

Exploring innovative career counselling strategies for universal relevance and sustainability in the Anthropocene era

Jacobus Gideon Maree

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author(s):

Jacobus Gideon Maree, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. Email: kobus.maree@up.ac.za

Abstract

This article reflects on several factors that influence the art and science of career counselling in different contexts. An adapted systematic literature review was implemented to examine developments in the career counselling field and to explore innovative career counselling strategies that have universal relevance and sustainability in the Anthropocene era. The continued relevance and functionality of career counselling in South Africa (as an example of a Global South, developing country reflective of the situation globally) is examined. I reflect on a possible theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling in the ‘career Counsellocene’ era and I argue for an approach that contextualises career counselling in different contexts in the future workplace and meets the career-counselling needs of people in the Anthropocene era. A career-counselling approach is needed that emphasises the importance of eco-awareness in reversing the impact of human abuse on the environment.

Keywords

Innovative career counselling, career Counsellocene era, Anthropocene era, escalating workplace changes, transformative occupational shifts, transformative career trajectories, eco-awareness

Introduction

This research is a response to Blustein and Flores’ (2023), Guichard's (2022) and Savickas’ (2021) and others call for action, recognising the need to develop new models and methods to help people cope with today's less predictable, less stable and less orderly world of work (Savickas, 2019a). Scholars such as Bimrose et al. (2019), Dalene (2023), Drabik-Podgórna and Podgórný (2022), Maree (2022a, 2022b), Podgórna (2022), Sensoy-Bridgick and Bridgick (2022) and Savickas (2002) emphasise the ongoing need for innovation in career counselling theory and practice among theorists, practitioners and policymakers. (Currently, career counselling is a broad term for a counselling service that encompasses several career counselling-related interventions, including vocational guidance, career education and guidance, career coaching and the provision of career-related information.)

Di Fabio and Blustein (2016) and Di Fabio (2023, p. 30) (more recently) called for a ‘transition from the paradigm of motivation to the paradigm of meaning, where the sustainability of the decent life project is anchored to a meaningful construction’. Heeren and Asmundson (2023) contribute to this debate by stressing the need to address current climate change and its

associated environmental challenges, arguing that these challenges are as serious as any other challenges facing humankind in the 21st century (Kenny et al., 2023).

Along with others in the field, I contend that making decent work available to all individuals who are able and willing to work should be a central focus in discussions about the future of work (Duffy et al., 2017). This should be coupled with reversing human abuse of the planet and its devastating effects on the environment. In this article, I use the following definition for the term ‘decent work’ from Di Fabio and Maree (2016): ‘Decent work helps all workers attain a sense of self-respect and dignity, experience freedom and security in the workplace, and (as far as possible) affords the opportunity to choose and execute productive, meaningful and fulfilling work that will enable them to construct themselves adequately and without restrictions and make social contributions’ (p. 26).

I further believe that an approach to career counselling is needed that operates at both the individual and the collective level. In other words, career counselling should, for example, be of benefit to

- i. a 52-year-old woman from a public school in Wroclaw who wishes to study drama;
- ii. a gifted 17-year-old woman from a rural school in Botswana who wants to study agriculture;
- iii. a male inmate in a correctional services facility in Brazil who wants to become a motor mechanic and
- iv. a young man working as a waiter in Istanbul who wants to become a green energy specialist medical doctor.

Moreover, career counselling should be useful not only to learners in affluent and public schools but also to

- i. a group of refugees living in squalor in a haven in Paris;
- ii. people living in a derelict ‘colony’ of Mumbai;
- iii. homeless women sharing a shelter for abused women and children in a rural area outside Berlin and
- iv. desperately poor people living in informal settlements on the Cape Flats (Maree, 2009, 2013, 2022a, 2022b; Winslade, 2011).

I have been criticised by some colleagues who maintain that ‘[it] is difficult to imagine that any single approach could achieve all of this and ... perhaps [Maree] gave himself an impossible task’ (Bassot, 2015). Below, I shed more light on my stance.

