

Career counselling framework for sustainable career trajectories Anthropocene: Intervention with a gifted disadvantaged youth

Gifted Education International
2025, Vol. 41(2) 301–331
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DOI: 10.1177/02614294251318191

journals.sagepub.com/home/gei



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Abstract

This article reports on an intervention based on a new approach to career counselling in the Anthropocene era. The research aimed to examine the determinants of the changes that occurred in the research participant rather than just the changes themselves. A gifted 17-year-old male (clarifying his career choice) was conveniently and purposively selected from enrichment workshop attendees. A descriptive and instrumental case study research was used to generate data. The workshop attendees completed the Career Interest Profile and the Maree Career Matrix to facilitate the intervention. Savickas' guidelines for analysing career construction-related data were used to analyse the data. The intervention enhanced the participant's psychological self as an autobiographical author especially. After the intervention the participant gave evidence of an enhanced sense of eco-awareness and moral behaviour). Further research is needed to establish the short-term and long-term effect of the kind of intervention in individual and group contexts.

Keywords

Existential experience, intervention research, career construction counselling, qualitative-quantitative approach, morality, counsellor

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Introduction

“The words we speak become the house we live in.” (Hafez)

Much has been written about the fundamental changes that have taken place and are currently taking place in the workplace. Career counselling researchers, practitioners, scholars, and policy-makers are also expressing concern about global warming, rising sea levels, forest burnings, biodiversity declines, water scarcity, increasing droughts, and the melting of the Arctic ice mass. Many believe the situation is getting beyond control (Drucker, 2023; Wang, 2023). The global population has mushroomed over the past 100 years leading among other things to an increase in the burning of fuel fossils (Krasna et al., 2020; Rustam et al., 2020). However little has been done to develop time-appropriate career counselling that focuses on eco-awareness issues such as recycling, using less plastic, and decreasing vehicle usage (Wueffen et al., 2023). Humanity has undeniably reached a pivotal moment in history – the Anthropocene, an era in which humankind has become the most significant force of destruction on the planet. Unless we collectively acknowledge our co-responsibility for this crisis and take decisive, unified action to reverse the devastating impact on life on Earth, our chances of success will remain severely diminished.

The first part of the article discusses the design of a new framework for career counselling to promote decent work, sustainability, socio-economic equitability, and ecological literacy in the current epoch known as the Anthropocene.

A paradigm shift in career counselling is needed in the Anthropocene era to effect a holistic transformation incorporating ecological awareness, economic equity, transdisciplinary skills, artificial intelligence integration, sustainable lifestyles, employability, self-sufficiency, and also morality issues (McAdams & Mayukha, 2023). It calls for the integration of work with the natural world and for equal opportunities for all. It anticipates a society that transcends the shortcomings of post-postmodernism, where meaningful and sustainable employment is not accessible to all who are willing and able to work. In addition, morality as a component of narrative identity has “for many years been an important research issue in the broad interdisciplinary movement within the social sciences that goes by the name of the narrative study of lives” (McAdams & Mayukha, p. 12). Yet very little has been reported in the literature on morality in career counselling.

Key dimensions in the envisioned ‘new’ approach are discussed below.

Key dimensions in the envisioned new approach to career counselling

Key dimensions in the envisioned new approach to career counselling (Maree, 2024a):

Ecological considerations and eco-awareness. This dimension underscores the importance of evaluating the environmental impact of career decisions and promoting eco-friendly career trajectories and lifestyles. It emphasises eco-awareness and the need to align professions with environmental sustainability (Rustam et al., 2020).

Social justice, transformation, and economic equity. This dimension advocates for careers aligned with people's interests and for the equitable distribution of job opportunities and resources. It aims to empower people to promote social justice in the workplace (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2021).

Transdisciplinary considerations. This dimension advocates for the development of diverse skill sets and the preparation of people for a rapidly evolving job market (Lawrence et al., 2022).

Integrating AI into career counselling. This dimension advocates for the use of technology to enhance connectivity thus enabling career counselling to leverage AI while maintaining a hybrid flexible approach to personalised counselling (McRae & Aykens, 2022).

Lifestyle change issues. This dimension advocates for the provision of opportunities for sustainable living and green work initiatives and sustainable lifestyles (Balanzá-Martínez et al., 2021).

Sustainable work futures. This dimension advocates for the alignment of careers with personal skills, interests, and values and providing people with sustainable employment opportunities irrespective of background (Alam, 2022).

Personalised career trajectories. This dimension advocates for the use of advanced data analytics and AI-driven instruments to identify suitable career trajectories based on people's unique profiles and life narratives (Chu et al., 2021).

The shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene era focuses attention on the impact of human abuse on the planet and on the need for a re-evaluation of career counselling in response to contemporary realities. This re-evaluation includes challenging traditional interpretations of vocational, educational, and career guidance, and using the term 'life-career engagement' to provide a broader perspective on career development. The term reflects the evolving role of people as socially and morally conscious beings dedicated to constructing purposeful career-lives and assisting others in doing the same.

Clarifying critical points: Honouring and prioritising people's worldviews, choices, and values. First and foremost, career counselling should honour and prioritise people's worldviews, choices, and values. Coercing individuals to adopt a specific stance – including a stance on sustainability – would negate the fundamental principles of ethical counselling and my professional ethos. Our commitment is to create a safe space where people can explore their unique career-life trajectories and make decisions positively aligned with their personal goals and values. While addressing environmental and societal sustainability issues is a critical global priority, I recognise that not everyone shares this interest or prioritises it in their career decisions. In such cases, remaining flexible, adapting my interventions to clients' unique preferences and needs while respecting their autonomy. Deeply conscious of the intrinsic power dynamics within the counselling relationship, particularly when working with people from diverse socio-cultural or

economic backgrounds, this article aim to provide one approach among many, rather than positioning it as the sole method in my therapeutic ‘toolkit’. Additionally, acutely aware of how counsellors’ personal values and privileges can influence counselling processes, my ongoing commitment is to continuous reflection, reflexivity, and self-examination to ensure that my values do not detract from clients’ sense of agency and self-direction.

