

BOOK REVIEW

Maree, J.G. (2013). *Counselling for career construction. Connecting life themes to construct life portraits: Turning pain into hope.* Rotterdam: Sense

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In his new book *Counselling for career construction*, Prof. J.G. Maree, an internationally acknowledged author and researcher in the field of career counselling, advocates the need to develop a career counselling practice that is located in the 21st century. To become relevant in a world that changes four times faster than the educational system, the central goal of career counselling will have to shift from assisting clients making occupational choices for a “world that does not exist any more” (p. 4) to assisting clients in designing successful lives, negotiating career transitions and finding meaning through social participation and contribution.

Counselling for career construction supports career construction theory by adding self-reflection and reflexive self-construction to the existing Savickian postmodern perspective. The debate revolves around the limitations of the positivist and purely quantitative career counselling approach in the light of contextual diversity, globalisation, IT developments and rapid changes in the world of work. This book inspires the idea that even the smallest person can make a contribution to the world by not letting themselves remain defined by their circumstances and turning a condition into a victory. This is a major reason I find this book a must for those practising career counselling in developing countries.

The book is divided in two parts. The first part uses the first six chapters to provide a platform for theoretical discussion and to promote a new conceptual framework for career counselling. The second part of the book (Chapters 7 and 8) explains the use of Career Interest Profile (CIP) and how the Career Construction method developed by Mark Savickas can be applied with the use of six case studies. The final chapter deals with a few recommendations for theory and practice.

The rationale of the book is examined in Chapter 1 where the author explores what would make a career intervention successful. A journey of psychological transformation seems essential, together with contextual adaptation of career counselling practice, inclusion of different career counselling methods and on-going reflections. A short personal

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account of an early experience related to loss and healing has inspired his lifelong research into proposing a more humanising and integrative career counselling approach.

Chapters 2 and 3 expand on the rationale for developing a career counselling approach relevant to this century. The dramatic changes in the world of work described in Chapter 2 question the contextual relevance of theories, practice and assessment tools still used in career practice. To respond adequately to these fast changes and repeated career transitions of their clients, career counsellors need an up-to-date theory to guide their practice. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description on the effect of changes in the world of work on psychological theories and career counselling in particular. The end of the chapter calls for more research into the application of North American and Eurocentric career counselling theory in developing countries contexts.

The book proposes a postmodern approach to career counselling and the use of a qualitative method of enquiry. For those readers interested in the theoretical underpinnings of career construction and related concepts there is a whole chapter dedicated to it. Chapter 4 starts with a discussion about the existential–phenomenological theory as a cornerstone for meta-reflection and the ability of clients to become their own agents of change. The use of a narrative framework as basis for facilitating a story approach in career counselling is explained in detail. In the second part of this chapter career construction theory (pioneered by Mark Savickas) and some of its key concepts like self-construction, life designing, career adaptability and facilitation of self-advising and their implication for career guidance are discussed.

For those new to the postmodern approach to career work, Chapter 5 elaborates on career construction features that need to be understood and mastered such as holding and continuity, eliciting life stories, identifying life themes and the necessity of a client's intention to find meaning. While listening is central to any counselling work, new methods are brought to light such as the importance of body language, 'seeding', verbalising a client's observations and the use of metaphors as valuable and unique features of a career construction approach. The chapter ends with some general hints to guide counsellors that are unfamiliar with postmodern careers work.

I particularly enjoyed the 'three early recollection technique' described in Chapter 6. This technique is based on Mark Savickas' Career Construction Interview (CCI) provided in an earlier chapter (Chapter 4, p. 38) of this book. The questions are used in identifying a client's central problem or a major life theme to help counsellors identify a career problem and interpret it within the larger pattern of a client's life. An example of analysis of a client's early recollections is provided at the end of the chapter to help integrate all of them in a major life theme.

The second part of the book is dedicated to the Career Interest Profile developed by the author over a period of many years and tested extensively with different populations. The idea of such a questionnaire is to provide material for patterns to emerge, to engage clients to identify main themes and subthemes and thus promoting an active participation of clients in their own counselling.

Chapter 8 discusses Savickas' eight steps for crafting a client's life portrait, the developing of a vision and mission statement, and six case studies provide the reader with ample opportunity to experience the value, flexibility and resourcefulness of the Career Construction Interview.

This seminal book is the beginning of new developments in career counselling theory and praxis worldwide. By questioning the thin identity of present career counselling approaches it invites counsellors, students and academics to participate in the construction of an innovative and reflexive practice with has the unique quality of turning pain into hope.

