Career counselling and sustainable decent work: Relationships and tensions

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The concept of decent work is intuitively desirable, an ideal to strive for, and a human right. Awareness of the decent work agenda has been raised in career counselling and is posing challenges about what role, if any, career counselling can play towards the achievement of sustainable decent work for all. Feeding into the social justice values of career counselling, the decent work agenda has drawn considerable attention. To date, however, limited suggestions have been provided about career counselling's potential contribution toward the achievement of decent work for all, the focus of this special issue. In this article we consider the contexts of decent work, career counselling, and social justice and the relationships and tensions between them. In particular, we raise questions about what exactly is being asked of career counselling in the promotion of decent work. In view of proponents of the decent work agenda in career development questioning whether decent work is achievable for many people, especially in developing countries, the purpose of this article is to consider the potential role of career counselling in the contemporary and emerging labour market.

Keywords: career counselling; decent work; social justice; sustainable work

Introduction

Career counselling was born in the context of rapid change in the social and labour market where the social reform movement sought to assist people from disadvantaged backgrounds through vocational guidance. From that time, social justice has been a foundational value of career counselling. However, social justice has not always been evident in career counselling practice or in career theory (Hooley, Sultana & Thomsen, 2019; Irving & Malik, 2005a; McMahon, Arthur & Collins, 2008; Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012). Career counselling finds itself once again in a time of rapid international change in the social and labour market where attention has focused on the nature of work in the context of the fourth industrial revolution and issues such as sustainable and decent work. The challenges facing career counselling in rapidly changing labour market contexts provides a stimulus for this special issue.

Decent work refers to dignified, safe, and secure work that is completed in a reasonable timeframe and is appropriately remunerated. Engaging in decent work is central to the well-being of individuals and communities (Blustein, 2019). The call for papers for this special issue poses eight questions related to the challenges posed by the context of the sustainable and decent work agenda for the career counselling profession. In this article we consider three of these questions:

- How can current career counselling models for promoting sustainable decent work for all be renovated and advanced to pre-empt challenges brought about by the fourth industrial revolution?
- Which new career counselling models can be designed to promote sustainable decent work for all at a time when automation and digitisation are increasing and contributing to major job losses?
- What are the career counselling theory, practice, research and policy implications of changes in the world of work?

While the authors believe in the concept of decent work as a right of all workers, in this article we consider the context of decent work and career counselling, and the relationships and tensions between them. In view of proponents of the decent work agenda in career development (e.g., Blustein, Duffy, Kenny, Gutowski & Diamonti, 2019) questioning whether decent work is achievable for many people, especially in developing countries, the purpose of this article was to consider the potential role of career counselling in this contemporary and emerging labour market.

We begin by considering the changing labour market context and subsequently describe recent trends in career counselling. We then reflect on career counselling's longstanding relationship with social justice in the context of the decent work agenda to consider the potential revision, renovation, renewal, or repositioning of career counselling in relation to its recent focus on the decent work agenda.

Labour Market Context

The labour market context has always been a focus of career counselling. Indeed, preparing people for entry into the labour market and supporting them with "planning, implementing and adjusting to work" (Blustein, 2019:vii) is the reason for the field's existence. Career guidance was a social reform response to the first industrial revolution, which transformed society from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrial economy. Subsequent industrial revolutions saw the emergence of mass production and then automation, with the fourth industrial revolution being a time of unprecedented rapid change brought about as a result of technological advances. Each revolution provides a foundation for the subsequent revolution which extends innovation and

advances production (Xu, David & Kim, 2018). A consequence of these revolutions is irreversible change in the nature of work with some occupations being eliminated and others being created. For example, in the fourth industrial revolution, boring, manual, and repetitive work may be automated whereas work that is more challenging and interesting may be created (Rumbens, Richardson, Lee, Mizrahi & Roche, 2019). Unlike its predecessors, however, the fourth industrial revolution is noteworthy for its scale, scope, and complexity, which will alter our lives, our work, and our relationships (Schwab, 2016). Not surprisingly, the fourth industrial revolution brings labour market challenges and opportunities.