On psychology and Counselling’s ethical Imperatives. Psychology and counselling, as professions, are imbued with morality. Our ethical standards call on us to embody principles such as respect, compassion, and a commitment to doing no harm while acting virtuously. These principles naturally inspire social justice and advocacy efforts. This article intends to spotlight a troubling gap between our ethical and moral ideals and the tangible actions (or inactions) of those in positions of power. Systemic decision-makers often perpetuate inequalities or fail to address the dire conditions faced by millions globally. Regrettably, psychologists and counsellors, too, sometimes fall short of their ethical mandates when they fail to actively confront these injustices. This article aims to foster a more accountable and proactive stance in addressing the critical needs of vulnerable populations. Recognising the power dynamics inherent in the counselling relationship is particularly crucial. Factors such as social class, age, gender, and socio-cultural background significantly shape counsellor-client dynamics. Maintaining an acute awareness of these dynamics is a cornerstone of ethical practice and regular self-reflection is essential to ensure that our values never overshadow clients’ self-direction and autonomy.

Concluding thoughts. The framework this article proposes is intended as a flexible guide rather than a prescriptive model. Its purpose is to invite people to consider sustainable practices as an aspect of their career development, should they choose to do so. As counsellors, our role is, at the very least, to raise our clients’ awareness of this critical issue. Ultimately, however, the decision to join the efforts to safeguard our planet must rest firmly in their hands.

I next discuss the elements of a proposed Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for Career Counselling aimed at facilitating the implementation of the key dimensions of the ‘new’ career counselling approach discussed above (Maree, 2024b).

Theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling in the Career Counselocene era

A contemporary theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling should accommodate people from diverse backgrounds and locations. It should also make provision for different lifestyles, particularly in view of shifting societal paradigms as the world moves away from the Capitalocene era, which has had devastating environmental consequences, necessitating a fresh approach to career counselling. The proposed new framework is based on self-construction theory, career construction theory, the psychology of sustainable development, psychosocial development theory, and eco-awareness.

Career construction theory

Career construction theory (CCT), as developed by (Savickas, 2019a, 2019b), covers the challenges posed to career counselling by the evolving global economy. It encompasses three key counselling approaches – differential, developmental, and psychodynamic – that focus on individual differences, life stage roles, and narrative exploration. CCT stresses the importance of understanding every individual’s unique life story from the earliest years. Career construction interventions elicit people’s micro-life stories and weave them into a cohesive macro-story with the emphasis on subjective facets, uniqueness, life themes, and forward movement. (Savickas, 2019a, 2019b) highlights the need for continual innovation in career counselling to bridge gaps in access to resources, employment, and support structures. He sees career counselling as a therapeutic intervention that requires ongoing collaboration among stakeholders to deliver quality, contextualised services. He also stresses the importance of providing guidance and counselling on contemporary skills to enhance people’s career adaptability and employability, particularly in today’s uncertain world (Kwok, 2018). Super’s (1957) developmental approach to vocational choice is subsumed under career construction theory with its emphasis on identity formation, particularly during the exploratory stage of life (from 14 to 24 years of age). Developmental theories are important in understanding adolescence and navigating career transitions during this period when young people seek not only self-awareness but also authentication of their self-concepts. At its core, this developmental journey seeks to answer the fundamental question, What is my career-life mission and vision and how do my mission and vision relate to my career choice? According to McAdams and Mayukha (2023), morality issues have been neglected by psychologists for years: “Decades later, there is still a sense that personality psychology has failed to take up the topic of morality with the fervor and focus it deserves” (Fleeson et al., 2014, p. 2). This article hopes to address this hiatus in present-day psychology (Narvaez et al., 2006).

Self-construction theory

Guichard (2009, 2022) argues that people actively construct their identities through their interactions with others, drawing from past experiences and anticipating future experiences. As people engage in various roles and communicate with others, they gradually develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. Guichard’s exploration of contemporary life dynamics raises critical questions about the true purpose of vocational guidance. Should it serve merely to optimise the functioning of the market economy, or should it strive to promote the development of each person’s potential and foster a more inclusive society? And should it enable people to respond appropriately to existential questions such as Why am I alive and why am I working?, Where am I heading?, What are my mission and vision in life?, and What is the purpose of my life?

Psychology of sustainability and sustainable development

Society is facing serious challenges regarding the future of work, including increasing levels of unemployment, underemployment, inequality, and instability. [Di Fabio and Rosen \(2018\)](#) stress the importance of the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development in addressing these challenges in the context of career guidance and counselling.

Psychology of sustainable development

[Blustein et al. \(2019\)](#), [Di Fabio \(2023\)](#), and [Di Fabio and Cooper \(2023\)](#) argue that the UN's sustainable development goals ([UN, 2016, 2019](#)) highlight the centrality of individual and environmental well-being, extending beyond the natural environment to encompass various other spheres such as personal, social, organisational, and global environments. These authors emphasise the alignment between sustainable development goals and the promotion of issues such as decolonisation, transformation, ethical behaviour, preservation of the environment, and the common good of humanity. These goals resonate with Goal 8 of the UN Agenda in particular, which stresses the importance of inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Theory of ecological awareness

The proposed framework for career counselling encompasses an exploration of ecological awareness, including an analysis of the root causes and results of environmental degradation. Rapid global population growth over the past 100 years has contributed to an increase in the burning of fuel fossils, which has to be checked if the world is not to face a grim future. Urgent steps need to be taken to preserve the environment and to curtail humankind's abuse of the planet. The proposed framework acknowledges the complex interaction between people and the environment and the need for sustainable practices to ensure harmonious co-existence in the future ([Krasna et al., 2020](#); [Rustam et al., 2020](#)).

Psychosocial development theory

Psychosocial development theory, as outlined by [Erikson \(1963, 1968\)](#), delineates eight stages of human development from infancy to late adulthood. These stages evolve naturally post-birth and are shaped by environmental and cultural influences on nurturing, upbringing, and education. Each stage presents unique challenges that must be confronted and (ideally) mastered along the way. Failure to overcome the challenges can lead to recurring issues in subsequent stages. However, progression through the stages occurs regardless of the outcomes of previous challenges. [Erikson \(1968\)](#) highlights identity formation as a crucial task during adolescence and the transition to early adulthood when people typically make career choices ([Maree, 2022](#)). Career identity, defined by [Stringer et al. \(2011, p. 158\)](#) as "the sense of self derived from one's development of an

occupational career” becomes a significant feature of overall identity. Erikson focuses attention on the social dimensions of identity formation, recognising broader contexts’ influence on people’s career-life roles. Scholars such as [McAdams et al., 2001](#); [Savickas, 2019a](#) conceptualise identity formation as a process of self-construction that evolves into a narrative of one’s career and life.

