

Preface

The book *Psychosocial career meta-capacities: Dynamics of contemporary career development* addresses a gap in the current research literature by putting together various psychological perspectives on the psychosocial capacities and resources people need to solve the challenges and problematic complexities presented by their vocational tasks, the more frequent career transitions they will experience and potential traumas they might encounter in the pursuit of their careers in the contemporary workplace and labor market. Researchers and scholars in the field have published (and are publishing) research on these new trends in various scientific journals, however, currently no book discussing these trends and perspectives in one book is available to make the information accessible in a coherent manner to other subject specialists, post graduate students and practicing professionals.

Psychosocial career meta-attributes, resources and capacities have taken on greater salience in today's career and turbulent environmental context. Individuals are increasingly dependent on their psychological and social resources (inner value and social capital) and less dependent on organizational career arrangements because they experience more frequent career transitions, are expected to have greater agency in career decisions and be proactive, able, adaptable and self-directed lifelong learners. People's self-regulatory career meta-capacities (with the assistance of a blend of quantitative and qualitative career assessment approaches, techniques and processes) help them to navigate their way through the uncertainties of modern day career lives and organize their career-related experiences in meaningful patterns in guiding them to rediscover the meaning of earlier events (for example, job loss, job insecurity, unemployment, underemployment) in the light of subsequent ones. Psychosocial career meta-capacities further help to establish criteria for success whereby individuals can assess their career and work achievements and experiences. These capacities generally help individuals to enhance and sustain their employability and guide adaptive strategies for implementing the self-concept in shifting work roles in order to facilitate a harmonic fit and integration between personal needs and external opportunities.

Broadly the chapters bring new perspectives that add intriguing insights into career development phenomena that are of significance in today's turbulent economy in four areas:

Part I: Psychosocial dynamics of the contemporary career development context (Chaps. 1 to 6)

Part II: Psychosocial career meta-capacities in organizational career development (Chaps. 7 to 10)

Part III: Career wellbeing and psychosocial career meta-capacities (Chaps. 11 and 12)

Part IV: Psychosocial career meta-capacities in educational career development (Chaps. 13 to 17)

The themes, research evidence, case studies and debates offered in the first six chapters presented in **Part I**, set the scene for understanding the challenges and dynamics of contemporary career development. The career meta-capacities discussed in the various chapters are modeled as multi-dimensional, providing cognitive, affective (emotional), conative (motivational), and interpersonal behavioral dimensions in a matrix of resources. The authors argue for the revitalization of traditional career counseling and guidance theoretical models and practices by illustrating how to combine them with postmodern, narrative career counseling approaches, techniques and practices in innovative and original ways. They further argue for a holistic and systems perspective by illustrating that modern day career counseling and guidance theory and practice should focus on studying individuals within their ever changing contexts and shifting roles as they encounter more frequent career transitions, career uncertainty, and events of unemployment/underemployment in an unstable business environment. Reflecting on the contributions made by the six chapters, it is concluded that although emphasizing the development of individual psycho-social career meta-capacities as a focal point of inquiry in contemporary career development is helpful and important, the broader socio-economic and political factors that are creating new generations of unemployed people should not be neglected. The role of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other devalued identities in the search for stable employment should also be considered in contemporary career research, theory and practice.

In **Part II**, the themes, research evidence and discussions presented in Chaps. 7 to 10 demonstrate the relevance of person-environment fit as a cornerstone in contemporary career development, especially in the retention context. The discussions by the various authors suggest that contemporary organizational career development practices need to take cognizance of the personal variables (interests, career anchors, psychological ownership, career adaptability, hardiness, psychological career resources, job embeddedness and organizational commitment) that influence the fit harmonics with the organizational environment. However, optimal person-environment (job, occupation, organization) fit or congruence may increasingly be more difficult to achieve in the twenty-first century workplace. Employees must increasingly realize that achieving an optimal fit in today's workplace or in one's working life may not be possible and should rather strive for person-environment integration by adapting to shifting work and social role expectations and changes in the person-environment harmonics. It appears from the various chapter contributions that the traditional quantitative career assessment measures are still deemed important and useful in order for career practitioners and managers to understand how individuals' psycho-social career resources or meta-capacities influence their psychological attachment to the organization. However, given the uncertain and changing nature of organizational career paths and career possibilities in today's world of work, it is

recommended that career practitioners complement quantitative career assessment measures that assess person-environment fit with the narrative career counselling processes which value subjectivity, active agency, meaning making, the importance of context and the interconnection of individuals and environments.

The themes, discussions and research evidence on flourishing and sense of coherence outlined in Chap. 11 and 12 in **Part III** provide a perspective that connects with the strengths-based focus of the positive psychology movement. In Chap. 11, the author introduces the notion of flourishing as a personal resource for enhancing career wellbeing in organizational context. The chapter appears to confirm that career counseling and guidance practices should strive to help clients choose occupations and work roles that fit their interests, values and abilities. In addition, career practitioners should help clients explore and manage the relationships that form part of their working lives. Chapter 12 suggests that contemporary career counseling and guidance practices must make room for the assessment and development of clients' sense of coherence as an essential meta-capacity. Sense of coherence is discussed as a dynamic general health resource influencing the general career wellbeing of individuals.

Part IV discusses career construction and career adaptability, flourishing, early career expectations and entitlements in the psychological contract, entrepreneurship, and life-long learning as important psychosocial resources in the pre-adolescence, adolescence and young adulthood life stages and in the educational career development of students from which organizations and individuals may benefit in the long-term. The themes, research evidence and discussions of Chap. 13 to 17 bring to the fore the role of career educational services and educational institutions in preparing children, adolescents and students for the complexities of the world of work. It is recommended that educational career practitioners and educators work jointly in helping students across the lifespan recognize the importance of psychosocial career meta-capacities and other non-job-specific generic graduate skills and attributes in developing the mindsets, skills and attributes graduates need to enhance and sustain their employability and flourish in their careers in the modern workplace and labor market. Students should also be guided to develop realistic expectations in terms of the work world and what they will be entitled to as graduates in today's workplace.

Finally, as authors, we trust that the rich information presented and career phenomena discussed in the various chapters will be fascinating to the global scholar because of their complexity and their connection with so many different aspects of the contemporary occupational world and employment context, the organizational career and people's personal career lives. For the practitioner, they link to career assessment approaches and practices and issues that are of fundamental importance to the future of people's career development, employability, career and life satisfaction and wellbeing. We trust that readers of this book will find the book enriching to their own understanding of the role and importance of psychosocial career meta-capacities in modern day career development, and most importantly, in guiding further research on the subject matter.

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