt at the earlier stages of the programme when we first met, and how do you feel now – when you think about your future?

231[IP24]*: At the beginning we were lost., could not follow what was happening. Did not take it seriously, bengicabanga kutsi kumdlalo nje, singaboni kutsi kuyiwaphi. Besimangala nje kutsi*

ubuyaphi yena lona,lotosimoshela sikhatsi setfu sekufundza. "We thought you were wasting our time, but now we understand that you were trying to help us". By then, we did not know anything about careers, but now we have learned. 235

8. Recommendations:

240[IP24]*:* *"I think it will be good to learn LO every day because LO teaches us about life, and to know what you want in life"*