In conclusion, the development of a theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling in the Career Counsellocene (a reference to a new approach to career counselling in the Anthropocene era) requires integration of key concepts such as self-construction theory, career construction theory, the psychology of sustainable development, psychosocial development theory, and eco-awareness. This framework should adapt to societal shifts towards a post-Capitalocene era following the current Capitalocene era where the unbridled pursuit of wealth at the expense of the environment is seriously undermining the global ecology ([Malm, 2015](#)). The aim is to address contemporary work-related challenges and promote sustainable practices for individual and environmental well-being. The above is a tentative framework whose details need to be reflected on and clarified before finalisation.

How career counselling brings about change

Career counselling has the capacity to facilitate the cognitive as well as the emotional changes that can influence career choice decisions ([Saputra et al., 2021](#); According to [Maree, 2024a, 2024b](#), research results have repeatedly shown the value of career determinants such as self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-reflection, receiving informed external feedback, and exploring novel and contemporary career possibilities. Safe, hope-instilling, and positive career counselling can promote people’s deep reflection, meta-reflection, and reflexivity ([Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021](#)). By identifying their strengths, assets, areas for development, and career-life preferences, people can make better informed career choice decisions.

Research has shown that career counselling also helps people better identify and understand their values, career interests, personality traits, and career- and self-identity, which separately and, more importantly, jointly constitute key determinants of the career decision-making process ([Barhate & Dirani, 2022](#); [Cardoso et al., 2021](#); [Hirschi et al., 2022](#); [Savickas, 2019a](#)). Career counselling thus helps people gain greater insight into their career-life hopes and aspirations, navigate complex and repeated career-related challenges, and muster sufficient confidence to recognise and use opportunities that present themselves more successfully. Research also shows the value of career counselling in promoting people’s career and general resilience, enabling them to manage career transitions more effectively ([Yates, 2022](#)).

Determinants of change in career counselling

Several key determinants facilitate the change experienced by people through career counselling.

Self-reflection, introspection, and insight as major components of career counselling

Carefully planned activities deepen people's awareness of their inner desires, hopes, dreams, aspirations, motivations, and fears. Enhanced self-awareness and self-reflection help shed light on people's unique career goals and decision making and also on their deeper-seated motivations (both conscious and subconscious) (Savickas, 2019a). Furthermore, research has shown that people who participate in profound self-reflection during career counselling sessions generally experience positive career outcomes (Cardoso et al., 2021; Maree, 2021; Maree et al., 2018; Ran et al., 2023; Rottinghaus et al., 2017; Savickas, 2020; Toggweiler & Künzli, 2020).

Exploration of career possibilities

Career counselling enables people to explore an agreed upon range of career options – including ones they may not have considered previously. These new career possibilities extend their career-life horizons and help them think beyond traditional career trajectories. Lent (2020) maintains that people who consider a wide range of career possibilities tend to make better informed, meaningful, and fulfilling career choices (Brown & Lent, 2016; Lent & Brown, 2020; Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022).

Personal agency and empowerment

Career counselling advances people's sense of personal agency by bolstering their capacity to (re-)take control of their career development. They are encouraged and supported to set attainable goals, develop and, more importantly, enact action plans, and take proactive steps towards actualising their chosen careers (Blustein, 2019). People who experience a heightened sense of personal agency are more likely to realise their career choice goals and experience fulfilment in their chosen careers (Gregor et al., 2021; Guichard, 2018).

Social support and feedback

Career counsellors' feedback and support assists clients in navigating the uncertainties that often accompany career decision making. Counselees who receive constructive and informed feedback from career counsellors are more likely to adapt their career-choice plans in response to often rapid changes in the world of work (Amundson et al., 2019). Family members, peers, and mentors' social support also play an important role in shaping their career-choice decisions constructively, while career counsellors assist them in recognising and leveraging external resources (Savickas, 2019a).

Adaptability and flexibility

In the evolving occupational world, adaptability has emerged as a major determinant in facilitating career-life success. Life design related counselling (and its key elements, namely self- and career construction) stresses the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and lifelong learning in a person's life. From a life design perspective, people are encouraged to develop a development mindset and to see constant change as an opportunity to develop their personal and professional portfolios (Maree, 2021). Research by Hirschi et al. (2015), too, highlighted the importance and value of adaptability and flexibility in career counselling. These authors noted that people who are able to adapt to rapidly changing work environments are far more likely to experience a sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in their career-lives.

Life design counselling as a key determinant of career change

Life design counselling helps people (co-)construct meaningful and hope-filled careers that align positively with their key life themes and career-life stories. It emphasises adaptability, self-directedness, independence, and the (co-)construction of career trajectories in response to rapidly shifting career-life contexts (Savickas, 2019a, 2019b). It also acknowledges that careers are continuously shaped and reshaped by dynamic personal, social, and economic factors rather than being merely 'linear'.

Career adaptability, a key principle in life design counselling, refers to people's capacity to navigate repeated career transitions and deal with career-related challenges. It has four main dimensions, namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2010, 2012). Hirschi et al. (2015) have shown that people with enhanced levels of career adaptability (obtained especially through life design counselling) exhibit a heightened ability to navigate repeated career transitions and make sound career-choice decisions. Life design counselling encourages and assists people to view their careers as a dimension of their broader life project. Based on a holistic approach, life design counselling helps people integrate their unique personal values, relationships, and core life goals into their career-choice decisions (Maree et al., 2018). Lastly, life design counselling's emphasis on involving the whole person, rather than his or her professional identity in isolation, facilitates multi-layered, meaningful change in people's lives.

The role of narrative career counselling in career counselling

Narrative career counselling, too, is based on an approach that promotes change in people's career-related decisions. It focuses on helping people construct and interpret their career stories thereby helping them make sense of and connect their past experiences with their envisioned future possibilities (Cochran, 1997). The narrative approach encourages people to regard their career development as an ongoing, ever-evolving story punctuated with numerous opportunities to revisit, revise, and reshape their career trajectories in response to changing occupational contexts, new experiences, and enhanced insights (Savickas, 2019a).

The narrative approach promotes change by helping people determine the key life themes and patterns that have shaped their career trajectories. Career counsellors expand people's understanding of how past experiences and events have influenced and continue to influence their current career and study field choices, future-related decisions, and future aspirations. This process includes self-discovery, which strengthens coherence and purpose in their career journeys (Guichard, 2018).

The contribution of career counselling to knowledge and performance

Career counselling (including traditional as well as emerging, postmodern approaches such as life design and narrative counselling), has enhanced the field of career counselling's knowledge base by foregrounding the importance and value of adaptability, self-consciousness, and personal agency in choosing careers and study fields. These determinants of career change equip people with the skills and know-how to cope with the concerns and fears occasioned by the rapidly changing occupational world.