A pressing need exists to conceptualise and enact an approach to career counselling that has universal relevance and fosters sustainable development in the Anthropocene era (‘new human’ era) (O’Hare, 2020; Pavid, 2020), yet is tailored to meet the diverse needs of people in different contexts. Maree and Jude (2020) argue that in the Anthropocene era, it is humans who are causing major ecological problems and contributing to earth warming and the extinction of many species and organisms. Education is needed at various levels to promote ecological awareness and to emphasise the importance of transformation and social and workplace justice. This is in line with the view of Di Fabio (2017) and Di Fabio and Svicher (2023a, 2023b) that human actions today pose a serious threat to sustainability in personal and community life.

Many scholars argue that in the Capitalocene era (e.g. Malm, 2015; Moore, 2015) capitalism is accountable for the widespread inequality and differential wealth in the contemporary world. However, a discussion of these views is beyond the scope of this article.

What is written below should be interpreted through the following lens (Pickerell & Borgen, 2023).

- i. Currently, career refers to a broad spectrum of paid and unpaid work. Seen from this perspective, all people have careers, which include leisure-related and learning-related activities.
- ii. All people's careers are unique as are their career-life stories. The focus in career counselling should therefore be on eliciting people's unique career-life stories and enabling them to advise themselves. 'Testing' people and 'matching' and comparing people's profiles to the profiles of others and 'advising' them regarding 'right' or 'wrong' careers have lost its currency. That said, the economies of different countries differ widely, and the outdated 'test-and-tell' approach may consequently still have currency in developing contexts.
- iii. The career-life is constantly changing and becoming more insecure. The work environment no longer automatically provides a safe holding space for workers. Instead, people now have to draw on their autobiographical stories for 'proven recipes' on how to manage change and negotiate transitions effectively.
- iv. Career counselling, emotional well-being and mental health are inextricably intertwined. Career counselling can be seen as a form of therapy. Krumboltz's (1993) view (Patterson-Mills, 2014) that '[t]here is no division between personal and career counseling ... personal and career counseling are one and the same' (p. 24) suggests the error of trying to distinguish between these two forms of intervention.
- v. All people have a right to decent, sustainable work that is fulfilling, enhances their sense of meaning and hope in the workplace and enables them to succeed.

Working assumptions

Because South Africa is considered one of the most unequal societies on the planet, with inhabitants ranging from very rich to very poor, it can be seen as a microcosm of the world in many respects.

The interplay between individualistic counselling approaches and different cultural contexts, alongside societal challenges, complicates any analysis of the career counselling scene in South Africa. In addition, the large-scale destruction of nature, which is threatening to turn large swaths of arable land into wastelands, is threatening the stability of the country on various fronts. Career counselling should therefore ideally include a component on eco-conservation.

Rationale for the research

Of concern is the disparity between people's self-perception and their career aspirations, which can be seen among those with access to career counselling resources compared to those without such access. This highlights the need for collaboration among researchers, practitioners and policymakers regarding (re-)investment in career counselling and related services. Such collaboration can help people navigate uncertain work futures, bolster their career resilience and enhance their overall well-being (Ribeiro, 2016). It can also help them clarify their deepest existential questions, namely Why do I work? What is the purpose of my work (in addition to

making a living)? What meaning and purpose does my work add to my life? How can I not only survive but actually succeed in my work–life in today's uncertain and rapidly changing times?

The abovementioned disparity is particularly pronounced among young people contending with the effects of events such as the pandemic and unresolved developmental challenges (Erikson, 1994; Maree, 2021). Avant-garde career counselling based on established psychological theories (Erikson, 1994; Freud, 1963) and contemporary perspectives (Maree, 2021; Savickas, 2019a, 2019b; Silva et al., 2022) can help them deal with trauma and become proficient in essential tasks.

Goals of the research

The aim of the research was to conceptualise the theoretical foundations of innovative career counselling and actionable strategies for universal relevance and sustainability in the Anthropocene era against the backdrop of high unemployment, job insecurity, work loss and minimal eco-awareness.

The research had the following objectives: To scrutinise innovative career counselling models capable of navigating the distinctive challenges and opportunities in the Anthropocene era across a diverse range of individuals and contexts.

- i. To investigate how the existing approach to career counselling could be adapted to meet the unique challenges and opportunities posed by the Anthropocene era. This involved considering the influence of environmental and societal changes on different career trajectories.
- ii. To examine the impact of cultural, political, socio-economic and environmental factors on the development and implementation of a universally applicable career counselling approach in the Anthropocene era.
- iii. To propose key considerations in formulating an approach to career counselling that ensured inclusivity and relevance across diverse populations during this time of significant environmental and societal shifts.