The fourth industrial revolution is occurring at a time when neo-liberal agendas about how wealth should be produced and distributed (Hooley, Sultana & Thomsen, 2018) are also influencing policy makers and industry leaders and consequently labour market policy, resulting in greater inequalities in society (Hooley et al., 2019). In the American context, for example, Blustein (2019) refers to what he sees as the erosion of work experience. Indeed, the fourth industrial revolution has to some extent taken the labour market focus away from the neoliberal agenda, which has impacted the security and stability of many people worldwide (Blustein, 2019) and impacted the way career guidance and counselling is conceived and practised (Hooley et al., 2018). It could be said that the fourth industrial revolution is impacting the nature of work and that the neo-liberal agenda is impacting workers' conditions.

Commonly, two scenarios related to the fourth industrial revolution are posited; the first is greater inequality as a result of the displacement of workers and a growing demand for low-skill or high-skill jobs, and a decline in middle-skill jobs (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2019a); the second is an increase in safe and rewarding jobs (Rumbens et al., 2019). Despite concerns about large-scale job losses as a result of the fourth industrial revolution, new jobs are emerging and employment has been growing (OECD, 2019a). Indeed, a recent Australian report claims that society can actually use technology to create work that is more meaningful (Rumbens et al., 2019). This report also notes that casual jobs represent a smaller share of all jobs than two decades ago and that the rate of self-employment is also declining.

A feature of the transformation of the labour market is that it is being experienced differentially across workers, industries and locations, and an important challenge arising at this time is transitioning workers from industries that are in decline to emerging opportunities (OECD, 2019a). Workers whose circumstances may be particularly challenging include women, low-skill workers, and young people. A recent report stated that men are more likely to be employed in routine, manual, repetitive jobs that are easily automated, while women are more likely to be employed in non-routine jobs that involve thinking, interpersonal skills, and creativity, and that are less likely to be automated (Rumbens et al., 2019).

A concern emerging about transformation of the labour market is that of job quality as a result of a decline in real wages, declining job security, and an increase in non-standard employment (OECD, 2019a) such as temporary employment, on-call work, temporary agency work, dependent self-employment, crowd work and gig work (International Labour Organization, 2019b). Similar to the inclusive transition agenda of the OECD, goal eight of the United Nations' 2030 agenda for sustainable development is to "[p]romote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations, 2015:19). Particular emphasis in the agenda is on gender equality, which historically remains an intractable issue in countries around the world. Decent work has been a long-standing goal of the International Labour Organization (1999) and is now a universal objective (International Labour Organization, 2019a). Decent work refers to

> opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (International Labour Organization, 2019a).

The fourth industrial revolution is occurring in the context of globalisation resulting in increased numbers of migrant workers, demographic changes related to ageing workforces in many countries, and the need to integrate young workers into the labour market – especially in some emerging economies (OECD, 2019a). In considering the future of work, the OECD advocates an inclusive "Transition Agenda for a Future that Works for All" (OECD, 2019b:4) and

> highlights the need to help workers in their job transitions through effective and timely employment services as well as prevention and early intervention measures. Looking ahead, countries should focus on putting in place comprehensive adult learning strategies – in particular for low-skilled adults – to prevent skills depreciation and obsolescence and facilitate transitions across jobs. Adult learning systems will also need to be strengthened and adapted to provide all workers with adequate opportunities for retraining throughout their careers (OECD, 2019b:4).

Thus, it seems that career counselling could be well positioned to respond to this call to support workers with their job transitions and learning pathways as the labour market changes.

Recent Trends in Career Counselling

Career counselling over the last and present centuries can be seen as responding to ongoing changes in societal, economic and work contexts. Indeed, successive decades over the last 120 years have presented career counselling with new challenges and the field has responded to such challenges through reconstructing career counselling models and assessment (Busacca, 2017). A major challenge facing career counselling in more recent decades, however, has been the accelerated and sustained pace of change in both social and work contexts. To address this challenge newer career counselling models and theories have made a fundamental philosophical shift from modernism to postmodernism. Constructivism is one example of such a shift that challenges earlier career counselling models that were based on logical positivism that focuses on cause and effect and linear progression, and places limited emphasis on environmental factors (Watson & Stead, 2017). A further example is Blustein's (2017) call for the profession to "actively engage in public debates about work and human rights" (p. 450) and his suggestion that career counsellors move from an individual to a context focus.