Conclusion

Career counselling can lead to far-reaching changes in people's career decision-making processes and career-lives by promoting their self-reflection, enhancing their personal agency, bolstering their career adaptability and resilience, and promoting the constructing, deconstructing, co-constructing, and reconstructing of their career-life narratives (Barhate & Dirani, 2022; Cardoso et al., 2021; Hirschi et al., 2022). Such determinants of career change help people make better informed and more meaningful career choices in line with their evolving career-life stories and personal and professional goals. Through interventions based on approaches such as life design counselling and narrative career counselling in particular, career counsellors can help people achieve career success and, more importantly, construct meaningful, purpose-filled, and adaptable lives. Because the career counselling field is continually evolving, ongoing research into the determinants of career change is needed to enhance our understanding of the key dimensions of the career counselling process and its influence on people's career-lives.

Rationale for the study

Extensive research has been conducted on the impact of self- and career construction and life design counselling on research participants in Global North (developed country) contexts. However, very little research of this kind has been conducted in Global South (developing country) contexts despite numerous calls for such research. There have also been few studies on to what extent self- and career construction and life design counselling is helping people make appropriate career and other choices in the current (Anthropocene) era. Little research has been done on the importance of making people aware of the impact of global warming on the future of humankind. Also, whereas much has been reported on the positive effect of career construction counselling on young people especially (McMahon and Watson (2020), Hartung (2015), Ferrari et al. (2015),

and Maree et al. (2018), few studies have been done globally on precisely how self- and career construction and life design counselling helps people make sound choices for the future.

Goal of the study

This study aimed to shed light on how a self- and career construction counselling intervention helped the research participant make sustainable choices for the future. The following two questions guided the research.

- a. How did the career construction counselling intervention (focusing on the importance of promoting the participant's social responsibility and eco-awareness) influence his three psychological selves?
- b. How did the intervention influence the participant's career and self-design in terms of his career choice and sense of mission and vision?

Method

Participant and context

I purposefully and conveniently selected Maisha (pseudonym), a high-achieving 17-year-old male student in Grade 11 from a cohort of highly talented yet underprivileged Grade 11 learners (prospective university students) to take part in the research. I was interested in reporting the career-life story of a learner from a seriously disadvantaged environment who had participated in a group career construction counselling intervention. Maisha lived with his unemployed mother in depressed circumstances after having lost his father early in his life. Maisha volunteered to act as one of the 'clients' during a demonstration of the self- and career construction and life design counselling process the workshop group participated in. The project featured a range of targeted interventions aimed at equipping the workshop participants with the skills needed to transition from high school to university life. Activities included academic, social responsibility (including eco-awareness), social-emotional, and career counselling workshops tailored to prepare the participants for tertiary education, with the ultimate goal of enhancing their prospects for successfully completing their university studies (Gati et al., 2013; Gati & Saka, 2011a, 2011b; Savickas, 2019b). The project had three main objectives: (a) to develop and refine strategies for identifying learners from under-resourced areas who had a reasonable chance of succeeding at university, (b) to pinpoint predictors of academic success for these learners, and (c) to empower them to transition smoothly to university life. Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the relevant university, and all the participants and their parents provided assent and consent respectively for the publication of the findings under strict conditions of anonymity.

Procedure

In Phase 1, the workshop participants completed the psychometric assessment instrument to enable the psychologist to elicit their 'scores' online, followed by their completing the qualitative instrument online to elicit their 'stories' (the two instruments are discussed below). In Phase 2, two days after the assessments, all the participants attended the workshop presented by me on the topic 'emotional-social responsibility'. This workshop introduced the participants to social responsibility-related constructs such as social justice, decolonisation, morality, transformation, ethical behaviour, economic equity (and the need to provide sustainable decent work to those able and willing to work), eco-awareness (preserving the environment and working towards decreasing humankind's abuse of the planet and promoting the common good of humanity). The participants then used the career-life story narrative integrator document (Maree, 2020) to integrate the findings, draft their identity statements, and identify appropriate career choices. Next, they drafted their mission (the personal meaning they wished to experience in their careers) and vision (the social contributions they wanted to make in and through their careers) statements to enable them to 'make meaning' of the fields of study we had jointly identified for job analysis and to empower them to enhance their existential experience (reflections on life and death and on how to retain meaning, hope, and purpose in their career-lives (Silverman, 2021). Vision statements also cover existential questions such as "Where am I headed in life?", "Why do I live?", "What is the purpose of my life?", with the emphasis on how they can contribute to humanity through their work. In Phase 3, the two sets of outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) were integrated during a five-hour long session with the entire group where the participants were split into smaller groups of five. In the concluding Phase 4, all the outcomes were analysed to identify possible careers, culminating in the linking of careers to mission and vision statements.

The intervention had the following steps: First, I would provide general, psycho-educational, and psychosocial information. Second, the workshop participants had to accept responsibility for their own career-related choices (in conjunction with me). Third, the participants would be assisted to identify their key life themes and they would be helped to analyse their responses to questions about the biggest challenges ('problems') they had experienced early in their lives (or experiences that had hurt them, which they would not want others to 'suffer') (Maree, 2020; Savickas, 2019a). In Phase 4, several volunteers presented their career choices linked to their mission (personal meaning) and vision (social meaning) statements. The session ended with a discussion on how forward movement and action (change) could be promoted through job analysis.

Throughout the session I reminded the participants that they were the only experts on themselves (Savickas, 2019a) and that they knew themselves better than anyone else did. When they 'asked' for advice, they were requested to read their responses to the question about their favourite mottoes and to explain these responses (reflection) to the group members. I also reminded them that their perceived developmental areas ('weaknesses') should eventually be transformed into strengths. Lastly, the participants were reminded that they should endeavour to actively master the pain, hurt, or 'problems' they had experienced ('suffered') passively in their early lives. Before ending the session, I gave

the participants the opportunity to share their career choices as well as their mission and vision statements with the rest of the group.

Mode of inquiry

An instrumental, descriptive-explanatory case study design was used in the study, based on a naturalistic (interpretive) inquiry. This approach helps participants improve the narratability, autobiographicity, reflexivity, and forward movement needed to bring about change in their career-lives. It also enables participants to link their conscious knowledge about themselves with subconscious insights into who they really are (Hartung et al., 2022; Maree, 2020; Rottinghaus et al., 2017; Tirri, 2023; Whiston et al., 2017).