Methodology: Approach to the literature review: Adapted qualitative systematic literature review

Research design

This research undertook an adapted, qualitative, systematic literature search, exploring recent developments and debates in career counselling against the background of contemporary workplace challenges. Following Snyder's (2019) contention that an accurate, precise and trustworthy literature review is more relevant than ever before, I aimed to establish a framework for understanding the topic and identifying gaps between existing knowledge and what is yet to be known (Laher & Hassem, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

Search strategy

Recognising the need to conceptualise innovative career counselling theoretical foundations for universal relevance and sustainability in the Anthropocene era, I collaborated with an academic information specialist at the University of Pretoria. Preliminary searches on Google Scholar informed the selection of databases, including EBSCOHost, ScienceDirect, ProQuest,

Taylor and Francis and Springer. Four key literature review steps were followed: Clarifying research goals, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, selecting literature based on the criteria and synthesising data.

Inclusion criteria encompassed sources shedding light on the research topic, providing more than private opinions and enhancing the literature review. Exclusion criteria encompassed biased or outdated sources and those unrelated to the research topic. Search terms such as innovative career counselling (strategies), sustainability, the Anthropocene era, Capitalocene, transformative occupational shifts and career trajectories and eco-awareness guided the exploration. The limitations of internet-based and non-peer-reviewed sources, diverse materials, including social media and online forums, were acknowledged. Data generation involved searching for abstracts in databases, signing up to internet-based publishing entities, clearing irrelevant sources, downloading or requesting full texts and scrutinising the relevance and value of identified sources. A range of sources, including standard publications, YouTube-based content, podcasts, webinars and platforms such as LinkedIn and ResearchGate, were analysed and synthesised. (The academic information specialist identified 53 sources and we subsequently selected 32 studies from the list for data analysis.)

Lastly, I chose an inductive approach to data analysis. Four key themes were identified from the data, namely (a) factors that influence the art and science of career counselling; (b) the relevance and functionality of career counselling in South Africa; (c) a theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling in the career Counselocene era ('Career Counselocene' refers to a new approach to career counselling in the Anthropocene era.) and (d) the main aim of career counselling in the career Counselocene era.

Trustworthiness of the study

The services of an experienced academic information specialist and an experienced educational psychologist were acquired to assist me in deciding on and assessing the quality of the selected sources.

In the following section, I contemplate potential innovative career counselling strategies aimed at universal relevance and sustainability within the Anthropocene era, drawing upon the four selected key themes or constructs mentioned earlier. Additionally, I propose recommendations for future directions in career counselling.

Factors that influence the art and science of career counselling

The art and science of career counselling (which, for the purposes of this article, includes career counselling interventions such as vocational guidance, career education and guidance, career development and life design) are influenced by several factors. These factors include the context of career counselling practice, economic developments, technological advances, political considerations, social justice issues and eco-awareness. It is therefore important that career counselling responds appropriately and promptly to contextual changes in the spaces where it is provided and that it adheres to fundamental standards of trustworthiness, reliability and validity, as highlighted by Irving et al. (2020) and Maree (2022a).

Is there any point in comparing different approaches to career counselling?

As stated above, there is a pressing need to conceptualise and implement an approach to career counselling that has universal relevance and that fosters inclusive sustainability and sustainable development in the Anthropocene era. This article supports the findings and recommendations of the Inter-Agency Working Group on career guidance, which underscore the need for context-specific support systems tailored to each country (IAG, 2023). The analysis here provides a comprehensive view of the issues involved without claiming finality on the issues. The challenge lies in the diverse time frames, rooted in both capitalist and socialist environments, that have to be considered, making it difficult to come up with universal comparisons. The structural elements of economies, political systems, socio-economic conditions and education systems at specific points in time play a key role in determining the effectiveness of different counselling approaches. Comparing approaches with distinct outcomes based on disparate learning and philosophical assumptions is a complex endeavour. Meaningful empirical comparisons can be made only when approaches share similar goals. Labels of 'better' or 'best' should therefore be avoided. Realistic comparisons of career counselling approaches are feasible only when the approaches have similar aims, enabling conclusions about their relative effectiveness. I start with a discussion of career counselling in South Africa.