An underpinning belief of the constructivist movement in career counselling is that individuals construct their own realities and truth (Watson, 2017). The practical implications for career counsellors adopting these newer approaches is the need to deconstruct previous perceptions of career behaviours, as well as reconstruct their counselling processes (Watson, 2017). For instance, there are several common themes to most current career theories and career counselling models including that they are contextually embedded; focus on the process of career development; and believe in subjective careers as well as observable, objective careers (McMahon, 2014). Deconstruction and reconstruction of career counselling and career theory may be worth the effort as constructivist approaches have a "greater capacity to accommodate the complex and dynamic processes of a rapidly changing society than theories underpinned by the logical positivist worldview" (McMahon, 2014:18). This stems from constructivism's emphasis on personal narratives and stories where clients are afforded the opportunity to recount their stories and reflect on the contextual influences on their careers. Even this advance in conceptualising career counselling, for example, as life design counselling, has been criticised for its individualistic focus that de-emphasises socioeconomic and cultural constraints and for suggesting that an individual's ability to tell stories is "enough to narrativise oneself out of structurally imposed constraints such as poverty, lack of opportunity, systemically induced inequality and such like" (Hooley et al., 2018:22). Hooley et al. (2018) remind us that the narratives of individuals are inseparably related to the master narrative of neoliberalism that influences our lives. For example, the emphasis in constructivist career counselling on personal agency could be a double-edged sword promoting, on one hand, independence and self-reliance, and on the other, feeding into neoliberal ideas about self-help.

Fundamental to contemporary career counselling is the recognition that management of an individual's career development has moved from an external to an internal locus of control, that finding meaningful work is dependent on the individual, on "holding oneself together while developing a career" (Busacca, 2017:23). Thus, the narrative of individual career development shifts from externally prescribed to internally constructed, with the individual needing to develop self-management skills to cope with a constantly shifting work environment. Stability would then come from within rather than from the postmodern labour market. It calls for a form of self-activism in which individuals actively engage with their self-construction so that they can make meaning of their career experiences (Watson, 2006). Caution is, however, warranted in this regard in order to avoid the possibility of victim blaming. Further, the individualistic perspective of narrative approaches to career counselling raise questions about its potential application in collectivist cultures.

The gestation of contemporary career counselling is not without its issues. For example, the career theory underpinning these models can become decontextualized and this situation is even more likely in times of rapid change and labour market instability (McMahon, Watson & Patton, 2014). A caution regarding the emphasis in contemporary career counselling models on personal agency is warranted in the context of neoliberal agendas that prefer self-help models that constrain the nature of services and may result in career counsellors having a limited or blinkered view of the systemic and structural impediments to decent work and also to factors such as discrimination, inequality, and oppression (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2019). Indeed, the psychological focus of career counselling on the individual, supported by assessments of personal adjustment and attitudes that identify deficiencies has been criticised as being complicit in oppressive political discourses (Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012). It remains unclear however, how extensively contemporary career counselling models have been adopted by practitioners. Patton (2019) identifies "the embracing of traditional theories and lack of attention to new and emerging theories" (p. 34). Thus, it seems that the very forms of career counselling purported to be fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, may also be open to critique in the current labour market and socio-political contexts.

Career Counselling and Social Justice

Inherent to calls for career counselling to revision, renew, and reposition itself in relation to the decent work agenda is the underpinning value of social justice. Fundamental to the decent work agenda are the social justice issues of inclusion and gender equity, areas which career development has long been criticised for ignoring (e.g., Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2015; Patton, 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Richardson, 1993). The enactment of social justice values has not always been evident in career counselling theory and practice despite it being a foundational reason for the existence of our field. In this regard, Hooley et al. (2018:21) claim that "[c]areer guidance's origins in social reform were quickly put to one side as the field became increasingly viewed as a branch of psychology" which "took the individual as the start and end point and ignored society and the social context other than as something which the individual had to be slotted into."