Data-Generating instrument: quantitative

The Maree Career Matrix (MCM) (Maree & Taylor, 2016a, 2016b; Savickas, 2019b). Premised on trait and factor theory (Holland, 1997), developmental theory (Super, 1990), and social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 2006; Lent et al., 1994), the MCM was conceptualised and developed in South Africa in the period 2002-2016. It measures self-estimates of assessees' confidence to enact 154 careers (divided into 19 career categories) successfully and their interest in these careers – it thus targets the psychological self as a social actor (McAdams, 2015). Maree & Taylor, 2016b confirmed the MCM's good psychometric properties. The MCM's test-retest reliability exceeded .70 for all the interest and confidence categories and Rasch analysis revealed that the 19 career categories measure a single construct.

Data-generating instrument: qualitative

The Career Interest Profile (CIP, Version 6) (Maree, 2017a, 2017b; Savickas, 2019b). The CIP is a storied, qualitative assessment instrument based on Savickas' career construction theory (Savickas, 2019a) and to some extent on Guichard's (2009) self-construction theory, Adler's (1958) and Cochran's (2011) work, and Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory. It reflects assessees' narrative, developmental, and to some extent differential (Parsons, 1909) theoretical foundations. This is because it elicits assessees' microstories and thus targets the psychological self as (in the first place) an autobiographical author and the self as an motivated agent (McAdams, 2015). The CIP was developed for use in different South African contexts. Reliable, valid, and credible strategies have been employed to assess the CIP's trustworthiness. The CIP can be administered in individual and group settings and to some extent it facilitates what Henke (1998) refers to as scriptotherapy (writing to promote healing and the therapeutic process).

Rigour of the study

The study rigour was enhanced by using the CIP to crystallise (Janesick, 2000) the qualitative data, followed by triangulation. Maisha was asked to i. reflect continually on

his responses to questions in the CIP and the MCM; ii. meta-reflect on what his responses meant to **him**; iii. reflect on whether or not he agreed with the outcomes of the assessment; and iv. reflect on the assessment instruments and his and my inferences. I reported Maisha's observations and the research procedure carefully to enable others to replicate the study in diverse contexts. An experienced external coder was invited to corroborate the reliability of the deductive analysis process by examining whether the identified themes and subthemes aligned with the actual data.

Data analysis

Quantitative data. The quantitative outcomes (facilitated by the MCM) were scrutinised to identify interest patterns and subpatterns (interest categories and subcategories) and to determine whether there was a positive alignment between them and Maisha's own (qualitative) assessments of his interest patterns and subpatterns.

Qualitative data. Qualitative data are analysed in six steps (Creswell, 2014).

- Step 1: Getting an idea of the whole by reading all datasets carefully and making notes on ideas coming to mind.
- Step 2: Generating initial codes from the data and creating labels using pseudonyms and identifying meanings from the participants' responses.
- Step 3: Grouping similar codes and making a list of major and minor codes, discarding redundant codes to achieve a manageable number.
- Step 4: Comparing codes for duplication by dividing similar codes into columns and recoding others to fit descriptions.
- Step 5: Refining the codes by revisiting the data, checking if any new codes emerge, and identifying specific quotes supporting the codes.
- Step 6: Collapsing codes into themes or categories and providing a summary by transforming the coded themes into findings.

To further improve the analysis of Maisha's stories and scores, I took the following steps to facilitate the qualitative data analysis. First, I repeatedly asked Maisha to explain the 'deeper' meaning of his answers to questions in the CIP (see the Findings section for examples). Second, I carefully documented all unique words, repeated words, phrases, and expressions. Third, as often as possible, I repeated Maisha's own words (Kewley, 2006). This included reflecting on the importance of talking about his role models – who provided a blueprint for his own self-designing and career choice as well as his advice to himself (revealed by his favourite quotations). Fourth, Maisha and I reflected on the overlap between the qualitative and the quantitative outcomes, which promoted triangulation and crystallisation. Fifth, we integrated Maisha's 'stories' and his 'scores' and co-constructed a short list of study fields that would help him make meaning of his work, instil in him a sense of purpose and hope, and ultimately design a successful life through which he could make meaningful social contributions. Sixth, together we drew on an 'integrator' document to help him identify several fields of study and associated careers

for job analysis to help him decide which of these fields would be the most appropriate for him. Lastly, he wrote down his mission statement (the personal meaning he wished to experience in his career) and his vision statement (the social contributions he wanted to make through his career) to help him ‘make meaning’ of the fields of study and careers we had jointly identified for study and job analysis and to empower him to better understand his life purpose.

Findings

(It should be stated at the outset that the presented results are based on the author’s and the participant’s joint inferences, and, as recommended by [Savickas, 2019a](#), construction, deconstruction, co-construction, and reconstruction were facilitated and emphasised throughout the research).

Quantitative outcomes

Maisha’s seven preferred interest and confidence categories were Mathematics and/or accounting industry; Engineering and the built environment; Information and communication technology; Practical-technical research; Adventure, plants, animals, and the environment; and Tourism, the hospitality, and the tourist transport industry.

Due to space constraints, Maisha’s responses to only a limited number of CIP questions are discussed below. His verbatim responses were lightly edited to preserve their authenticity.

Qualitative outcomes

According to the CIP, Maisha’s preferred interest categories were Engineering and the built environment; Mathematics and/or accounting industry; Research; Adventure, plants, animals, and the environment; Information and communication technology; and Practical-technical. (A strong, positive correlation between the qualitative and the quantitative interest profiles thus emerged).

As stated previously, throughout the intervention, I focused on obtaining Maisha’s view on significant moments of the intervention. He and I reflected on the overlap between the qualitative and the quantitative outcomes and the resultant triangulation and crystallisation. We also integrated Maisha’s ‘stories’ and ‘scores’ and co-constructed a short list of study fields that would help him make meaning of his work, instil in him a sense of purpose and hope, and ultimately assist him design a successful life through which he could make meaningful social contributions. Furthermore, together we drew on an ‘integrator’ document to help him identify several fields of study and associated careers for job analysis to help him decide which of these fields would be the most appropriate for him. He wrote down his mission statement (the personal meaning he wished to experience in his career) and his vision statement (the social contributions he wanted to make through his career) to help him ‘make meaning’ of the fields of study and careers we had jointly identified for study and job analysis and to enable him to better understand his life