Relevance and functionality of career counselling in South Africa

The benchmark for the views expressed in this article is the United States of America as an example of a developed Global North country while South Africa is an example of a Global South, developing country. Many Global North countries have transitioned to post-industrial economies while the economies of most Global South countries remain predominantly industrial. In contrast to their counterparts in the Global North, these countries still grapple with the challenges and dynamics associated with industrial development. My home country South Africa is acknowledged as one of the most unequal societies in the world and as such I believe it can serve as a laboratory for gaining valuable insights on how to address the formidable challenges facing career counselling globally.

In South Africa, as in other countries, there is an inequitable distribution of career opportunities, with prevailing career patterns favouring previously privileged groups. The historical trajectory of career counselling assessment and intervention in South Africa mirrors the global trend, with new approaches in career counselling struggling to gain traction. This is unsurprising in South Africa in particular given its unique economic, social and political circumstances where a substantial portion of the population lives in poverty with limited if any access to career counselling.

Disparities are evident between affluent and disadvantaged communities, making the prevailing one-size-fits-all career counselling approach untenable in the South African context. Tailoring assessments and interventions to meet the diverse career assessment needs of the different populations and subpopulations at different points in time is needed. In disadvantaged communities in South Africa, exposure to modern career services is limited mainly to individuals participating in research initiatives undertaken by a small group of researchers (e.g. Jude & Maree, 2023; Maree & Makunja, 2023; Sethlare et al., 2017). It needs to be emphasised however that the main reason contemporary interventions have not gained satisfactory acceptance in disadvantaged communities is the lack of support for introducing innovative approaches at the policy level. Instead, the argument is often heard that people are actually

disadvantaged by the implementation of adapted, up-to-date interventions. (Criticism of this kind comes largely from non-psychologists with limited knowledge of life design.) The fact is that all my colleagues' and my own life design interventions have yielded positive outcomes. What is needed is support for the implementation of these new approaches at the policy level, instead of consistently arguing that outdated models such as the 'test-and-tell' model work the 'best' and have always worked the 'best'. Many policymakers are unfortunately unwilling to draw on contemporary approaches to meet the ever-changing career counselling needs of people. Scholtz's (2023) review reveals that Maree and his colleagues' research stands out as an almost 'solitary endeavour in advancing research on the subject' (p. 8).

Influence of economic, social and political evolution on career counselling globally

South Africa, like the rest of the world, is grappling with multifaceted issues such as poverty, xenophobia, escalating crime rates, growing socio-economic and wealth inequality and political instability. The pervasive impact of these challenges on the political, social and economic culture is the backdrop against which counselling practices evolve. This complex milieu influences the development of career counselling epistemology (the theory of knowledge regarding career counselling) and shapes the practical application of counselling. The divergence in economic structures between the Global North and the Global South calls for an examination of how this divergence influences career counselling practice in terms of career trajectories, job opportunities and vocational guidance across different contexts. A key component of such an examination involves scrutinising the implications of inequality, unequal wealth distribution and income disparities globally. The disparities between the Global North and Global South economies underscore the need for tailored approaches to career counselling that consider the unique challenges and opportunities presented by different economic systems (Sultana, 2023).

Unintentional silencing of clients by career counsellors

Scrutiny of the state of career counselling in post-1994 South Africa reveals that most career counsellors come from privileged backgrounds and engage with a diverse client base. Clients, particularly those in rural and township areas, generally experience marginalisation and limited exposure to contemporary career options. The misalignment between counselling practices and prevailing cultural norms is critical to understanding the dynamics of the South African situation where there is a risk of counsellors unintentionally silencing clients, potentially leading to their disempowerment rather than empowerment. The prevailing view is that contemporary issues need to be addressed in order to promote positive development in career counselling in South Africa (Leach et al., 2003). This includes acknowledging and addressing the limited exposure of people in disadvantaged communities to modern career services.