Awareness of career counselling's limited attention to social justice has long been recognised. For example, almost two decades ago Hartung and Blustein (2002) identified, as a future critical challenge, the need to develop approaches that attend to social justice. Despite this, career counselling continues to pay little attention to entrenched social justice issues such as the "cross-cutting objective" of the decent work agenda of gendered labour markets (International Labour Organization, 2019a) and the inclusion of people with disability in the workforce (Ferrari, Sgaramella & Soresi, 2015). Even though the decent work agenda incorporates such social injustices, questions could be asked of career counselling about whether its focus on decent work is more theoretical and conceptual than practical. Indeed, career counselling's present concern about how to address the social justice issue of decent work is reflected in McMahon et al.'s (2008) decade old observation about the enactment of social justice in career counselling: "How to do this is a question career development is now grappling with as it strives to remain relevant to societies and individuals" (p. 24). To date, this question remains unanswered and is reflected in a similar, more recent question posed by Professor Jean Guichard about how career and life design interventions can contribute to fair and sustainable development and to the implementation of decent work all over the world (Cohen-Scali, Pouyaud, Podgórny, Drabik-Podgórna, Aisenson, Bernaud, Abdou Moumoula & Guichard, 2018).

Further questions for career counselling are evident at a fundamental level in relation to women. For instance, research of older women's careers across nine emerging and developed countries revealed that none of the 109 women interviewed had accessed career guidance in the construction of their careers (Bimrose et al., 2015). This led McMahon, Watson and Bimrose (2015) to pose three questions emanating from the research concerning whether career guidance actually does have a place in assisting individuals and, if it does, what the responsibility of career counsellors is in promoting social justice and social change, and how the pitfalls of imposing western models in nonwestern developing contexts can be avoided. These questions may be understood in a context where, for the majority of people in western countries, access to career counselling is dependent on services that are publicly funded (Hooley et al., 2018) and in developing countries, such services may not exist. Given the decent work agenda's emphasis on equality, these questions warrant consideration in relation to women specifically, and more generally, people with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Career Counselling and the Decent Work Agenda

Such questions challenge career counselling to reflect, refocus, revise, and renew in the context of the impelling changes resulting from advances in technology, demographic shifts, and globalisation. The sustainable decent work agenda picks up on gender inequality, ageing workforces and inclusion of people with a disability in the workforce. However, these intractable issues have existed for a long time and career counselling has not to date reflected on these issues to the extent that it is reflecting on issues emanating from the fourth industrial revolution and the decent work agenda. This is a curious situation given career counselling's social justice values and its origins in social reform and its continued middle-class focus.

In career counselling, there is a need to consider how work and decent work are defined. At a fundamental level, a question could be asked about the decent work agenda's focus on work that represents paid employment and whether career counselling's present emphasis on this form of work may result in further neglect of other forms of work, including unpaid care work for which the field has consistently been criticised (e.g., Richardson, 1993). Further, Pouyaud (2016) makes the point that the International Labour Organization's definition of decent work is objective and that it is more difficult to define in psychology. Moreover, he claims that the notion of decent work is difficult to operationalise in career counselling. In the Brazilian context, Ribeiro, Silva and Figueiredo (2016) hypothesise from a social constructionist perspective that any definition of decent work must necessarily be psychosocially based on discourse and narratives constructed in relational processes. For example, in their research with Brazilian workers without college education, Ribeiro et al. (2016) found that participants aspired to the features of decent work but that their achievement was more a factor of social networks than formal structures.

Contextually defining decent work may differ from western to non-western contexts. For instance, the OECD Economic Survey of South Africa (2010) expressed concern that placing emphasis on decent work could in fact be counter-productive when there is a shortage of and need to create jobs. In South Africa, this sentiment was endorsed and prioritised by the then Minister of Labour who declared that South Africa first needs jobs and then needs to strive for decent work (Oliphant, 2011). This has led to Cohen and Moodley (2012) arguing that in the South African context there may be a need in the short term to compromise between the creation of more jobs and decent jobs. Thus, it seems that the notion of decent work may remain aspirational in many contexts until the more pressing issue of job creation is resolved. Indeed, it has been suggested that decent work is "an ideal that is becoming less possible for increasing numbers of working people across the globe" (Blustein et al., 2019:156). Given career counselling's traditional focus on middle-class clients in western countries who are more likely to be employed in decent work, whether career counselling can revise or revision itself to promote sustainable decent work for all is realistic or aspirational, remains to be seen.