purpose. In response to my first question to him, “How can I be of value, of use, or of help to you?” or “What are you hoping to gain from this assessment?” (Maree, 2017a, 2017b, Savickas, 2019a), he replied: “*I am unsure regarding my future. Promote my self-development and help me know myself better and help me choose a novel career that will enable me to help people in need.*” Here he exhibits a sense of morality (McAdams & Mayukha, 2023), career concern (thinking about and planning his career), and career curiosity (being open to learn and explore new career possibilities) (Rossier, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017; Savickas & Porfeli, 2010, 2012). He confirmed that he had not always been encouraged and praised by significant others, which to some extent had impaired his sense of self and of self-confidence (Phase 4, Erikson, 1968) and negatively impacted his acquisition of a proper sense of proficiency and self-belief. Growing up without the necessary family support structures, he had leaned on his teachers for the sustained support and reassurance he needed to achieve a sufficiently well-developed sense of self- and career identity and to be less dependent on others (Phase 5, Erikson, 1968; Maree, 2020). When questioned about his greatest strengths, he replied: “*I am hardworking, imaginative, willing to take risks, good with numbers. Moreover, I have an excellent memory, I don’t give up easily, and I actively try to use resources optimally.*” Asked about the kind of leader he wanted to be, he replied: “*An ethical, compassion leader like my role model, Nelson Mandela.*” Maisha cited the following people as his role models when he was young.

- i. “*Nelson Mandela. He was a freedom fighter; a selfless person who wanted to improve people’s lives and their environments.*”
- ii. “*Christiano Ronaldo. He is a humble, dedicated, and committed human being.*”
- iii. “*Itumeleng Khune. He was an outstanding goalkeeper who flourished under pressure despite receiving criticism.*” Asked about his favourite quotations (his advice to himself), he wrote: “*People who have removed mountains started by carrying away small stones*”; “*Some people wish something to happen, some want it to happen, and some make it happen*”; and “*Mathematics is the door and key to sciences.*”

Maisha and I uncovered his key life themes by scrutinising his responses to the question about the biggest challenges (‘problems’) he had experienced early in his life (or experiences that had hurt him) that he would not want other people to experience (‘suffer’) (Maree, 2020; Savickas, 2019a). He wrote as follows: “*I had to deal with huge life problems (such as poverty and living in a very poor and devastated environment)*”; “*I struggled to stay true to myself in an environment where many youngsters acted irresponsibly*”; and “*I was concerned about the fact that I could not see how I would ever realise my full potential.*” The first response sets the tone for his career-life story. Maisha grew up in a poor environment where few people thought about the effect of, for instance, indiscriminately cutting down trees for firewood or the effect on the environment of the heavy smoke from fires used to prepare food. Most of the learners in the group were equally poor and had little hope of a positive future. This set the scene for Maisha’s desire to take care of people in distress and to preserve the environment (a central life theme).

Maisha's second response set the scene for his desire to help people in environments where they received little support in differentiating between wrong and right. His third response set the scene for his desire to reach out to vulnerable people who had little opportunity to realise their potential.

Maisha and I reflected on his responses to the CIP questions, with my helping him uncover the 'hidden' meaning of some of his responses. This included reflecting on the importance of talking about his role models – who provided a blueprint for his own self-designing and career choice as well as his advice to himself (revealed by his favourite quotations). Maisha and I also reflected on the overlap between the qualitative and the quantitative outcomes, which promoted triangulation and crystallisation. We subsequently integrated Maisha's 'stories' and his 'scores' and co-constructed a short list of study fields that would help him make meaning of his work, instil in him a sense of purpose and hope, and ultimately design a successful life through which he could make meaningful social contributions. Together we drew on the 'integrator' document to help him identify several fields of study and associated careers for job analysis to help him decide which of these fields would be the most appropriate for him. These fields included:

- ✓ Nuclear Physics (*"This is my passion; a career that will help me discover a way to contribute to efforts to generate 'clean', affordable, and sustainable energy."*)
- ✓ Aeronautical Engineering (*"This career will help me design aircraft that are safe and contribute less to air pollution."*)
- ✓ Accountancy (*"I am very good at accounting."*)
- ✓ Mathematics (*"I find mathematics enjoyable, and I get excellent marks in the subject."*)
- ✓ Actuarial Sciences (*"Like the previous two careers, it pays very well and will help me live a comfortable life and help people that grew up in poverty like me."*)

We then revisited our joint analysis of his three responses to the questions about challenges ('problems') he had faced when he was young). I reminded Maisha that he could use his career as a conduit for actively mastering the challenges he had 'suffered' passively and for healing himself and others who had 'suffered' similar challenges. He then wrote down his mission statement (the personal meaning he wished to experience in his career) and his vision statement (the social contributions he wanted to make through his career) to help him 'make meaning' of the fields of study and careers we had jointly identified for study and job analysis and to empower him to better understand his life purpose. This is what he wrote: *"I would like to apply my excellent mathematics and physical sciences in my studies and career so I can enjoy what I am doing"* (mission statement; personal meaning). *"I would like to find the cleanest and most harmless means that will be sustainable and save the earth and the life found on earth and alleviate poverty in the world, put an end to incurable diseases, and find the most effective means that do not contribute to pollution and that everyone can afford"* (vision statement; social meaning).

As shown above, our joint analysis of the responses allowed for constant self-reflection, meta-reflection, and reflexivity by Maisha and for a clear description of

how the observed changes occurred (see discussion below) as well as the determinants of the change.

In response to my concluding questions to him: i. “How did you experience the session? ii. Did anything change during the session? iii. If the answer is ‘yes’, how do you explain the change?”, Maisha wrote: *“I enjoyed writing about things close to my heart and reflecting on and clarifying my true identity. However, it was difficult to talk about my parents and our poverty. I got to understand myself better, my self-development was promoted, and I now know what I want to do in life”* (meta-reflection or reflexivity.)

I then asked Maisha to reflect carefully on the career recommendations, conduct thorough job analyses, and report back to me.

Follow-up

Maisha is currently studying nuclear physics.

Discussion

This study aimed to shed light on how a self- and career construction counselling intervention helped the participant make sound study and career choices. The following two questions guided the research.

- a. How did the career construction counselling intervention (focusing on the participant’s social responsibility and eco-awareness) influence the participant’s career-choice making?
- b. How did the intervention influence the participant’s career design and self-design in terms of his career choice and sense of mission and vision?

I discuss the two research questions in the following section. The findings are compared with other findings on how self- and career construction counselling promotes sound study, career, and life choices.

How did the career construction counselling intervention (focusing on the participant’s social responsibility and eco-awareness) influence the participant’s three psychological selves?

