

**Call for Manuscripts: Special issue of *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling (BJGC)* 2019-2020**

**Revitalising career counselling to help workers re-design their career-lives and find sustainable, decent work**

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Volumes have been written on the changes in the occupational world that are alienating workers and leaving them insecure and uncertain. These changes – brought about by technological advances and the need to disseminate information across the globe faster and more efficiently – require workers to re-plan and re-design their career-lives in order to endeavour to find sustainable, decent work. Organisations can no longer provide workers with holding environments, leaving them struggling to adapt to constantly changing work contexts. Many workers are traumatised by this struggle to the extent that they feel that their work has no meaning and purpose.

Researchers and career counsellors have to come up with an innovative response to lessen the impact of these changes on workers. A shift in emphasis is needed from trying to identify ways to re-educate and retrain workers to rethinking existing theories and practice and devising new strategies to assist workers to choose appropriate careers, construct themselves and their careers, and design successful lives in the 21st century. An innovative, visionary approach is needed that will enable the career counselling profession to re-invent itself and remain relevant in today's world of work. Savickas et al. (2009) state that the changing social arrangement of work presents a challenge not only to workers, but also to career counselling theorists, researchers, scholars, and practitioners.

Very few people today enter a career and stay in it for the rest of their lives. The idea of just trying to “find a job” is simplistic and no longer sufficient for 21<sup>st</sup> century workers, many of whom are increasingly experiencing their work as meaningless and are struggling to use their work to create meaning in their lives. This is compounded by inadequate self- and career construction and failure to design successful lives (Guichard, 2009; Savickas, 2011). A small number of workers (who can afford to do so) seek the help of career counsellors (Stringer, Kerpelman, & Skorikov, 2011). However, most workers are left to their own devices to deal with the work challenges of the 21st century. Work-seekers today need help urgently to gain

the skills that will enhance their adaptivity (help them become more adaptable) and employability thereby increasing their chances of transitioning successfully from one work assignment or project to another.

Many authors, including Akhurst and Mkhize (2006), Maree (2016), Stead and Watson (1998), Subich (2011), and Watson (2013), have expressed concern about the indiscriminate application of career counselling theory and practice in contexts where such theory and practice is inappropriate. At the heart of their concern is the fact that many career counselling theories and assessment instruments have their origins in Western individualistic values. Akhurst and Mkhize (2006) argue that unfounded assumptions of individuals' free and autonomous agency underpin these theories and assessment instruments and strategies. One such assumption is that facets of people's personalities (such as their interests, values, and abilities) can be used to define their "self-knowledge". Maree (2013) and Watson (2013) highlight the detrimental effect of the traditional approach to career counselling on populations in disadvantaged, third world areas in particular. Watson (2013, p. 4) maintains that career counselling theories and their applications are generally useful and applicable only to "limited cultural, gender, and socioeconomic populations" and cannot be generalised to groups that differ from the populations for which they were standardised.

A lot has been done in the field of career counselling in the recent past to promote global acceptance of the equal value of qualitative and quantitative approaches to career counselling. The value of an integrated, qualitative+quantitative approach has been acknowledged by career counsellors in developed countries in particular. However, much more needs to be done to come up with an innovative, practically useful and theoretically sound response to advance career counselling, which, for the purposes of this call for manuscripts, is defined as "a general rubric that covers a myriad of interventions and services" (Savickas, 2015, p. 129). Such a response should be based on an understanding and the implementation of the subjective as well as the objective aspects of career counselling. In other words, eliciting and building on workers' career-life stories and enabling them to authorise these stories should be regarded as just as important as interpreting their "objective" test results. Workers should be encouraged and helped to devise work-life identities that will enable them to see the opportunities in major challenges and to thrive in career-life contexts in turbulent times instead of merely surviving (Savickas, 2007).

Like Guichard (2016), we share global concerns about the predicament of unemployed people, especially those who have no opportunity to access sustainable, decent work. This situation may well be an unpalatable fact of economic life today, which is exacerbated by the burgeoning world population but it remains morally indefensible and poses a threat to world peace in the long term. Close scrutiny of unemployment and its causes is needed to provide career counsellors with a platform for devising interventions to deal with the problem.

The situation delineated above is particularly prevalent in developing countries. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2017, p. 1) states that “[t]he increase in unemployment levels and rates in 2017 will be driven by deteriorating labor market conditions in emerging countries (as the impacts of several deep recessions in 2016 continue to affect labor markets in 2017). In fact, the number of unemployed people in emerging countries is expected to increase by approximately 3.6 million between 2016 and 2017”. These high unemployment figures threaten a) societies at various levels, and b) expectations that poverty will be eradicated as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2016).

Rural regions and informal settlements (in developing countries in particular) are hit hardest by increasing socioeconomic disruption. People in these areas often express their despair, marginalisation, and hopelessness, lamenting the fact that little or no career counselling is offered to them. Young people, in particular, are angry about the deteriorating unemployment situation and the fact that it will make it very difficult for them to find sustainable, decent work, regardless of their level of training. The spiralling unemployment and the often accompanying lawlessness (exacerbated by the perception that corruption is so rife that the already desperate situation is bound to get worse) presage increased suffering, insecurity, and future instability. This will be the case in any context where, for whatever reason, people do not have access to sustainable, decent work (whether because they are “denied” work or because there is just no work) and therefore cannot experience true self-determination (Blustein, 2015), or construct their careers and themselves effectively, or design successful lives and make social contributions (Guichard, 2009; Savickas, 2011). According to Blustein (2015): “When work is going reasonably well, we have a sense of purpose in life. It makes people feel part of something bigger.”

This call for manuscripts is an invitation to career counselling theorists, researchers, and practitioners to share their views on how we should respond, individually and collectively, to the challenges discussed above.

### **Types of manuscripts we are looking for**

We welcome proposals for innovative assessment and intervention measures, strategies, and techniques to help workers, work-seekers, and prospective workers deal with seemingly intractable unemployment and successfully negotiate multiple occupational transitions. Typical questions requiring answers are the following:

- ✓ How can career counselling help workers take responsibility for their future; become resourceful, flexible, adaptable, and versatile; and deal with repeated transitions in today's chaotic world of work?
- ✓ How can contemporary career counselling theory and praxis help promote decent work and sustainable development?
- ✓ How can career counselling be reconfigured to contribute to success in the workplace, employability, and career resilience?
- ✓ How can life design be advanced across the globe (especially in developing countries)?
- ✓ How can career counselling be used to help people get in touch with their occupational feelings and needs, bolster their career-life identity, exploit happenstance and "chance", and promote self-reflection, reflexivity, and life design?
- ✓ How can group-based counselling be promoted and a sense of critical consciousness fostered? (Blustein, 2015)

We thus look forward to receiving thought-provoking, constructive contributions that extend across the spectrum of research methodologies – manuscripts that deal with theoretical and practical issues and that report on research from a quantitative, a qualitative, a mixed-methods, or an integrated qualitative+quantitative perspective.

### **Deadline for submissions**

Manuscript proposals should include the manuscript title, an abstract comprising 300-400 words, authors' full names and affiliations, as well as the corresponding author's contact details and should be e-mailed to Kobus Maree at [kobus.maree@up.ac.za](mailto:kobus.maree@up.ac.za) by 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Once a proposal has been considered, the guest editor will e-mail

you the *BJGC* guidelines document as well as other relevant details. The deadline for submissions for this special issue of the *BJGC* is 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 or earlier if possible. Submitted manuscripts will undergo peer review and authors should receive the decision of the peer review panel within 1 month. The anticipated publication date is late October 2020.

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