Career Counselling, Social Justice and Decent Work

At a fundamental level, what does a revision of career counselling require of itself? Is it asking for a return to its social reform origins? For instance, in reflecting on the work of Parsons over four decades ago, Gummere (1988:405) asked "should members of the profession he created explore ways to return to his grand vision of combining individual rescue with social change?" Subsequently, almost two decades later, Hartung and Blustein (2002) similarly suggest

> returning to counseling's roots in the early 20th century social and political reformation movements could ultimately lead the profession to a renewed vision that comprehends career decision making and counseling as a socially situated process entailing purposeful reasoning, prudent intuition and sustained efforts at ameliorating social injustice (p. 41).

Now, almost twenty years later, the decent work agenda has spurred career counselling to once again consider its social justice values and its potential response to such an agenda. However, responsibility for addressing the decent work agenda is multifaceted. Career counselling operates in the broader socio-political context and questions may be asked about how much career counselling can do if policy frameworks are not in place to ensure that decent work is possible. For example, developing and implementing appropriate economic and social policy and job creation is fundamental to the achievement of the fair work agenda. In addition, employers, organisations, and workers have a role to play.

Career counselling aspires to the ideals of the decent work agenda. Career counsellors need to be mindful of the decent work agenda in the context of larger and sometimes more pressing labour market concerns such as job creation. Thus, career counselling must consider how to "work with broader systems and contexts to create more humane and equitable schools, universities, and work environments" (Hartung & Blustein, 2002:45). For example, Blustein (2017:452) believes that career counselling has a role to play in "holding employers and public leaders responsible for ensuring that people have access to decent work." Questions remain, however, about how this role would be enacted and who in the career counselling profession is being asked to do this.

Career counselling remains one player in a larger system of role players, many of whom, such as policy makers, have greater potential to move society towards the achievement of decent work – especially if potential clients do not know about, do not, or cannot access career counselling (e.g., Bimrose et al., 2015), cannot afford career counselling, or in contexts where career counselling is not culturally relevant (e.g., Arulmani, 2019; Stead & Watson, 2017). The potential exists for different role players to define the agenda in different ways, and tension between role players could manifest. In relation to broader career development, Naidoo, Pretorius and Nicholas (2017) caution against being co-opted to serve the agendas of the system. For example, career guidance, of which career counselling is one form of practice, has long been viewed as a "soft policy instrument" (Hooley et al., 2018:25) serving social inclusion, educational, and labour market policy agendas. Most recently, policy agendas regarding attracting more young people to vocational education and training and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers have sought to enlist the support of career guidance and counselling. As a "soft policy instrument," career counselling could be viewed as part of a policy solution and could also be viewed as a contributor to the non-achievement of policy goals. In this regard, Helms (2003) suggests that if career counselling positions itself in the broader organisational and socio-political system, then it may be possible that its agendas may not be supported or well received by other role players.

Career Counselling: Revision, Renewal, Refocus, Repositioning?

Against the context presented so far, we consider the three questions that provide the focus of this article before presenting some concluding thoughts. Inherent to these questions is a belief that contemporary career counselling models already promote

sustainable and decent work for all. But does career counselling of any form promote decent work for all? It is undeniable that career counsellors seek to assist their clients to find meaningful and satisfying work. Career counselling, however, has a traditional middle-class western focus and thus a clientele that is more likely to have access to decent work and potentially be less impacted by the fourth industrial revolution. Career counselling has not traditionally catered for a clientele that is less likely to be able to access decent work; for example, obtaining work of any kind is the reality for many people across the world.

Decent work may well be aspirational in contexts of high unemployment where creating jobs remains a major challenge. Decent work is not available for many working people in economies around the world and even less available for people who are under and unemployed, in non-traditional work or who are low skilled. Given career counselling's middle-class western focus, is it even likely that career counselling will be available or accessible for such a clientele, let alone promote a decent work agenda to them? If career counselling retains its focus on its traditional client groups, then questions could be asked about whether it needs to be renewed or renovated. For example, the recent shift to constructivist approaches has widely been claimed as fit for purpose for its traditional twenty-first century clients (e.g., Savickas, 2013; Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck & Van Vianen, 2009).

Given the call for career counselling to consider how to promote the decent work agenda, at a fundamental level questions could be asked about who is going to promote it and to whom. For example, are career counsellors themselves being asked to find new client groups or assume social activist roles as suggested by Irving and Malik (2005b) and advocate with policy makers and other stakeholders, or are they being asked to support clients to find work, preferably decent work? If the former, then do career counsellors possess the skills and knowledge to do so? If the latter, what messages about the decent work agenda do career counsellors give to clients who simply need and/or want to find work? Regardless of their role, career counsellors may need to increase their awareness and understanding of and sensitivity to the issues associated with both social justice and the decent work agenda. For example, Perry and Smith (2017) draw on critical consciousness to suggest that a first step in becoming socially active is developing socio-political awareness.