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

A theoretical and conceptual framework for career counselling in the career Counselocene era needs to be designed to accommodate individuals across diverse locations and socio-economic backgrounds. It should facilitate exploration of varied lifestyles and opportunities in the shift towards a post-Capitalocene (Malm, 2015) society. Contemporary society's obsession with money is leaving the world poorer and creating more environment-related challenges with each passing day. I propose that the new framework should be based on life design theory (self-construction theory and career construction theory in particular, which promotes the integration

of education, training, counselling and coaching), the psychology of sustainable development and eco-awareness (Weuffen et al., 2023).

Self-construction theory

Self-construction theory (SCT) holds that people actively construct their identities through interpersonal relationships, drawing upon memories and anticipating future experiences. Through engagement in various roles and through communication, they gradually develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, clarifying their identities over time (Guichard, 2009). Guichard (2022) raises a fundamental question regarding contemporary life dynamics: ‘How do we support the design of active lives that meet the challenges (economic, ecological and political) of the twenty-first century?’ (p. 5). He concludes that renewing support for the design of active lives involves specifying the conceptual foundation, experimenting with new interventions and setting up operational mechanisms to propose them to the public (p. 5). Guichard’s (2022) inquiry revolves around two pivotal questions: Is the ultimate purpose of vocational guidance to optimise the functioning of the market economy and maintain related social organisations, or is its aim to promote the development of every person’s potential, increase social justice and foster a more inclusive society?

Career construction theory

Career construction theory (CCT), developed by Savickas (2019a), covers challenges in career counselling resulting from the evolving global economy. Combining three counselling approaches – differential, developmental and psychodynamic – CCT emphasises individual differences, life stage roles and narrative exploration. CCT comprises four facets: construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and co-construction, with the focus on the self as an internal guiding force. CCT is particularly beneficial for identifying and assisting disadvantaged learners, based on the premise that every life story begins with pain. Career construction interventions involve eliciting micro-life stories, weaving them into a cohesive macro-story and emphasising subjective facets, uniqueness, life themes and forward movement (Savickas, 2019a). Clients actively participate in authoring their life stories to find meaning and purpose, thereby aligning with the core goal of life design.

Savickas stresses the need for continuous innovation in career counselling to bridge gaps in access to resources, employment and support structures. Career counselling, seen as a therapeutic intervention, requires ongoing collaboration among stakeholders to deliver quality, contextualised services. In line with Savickas, the need for ‘a general rubric that covers a myriad of interventions and services’ (Savickas, 2015, p. 129) is underscored in the proposed framework. Also emphasised is the need for guidance and counselling on contemporary skills to enhance career adaptability and employability (Briddick & Sensoy-Briddick, 2017; Savickas, 2019a). Career counselling should help workers and jobseekers recognise and, more importantly, embrace and leverage the numerous opportunities that emerge during turbulent times in order to shape their narratives positively (Savickas, 2020, in Arthur, 2020).

Psychology of sustainable development and sustainability

Di Fabio and Rosen (2020) argue that ‘the quality of life and well-being of each individual in an individual’s environment are central’ (p. 2). Here we refer to the natural environment as well as other types of environments; this extends not only to the well-being of the individual but also to that of the individual’s environments, whether they be natural, personal, social,

organisational, communal, digital, cross-cultural or global (Di Fabio & Cooper, 2023). With reference to Guichard's questions (referred to earlier), Blustein et al. (2019) maintain that sustainable development goals are in line with the increasing support for the decent work agenda and its positive correlation with social justice issues such as decolonisation, transformation, ethical behaviour and the common good of humanity. These goals align with my own views (Maree, 2020) on the value of devising and adopting a viable model to advance Goal 8 of the UN Agenda (UN, 2016, 2019), particularly enhancing sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Blustein et al. (2019) warn that society is at a critical juncture regarding the future of work, with the potentially dire consequences of increasing levels of unemployment, underemployment, inequality and instability worldwide. Against this warning, Di Fabio (2023) stress the importance of the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development, which encompasses career guidance and counselling.

Theory of eco-awareness

I advocate the extension of the proposed career counselling framework to include an exploration of ecological awareness, which should in turn include an analysis of the root causes of environmental exploitation, human perceptions of the natural world, humanity's propensity to abuse nature and the repercussions of persistent environmental degradation (Krasna et al., 2020). The framework should address the complex interactions of humans with the environment, acknowledging the tension that arises from such interactions. We need to broaden our perspective, recognising the symbiotic nature of our existence with the environment and embracing sustainable practices to ensure a harmonious coexistence for future generations (Rustam et al., 2020).