Maisha’s feedback confirmed that the intervention had strengthened his enactment of what [McAdams \(2013\)](#) refers to as “developmental layers of the psychological self, namely the person as an actor, the person as agent, and the person as the author” (p. 273). Maisha’s ‘storyline’ reveals that what ‘glues together’ his self- and career identity is his desire to make social contributions, act morally, and promote eco-awareness (his key life theme). This finding is consistent with the findings of others, including [Fouad et al. \(2009\)](#), [Gati and Kulcsár \(2021\)](#) and [Gati \(2013\)](#), who assert that merely providing more information does not suffice to help people choose careers and enact their key life themes.

The psychological self as social actor. The administration of the MCM (the quantitative part of the intervention) targeted the social actor (McAdams, 2015) in terms of clarifying the participant's career choices, this was not the primary target of the CIP. Maisha's feedback shows that the intervention helped clarify his career choice(s). From a vocational or career guidance (social actor) point of view, he wanted to specialise in nuclear physics because "this is my passion; a career that will help me discover a way to contribute to efforts to generate 'clean', affordable and sustainable energy". However, he realised that other fields of study could also help him achieve his goal and at the same time enhance his existential experience.

The psychological self as motivated agent. Savickas (2020) contends that the career adaptability of the 'motivated agent' increases when "the actor's strivings" become clearer (p. 169). In Maisha's case, the "self-organizing ... yet self-regulating and self-conceiving" (Savickas, 2020, p. 169) role of the 'social actor' is partially evident because Maisha's awareness of the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies required to achieve his career-life goals had increased to some extent (Gregor et al., 2021; Guichard, 2018; Ran et al., 2023; ; Toggweiler & Künzli, 2020). However, he did exhibit growing confidence in his ability to set and achieve his unique career-life goals as well as his ability and readiness to navigate key career-life transitions. Lastly: Articulating his mission and vision statements as determinants of change enabled Maisha to clarify his personal career-life goals. It also strengthened his belief that he could eventually actively master what he had passively endured and help others to do the same (Cardoso et al., 2021; Gülsen et al., 2021; Ran et al., 2023; Savickas, 2020).

The psychological self as autobiographical author. The study outcomes confirm that the career construction counselling intervention strengthened Maisha's psychological self as the 'autobiographical author' who generates "a reflexivity schema and identity strategy for authoring a vocational identity and composing a career story" (Savickas, 2020, p. 169). His increased self-insight helped him realise that the "huge life problems (such as poverty and living a very poor environment)" that he had to deal with could be converted into a major strength in his career-life. Also, like his first role model (Nelson Mandela), he would stay true to himself in his career-life even though many others might act irresponsibly and immorally. He was able to approach the future with a greater sense of career adaptability, being less concerned about whether he could achieve great heights (actualise his true potential) and more confident in his ability to do so. His belief that he could make major social contributions by helping people in need strengthened his existential experience. Integrating his conscious self-knowledge (revealed by the MCM) with his subconscious insights (revealed by the CIP) enabled him to connect the dots of his career-life story (autobiographicity) (Gati & Kulcsár, 2021; Savickas, 2020). His ability to do so confirmed that autobiographicity had occurred and therefore that his psychological self as autobiographical author had been promoted. Stated differently: Merging his past, his present, and his envisioned future had acted as a change determinant that raised his hope of achieving a meaning- and purpose-filled future career-life story (Hartung et al., 2022; Rottinghaus et al., 2017; Tirri, 2023; Whiston et al., 2017).

According to [McAdams \(2010\)](#), “[n]umerous studies have shown that deriving positive [existential] meanings from negative events are associated with life satisfaction and indicators of emotional wellbeing” (p. 191). The present study also found that career construction and personal counselling cannot be divorced and that learners’ reasons for seeking career counselling should be linked to their search for meaning and purpose ([Rodríguez-Fernández & Sternberg, 2023](#)). Integrating career counselling paradigms and incorporating narratives and assessments offers career counselling practitioners a framework for interventions with gifted learners grappling with issues of meaning and purpose in life ([Savickas, 2016](#)). The findings presented here are in line with those of [Hartung \(2015\)](#) and [Masdonati et al. \(2009, 2022\)](#), which highlighted the effectiveness of personal career counselling in resolving career decision-making challenges. The findings also support [Greene’s \(2003\)](#) and [Chiesa et al.’s \(2024\)](#) view that career counselling should be action oriented and considered in conjunction with other aspects of life. From a psychological selves perspective, [McAdams and Dunlop \(2022\)](#) consider morality in terms of i. the social actor’s moral traits; ii. the motivated agent’s patterns of values and moral reasoning; and iii. the autobiographical author’s construction of the moral life as an integrative life story (p. 2). The present study also showed that Maisha’s construction of his moral life was enhanced by the intervention.

How did the intervention influence the participant’s career design and self-design in terms of his career choice and sense of mission and vision?

Since I believe that ‘traditional’ career counselling (vocational or career guidance) alone no longer suffices for addressing the career counselling needs of young people, Maisha and I agreed that I would use an integrative QUALITATIVE-quantitative approach to promote reflective dialogues and co-constructive conversations between him and me to help him uncover his reason for seeking career counselling (“*Promote my self-development and help me know myself better and help me choose a novel career that will enable me to help people in need.*”) After the intervention, Maisha said that the intervention had indeed promoted his self-development, helped him understand himself better, and enabled him to choose a career that would help him realise his desire to help people in need and also curb people’s often abusive treatment of the environment. By helping him express his innermost feelings (narratability), Maisha was better able to respond to ‘existential’ questions such as: “What do I want to do and why?” and “What are the meaning and purpose of my life?” ([Guichard, 2009](#); [Maree, 2017a](#)). Maisha drew on his autobiography (autobiographicity) for inner advice on how to answer these questions. Together, we converted the tension in his storyline (his sense of insecurity about who he was and what career would enable him to make social contributions) into intention (see his mission and vision statements). He was thus helped to link his key life purpose with his future work environment ([Duffy & Dik, 2009](#)).

This study’s findings support other researchers’ findings about the potential of career construction counselling to help adolescents increase their self-knowledge, clarify their self- and career identities, and eventually pursue their future career-life

roles (Maree et al., 2018; Peila-Shuster, 2017; Savickas, 2019a, 2019b; Supriatna et al., 2024; Taber et al., 2011).

In summary: The findings discussed in this article were inferred from Maisha's reflections during and after the intervention. It is clear that his self-insight and understanding regarding possible careers had been promoted thus confirming the findings of Gashi et al. (2023) in a similar study. It is also clear that Maisha was offered a much-needed space in which to reflect on moral and existential issues that he had been eager to clarify from the outset. The latter finding supports the views of McAdams and Mayukha's (2023), who argue that some of the key "differences in life are the differences we express – as social actors, motivated agents, and autobiographical authors – in our moral engagement with the world" (p. 14).