The labour market challenges of the twenty-first century and the decent work agenda have to some extent already drawn a response from career counselling specifically and the field of career development more broadly. Constructivist approaches to career counselling such as life design counselling are widely claimed to be fit for purpose and the psychology of working theory has drawn attention to the decent work agenda by placing decent work as its central variable (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer & Autin, 2016). More recently, life design counselling has incorporated the decent work agenda into its remit (e.g., Cohen-Scali et al., 2018) and the psychology of working theory includes as a variable career adaptability which has commonly been associated with career construction theory and its application through life design counselling. However, Prilleltensky and Stead (2012) remind us that "underlying all career theories is that at least some career choice is present, if only individuals knew how to properly utilize their inherent characteristics and relational and contextual resources to successfully navigate the world of work" (p. 322). These authors claim that little attention has been focused on oppression and how it marginalises people and limits or removes their choices. By way of response to such critique, research related to the psychology of working theory is investigating, for example, the relationship between personal variables such as career adaptability and work volition, structural variables such as economic constraints and marginalisation, and decent work (e.g., Duffy, Gensmer, Allan, Kim, Douglass, England, Autin & Blustein, 2019).

Both life design counselling and the psychology of working theory are generating international research – some of which relates to the measurement of personal traits such as work volition and career adaptability. But is the measurement of such traits succumbing to a neo-liberal agenda whereby individuals who find adaptation difficult or who have limited work volition are blamed for their circumstances rather than reflecting critically on the structural causes of the circumstances? Indeed,

> [i]s it possible that the profession of career development, in its breathless rush toward scientific status and to receive the accolades bestowed by the OECD for its contribution to the knowledge economy, will become a servant of corporate power distinct from its original role of serving the good of the client individual? (McIlveen & Patton, 2006:23)

For example, Prilleltensky and Stead (2012) caution that career counsellors could become "unwitting accomplices" (p. 328) in the perpetuation of a grand narrative about success coming from personal effort while ignoring the entrenched systemic and structural influences of privilege, marginalisation, oppression, and poverty. They suggest that, while "we critique the system for inequities, our practice sustains the ideology that marginalizes many of our clients in the first place" (p. 328), for example through career assessment and person-centred coping solutions (Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012).

So, it seems that a question remains about if and how career counselling responds to the decent

work agenda. For example, if such a response is at the individual level, providing accessible and affordable career counselling to all citizens remains a challenge and requires public policy engagement and funding. To take a social activist role may necessitate changes in teaching programmes for career counsellors and considerable professional development to equip the field at an individual and collective level for this role to which it is unaccustomed. Social activism also raises questions about the boundaries of career counselling and which practices fall within its remit. At the most fundamental level, it is possible that the decent work agenda may stimulate the critical consciousness of career counsellors at an individual and collective level and encourage reflection on its role and its position in relation to socio-political institutions, clients, and political and economic agendas. Such reflection may alert the field to the tensions between adapting and challenging (Perry & Smith, 2017; Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012). Future research could investigate if and how career counsellors have been influenced in their work by the decent work agenda and also if and how they enact social justice in their work.

Conclusion

The concept of decent work for all is intuitively desirable and an ideal to strive for as a basic human right. Contributing towards the achievement of decent work for all accords with the social justice values of career counselling. Calls for career counselling to pay attention to the issues and implications of the decent work agenda are reminiscent of Parson's (1909) claim in relation to social justice that

> [n]ot till society wakes up to its responsibilities and its privileges in this relation shall we be able to harvest more than a fraction of our human resources, or develop and utilize the genius and ability that are latent in each new generation (p. 165).

The decent work agenda may serve as a wake-up call for career counselling to return to its social justice roots and critically reflect on its theory and practices and consider its position in relation to socio-political agendas and clients. In particular, career counselling needs to consider what exactly is being asked of it in relation to the promotion of decent work.

Authors' Contributions

MM and MW co-authored the manuscript. Both authors reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

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