From the Holocene to the Anthropocene

The shift from the Holocene ('entirely new'; an epoch that lasted from the end of last ice age to the mid-20th century) to the Anthropocene era (a period during which humans have become the single most influential species on the planet, causing substantial global warming and other changes to the land, the environment, water, organisms and the atmosphere) is marked by significant human impact on the planet, prompting a re-evaluation of career counselling in response to contemporary realities (O'Hare, 2020; Samuel, 2023).

This article challenges traditional interpretations of vocational guidance, career education and guidance, career development and career counselling, proposing the term 'I tentatively' suggest that the term 'career counselling' be replaced by the term 'life-career engagement' (Guichard, 2009; Pickerell & Borgen, 2023; Savickas, 2019a, 2019b). (Please continue reading for an explanation of the reasoning behind this term.) It suggests that the time has come to define and introduce a fourth psychological self alongside the social actor, the motivated agent and the autobiographical author (McAdams, 2015), namely the socially conscious navigator. This 'self' is dedicated to constructing an active, purposeful career-life and assisting others to do the same.

Main aim of career counselling in the career Counselocene era

Career counselling aims to instil hope in people by providing direction and insight into career options. However, the lack of career counselling in many contexts, especially in disadvantaged

areas, jeopardises the career prospects of millions of people, with far-reaching negative consequences (Hickman, 2020).

The proposed new career counselling approach integrates reflections on ecological awareness, economic equitability and transdisciplinary education. It covers the interconnectedness of human careers with the environment, guiding individuals towards eco-friendly professions and lifestyles. It also includes transdisciplinary education and encourages a diverse skill set for navigating the evolving employment landscape. Drawing on employability counselling (as a facet of career counselling in the career Counsellocene era), people are guided towards sustainable futures and are assisted in identifying green jobs, entrepreneurial ventures and community-based initiatives. The new approach emphasises systems thinking, helping people understand the broader ecological and socio-economic contexts of their career choices.

The proposed approach to career counselling in the career Counsellocene era addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by the Capitalocene era, a period during which wealthy people's obsession to make more money at the cost of the environment is influencing the ecology negatively. The approach should guide people towards environmentally sustainable, economically equitable and morally responsible careers, fostering hope, purpose and adaptability.

Concluding observations

Adapting to the Anthropocene era

The Anthropocene era, characterised by global climate changes, demands an innovative approach to career counselling. Recognising such an approach as a potentially therapeutic intervention, collective efforts are required to understand and address evolving counselling needs, ensuring relevant and quality services for all. This model fuses accessible online resources with personalised in-person interactions, promoting the suppleness and efficiency of interventions. Prioritising accessibility and inclusivity is key to transcending language barriers, respecting diverse cultures and adapting to varying technological infrastructures. Individual and group career counselling sessions are structured to offer personalised guidance, peer support, networking and skill sharing.

Personalised career trajectories facilitate guidance and counselling for individual needs, leveraging advanced data analytics and AI-driven instruments for identifying suitable career trajectories based on unique profiles. An ideal career counselling intervention thus comprises a flexible, inclusive and holistic approach that seamlessly combines online and in-person methods. It helps people gain meaningful employment while actively addressing issues of connectivity, social justice and personal fulfilment. The result is a comprehensive counselling experience that acknowledges the evolving nature of work and lifestyles in the transition to the Post-Capitalocene society, encouraging exploration of alternative career trajectories, green jobs, gig economy opportunities and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Equally important is aligning people's skills, interests and values with job opportunities to address job market volatility and economic disparities. Connectivity and technology integration enhance connectivity through virtual events, online courses and job-matching platforms, bridge geographical gaps and provide global access. Empowering people to advocate for their rights and the rights of others and to access resources promotes social justice in the workplace.