The present research also confirms that any form of bias, stereotyping, the absence of suitable role models, etc. can inhibit career counselling and career development interventions (Archer et al., 2014). I agree with Chambers (2018) that some learners do not explore certain career options "because they believe that their future career choices are limited by their gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background" (p. 15).

The determinants of change in the participant and overview of the changes observed. Career counselling can help people deal with the challenges associated with the career decision-making process by for instance bolstering their personal growth, self-reflection, self-awareness, and adaptability (Ran et al., 2023; ; Toggweiler & Künzli, 2020). As a dynamic activity, career counselling enables people to make sound decisions that relate positively to their dreams, hopes, aspirations, values, and career-life circumstances (Barhate & Dirani, 2022; Cardoso et al., 2021; Hirschi et al., 2022).

Career counselling researchers and practitioners examine the determinants of career change in order to better understand the procedures that promote successful career transitions. These determinants influence the development of more effective counselling interventions. Whereas cognitive-behavioral techniques, for example, may be effective for people experiencing career-choice indecision, interventions that focus on life design and narrative approaches are generally more suitable for people wishing to align their career-choice decisions with their larger, key life goals (Lent & Brown, 2019).

Career counselling's focus on adaptability, flexibility, and employability (rather than merely trying to find 'a job'), and its emphasis on lifelong learning make it a key instrument for people endeavouring to overcome modern labour market challenges and complexities. In contemporary occupational contexts, adaptability is a critical determinant of career success and fulfillment. Career counselling interventions, life design counselling especially, furnish people with the conviction and skills needed to succeed in the contemporary and ever-evolving world of work (Savickas, 2020).

Overlap between the quantitative and qualitative findings. The findings revealed a positive correspondence between the qualitatively and quantitatively identified career interests (see the 'Outcomes' section) and support the findings of other researchers in this regard (Maree & Gerryts, 2019).

Limitations. First, the efficacy of the intervention in developing countries in particular has only been determined in a few schools and colleges (and different grades) to confirm its applicability in these contexts and to determine the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, it was hard to find an adequate number of research studies to compare my findings with the findings of others' Second, due to the prevalence of the test-and-tell approach in developing countries, the style of intervention I used here was new to the participant. The emphasis on allowing participants to express themselves freely and verbally is relatively unknown in developing countries such as South Africa. The participant might therefore have been reluctant at times to express himself freely. Third, my bias towards disadvantaged people may have subconsciously influenced my objectivity to some extent. Fourth, my roles as both practitioner and researcher may have had some minor influence on the research outcomes (Hay-Smith et al., 2016). Fifth, as Maisha may have wanted to 'please' me by responding to some of my questions in a way that he thought would satisfy me, I may have influenced what he told the group and me consciously or subconsciously. However, this was unlikely as I took trouble to clarify Maisha's questions and responses with the group members (Sieck, 2012). Lastly, my bias towards the career counselling style and its applicability may have marginally influenced some of my interpretations.

Recommendations for theory, practice, future research, and policy. The career counselling profession has accepted the value of storied, narrative, or qualitative approaches in conjunction with quantitative approaches. More research is needed to establish the value of newer approaches to career counselling in developing (Global South) countries such as South Africa (where career counselling still caters predominantly for those who can afford the service). As shown in this article, there is a need to constantly renew the theory and practice of career counselling to better meet the career counselling needs of people in rapidly changing work contexts. A need exists also for data from larger samples to provide more consistent findings. For example, in group interventions, it would be valuable to know participants' views on the significant moments of an intervention. Equally important would be to know to what extent these significant moments are predictors of an intervention's effectiveness.

Regarding the implications for career counselling practice, the role of the identified factors of career change examined in this article should be included in career counsellor training in particular and in career counselling practice in general.

Lastly, I propose the introduction of a fourth psychological self, alongside the social actor, motivated agent, and autobiographical author (McAdams, 2015): the socially conscious navigator. This self is dedicated to building a purposeful, active career-life while also helping others and working to combat climate change and its devastating impact on our planet.

Practice. Verification of the value and practicability of cross-cultural career counselling is essential. It is also important to follow-up on assessees' short-, medium-, and long-term progress.

Future research. Future research should endeavour to establish the short- and long-term impact of career counselling in individual as well as group counselling. The use and impact of different assessment instruments and approaches (including the qualitative/quantitative approach discussed here) should be considered to determine the feasibility of the various approaches. Lastly: Research is needed on *how* career counselling interventions enhance people's career choice ability rather than merely assessing the effect of such interventions.

Policy. Career counselling and development interventions should address the real career counselling needs of learners. The influence of career counselling at all levels should be investigated and reported in scholarly journals. I have reservations about the value of interventions such as career fetes as there often seems to be greater emphasis on the fetes themselves than their value for learners. Also, policy conceptualisation is often poor. Case in point: Eight years after the gazetting of the new Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa (DHET, 2016), stakeholders are still nowhere near finding an answer to the pivotal question: Who will be responsible for ensuring that trained career development practitioners will have access to sustainable decent work? Poor implementation of policy is jeopardising virtually all efforts in this regard.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations discussed above, the reflexive and meta-reflexive process followed in the present study appears to have been more than adequate. The study demonstrated how the power and value of counselling for career construction could be harnessed to offer a disadvantaged young man the prospect of a future career filled with hope and meaning (Barhate & Dirani, 2022; Cardoso et al., 2021; Hirschi et al., 2022; Lent & Brown, 2020; Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022; Yates, 2022). Change (forward movement) and transformation were achieved in that the participant's self-insight and self-understanding were enhanced and his career choice was finalised. The research also showed *how* the intervention influenced the participant's transformation and forward movement instead of merely showing that transformation had taken place. In addition, the study highlighted the participant's morality by his choice (brought to the fore by the intervention) of a career where he could be of help to others. This finding is important in a world where morality (ethical behaviour) today is probably at its lowest ebb. In conclusion: The intervention was successful in that it led, among other things, to the participant's heightened insight into how his career choice could be linked to his mission and vision and the enactment of his individual life project (Cochran, 2011; Savickas, 2019a). It helped him 'make meaning' of his life and future career and heightened his existential experience through the execution of his key life goals (Author, Maree; Rabat & Freedman, 2019).

Acknowledgements

I thank the participant for his willingness to take part in the study, the language editor for his editing of the text, and the reviewers for their thoughtful and constructive recommendations.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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