Promoting eco-awareness to reverse the devastating impact of human actions on the environment

The innovative approach to career counselling I am proposing envisions a universally applicable model anchored in holistic principles such as connectivity, dealing with people's existential questions, emancipation, social justice, transformation, inclusion, meaning, hope and fulfilment. Designed to accommodate people across diverse locations and socio-economic backgrounds, the model facilitates the exploration of different lifestyles and opportunities in the shift towards a post-Capitalocene society. Theoretical perspectives on career counselling should embrace multidisciplinary approaches, incorporating insights from psychology, sociology, economics, artificial intelligence (AI) and the different industrial revolutions. Shifting from a linear to a life course perspective in career counselling unlocks the potential for numerous career transitions throughout an individual's lifetime.

Helping people recognise that the significance of work extends beyond merely earning a living is a key feature of the new approach. Career counselling should stress the importance of deriving meaning and purpose from one's work, while also focusing on the need to counteract the adverse environmental impact of human actions. People should actively participate in advancing processes such as decolonisation, transformation, the promotion of social justice, ethical behaviour and tackling the rampant abuse and destruction of the environment (Rivera, 2023).

Acknowledging the limitations of this article

First, the opinions and interpretations presented in the article are my own and represent only a fraction of the views of the broader intellectual community. Second, the variability in the quality of the included studies may impact the overall reliability of the conclusions drawn. Third, some degree of bias may be present because of my personal interest in the topic, influencing the selection of studies for review. Fourth, the scarcity of reports on the topic made it difficult to locate a sufficient number of scholarly publications for comprehensive review. Lastly, because career counselling is characterised by evolving methodologies and changing standards, this research conducted at a specific point in time might not have included the most up-to-date research and methods in the field.

Recommendations for theory, practice, future research and policy theory development

Current challenges in the world of work and changing client needs call for a reassessment of career counselling strategies in South Africa. The research findings underscore the need for a new theoretical and practical approach that addresses career choice challenges arising from economic changes, Work 4.0 and 5.0 and the impact of human actions on nature. This involves promoting decolonisation, social justice, ethical behaviour and integrating human abilities with technology. Examination of the status of career counselling in developing countries post-1994 reveals a scenario where counsellors, often from privileged backgrounds, engage with a broad and diverse client base, mostly without duly contextualising career counselling interventions adequately. The majority of those in this client base are from different cultural backgrounds and their experiences are frequently of marginalisation and constriction. The theory base on which career counselling is based mostly does not satisfactorily consider cultural contexts that differ from those in which our current theory base was developed. This is particularly evident among people in structurally challenged and resource-constrained areas who have limited exposure to contemporary career options. In such contexts, there is the risk that counsellors

may inadvertently stifle clients during career facilitation, resulting in disempowerment rather than empowerment. Addressing contemporary issues is a minimal requirement for fostering positive development in career counselling in general (Leach et al., 2003).

Practice

Life-long training for career counsellors is crucial to ensure they keep abreast of the latest research and counselling techniques. Accepting and implementing technology-enhanced counselling, including AI-driven instruments and virtual platforms, can expand the reach and effectiveness of career counselling services. Inclusive practices, tailored to the unique needs of underrepresented groups in particular, are essential for promoting equity in the workplace. Also essential is the use of career counselling as a platform to deal with issues such as the devastating effect of human abuse of the environment over many years.

Future research

Longitudinal studies need to be undertaken to trace career trajectories and identify factors influencing employability, success, satisfaction and adaptability. Cross-cultural research on the impact of culture on career development is essential for culturally sensitive counselling. Equally important is investigating the influence of digital technologies, automation and AI on career choices.

Policy

Workforce development initiatives, including funding for training and education, are needed to adapt to changing job requirements and improved access to updated labour market information can help counsellors provide more relevant career advice. Advocating for equal job opportunities involves implementing anti-discrimination measures, addressing remuneration disparities and supporting flexible work arrangements to cater for diverse needs (Duffy et al., 2017).

Conclusion

According to Corbin (2024, p. 1), '[t]he Doomsday Clock, which symbolically indicates how close the world is to apocalypse, will remain at 90 s to midnight'. Clearly, from a career counselling perspective, an approach is needed that serves the interests of all clients and helps mitigate the current dangers faced by humankind. Such an approach should not only promote transformed career trajectories but, more importantly, lessen the possibility of a global upheaval comparable to the Arab Spring of the early 2010s (Di Fabio & Maree, 2016).

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ORCID iD

Jacobus Gideon Maree <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9492-8445>

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