

Book Review: *Practice Principles: Career Theories and Models at Work* (Nancy Arthur, Roberta Borgen, Mary McMahon, 2024)

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Introduction

In *Practice Principles: Career Theories and Models at Work*, authors Arthur, Borgen, and McMahon effectively delineate the connections between theories and models, providing practical insights for readers. The book comprehensively employs theories, integrating models and frameworks that practitioners can readily apply. Its seamless application process facilitates straightforward understanding and the usage of various frameworks. This book serves as a guide for career practitioners such as career counselors, coaches, HR personnel, and career advisors. For new practitioners, it builds a solid foundation in career development; for seasoned practitioners, it provides a resource for reflection and a tool for continued growth.

The book includes relatable examples demonstrating the necessity of these theories in establishing a case when working with clients, aiding in understanding their behaviors, plans, and thoughts. Understanding and applying career theories is essential for effective career coaching. The book covers various aspects including the following:

- Client understanding
- Goal setting
- Career assessments
- Intervention strategies

The authors have designed this book as a standalone resource for learning foundational principles, encouraging readers to develop personal vignettes or case scenarios to sharpen

their skills. The book covers eight theories in separate chapters, making the content accessible and easy to read.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

This chapter emphasizes theory-informed practice, encouraging readers to reflect deeply and develop their own practice principles. From 295 practice points, the authors distill eight key points to help readers stay focused. This chapter helps practitioners establish career development frameworks for practitioners, aiding them in areas such as decision-making, career conceptualization, professionalization of disciplines, and developing sustained learning and work.

Chapter 2

This chapter highlights the power of reflection as a tool for facilitating change, aligning insights with career theories to gain new knowledge. It demonstrates that reflection is not a linear process and underscores the importance of building on knowledge, improvising, and being agile. The chapter emphasizes the individuality of clients and the necessity of recognizing their unique experiences and influences. It also stresses the importance of building effective relationships with clients and working collaboratively to support their goal achievements. The chapter provides useful tips for group work and examples of sources of

resources. Additionally, it discusses the importance of having a well-structured framework when working with clients.

Chapter 3

The importance of working alliances is emphasized in this chapter, with practical examples illustrating ways to achieve this. The chapter recommends using language that clients can understand to avoid alienating them with jargon. It underscores the importance of building trust and creating a safe environment for clients, which is free from bias, judgment, and prejudice. Creating a safe place is key, as clients will value the input of a coach if they feel secure. Additionally, the chapter argues that the use of career instruments should depend on the clients' needs rather than organizational standard procedures, a point particularly relevant to some organizations.

Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on recognizing clients as individuals and the importance of their readiness for change. It highlights the need to sharpen competency skills to stay relevant and emphasizes the motivational impact of assessments. The chapter supports the idea that learning does not always require formal education, advocating for a mix of learning opportunities to cultivate self-efficacy.

Chapter 5

Customization is highlighted as the key to maximizing client potential. The chapter emphasizes the importance of respecting individuals and provides examples of applicable resources.

Chapter 6

This chapter, particularly useful for organizational leaders, argues that career development involves one's entire life, not just their occupation. It provides a holistic perspective on career development and suggests that top management should invest in training employees for career growth conversations. In the context of training career development practitioners, this chapter emphasizes the

importance of adopting a holistic perspective in practice.

Chapter 7

Addressing cultural awareness, this chapter emphasizes the importance of understanding various cultural contexts and trends. In the context of multiple pathways, the chapter provides a viewpoint on the emergence of a new equilibrium to assist with new outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of focusing on clients' strengths and identifying those that matter most to them. It discusses how clients' worldviews are influenced by their interactions and experiences, advocating for a focus on clients' strengths.

Chapter 8

Although the idea of social justice advocacy is complex, the authors have done a commendable job in keeping it simple. In this chapter, the authors present social justice advocacy as an integral part of career development work. Having a sense of social justice enhances our work life, particularly when we understand its different elements and their influence on our lives. The chapter simplifies important issues such as work inequalities and dilemmas but does not downplay their significance. This approach helps career development practitioners become familiar with the topic and better prepare for conversations with their clients.

Chapter 9

The importance of professional collaboration and networking is highlighted in this chapter. The authors provide examples of ways to create and maintain professional networks, which can enrich the work experience of professionals and expand the knowledge and skills of career development practitioners.

Chapter 10

This chapter summarizes the key points covered in the book.

Overall Assessment

Practice Principles: Career Theories and Models at Work is a comprehensive resource, rich with examples and references, that underscores the importance of applying career theories in practice while focusing on clients' needs. This book is highly recommended for both new and seasoned practitioners as a valuable tool for career development.

As a seasoned practitioner, I cannot overemphasize the importance of building a quality practitioner–client relationship, as discussed in Chapter 3. In my work with single mothers who face the dual challenges of being sole breadwinners and caregivers, establishing a safe and trusting environment is crucial. When clients know that their shared experiences are held in confidence, they are more likely to trust the guidance provided and take meaningful steps forward.

The book's discussion on "An Era of Customization and Accommodation" resonates deeply with my practice. When working with clients from diverse backgrounds, it is imperative to share experiences that are relevant to their unique situations rather than sharing generic, popular stories. Customizing our approach to meet the specific needs of each client can significantly enhance their willingness to engage. When a personal story is not available, drawing on examples from peers can be equally helpful.

Chapter 9's focus on career practitioners and professional networks also aligns with my experience. Supporting clients, such as the single mothers I work with, often requires a network of professionals and services, such as educational support, healthcare, or after-school care. I prioritize staying connected with various help agencies and professionals, ensuring that I can provide the necessary referrals when needed. Building these connections through seminars, professional networks, and referrals is essential for effective career practice.

While I found the book enjoyable and a valuable reference, I believe that it could be

further enhanced by introducing new theories that better address the learning styles of the current generation, particularly as new norms requiring special attention emerge. Furthermore, incorporating modern tools and assessments influenced by artificial intelligence could significantly advance our assessment processes. Given the rapid evolution of technology, staying abreast of these developments is our responsibility as practitioners.

A discussion on transformational skills for career development would also be beneficial. These skills are essential for sustainability, as they involve the growth and refinement of existing abilities. Transforming skills is a continuous process that ensures they remain relevant and effective in changing environments.

Despite these suggestions, the theories presented in the book are fundamental. I am committed to ensuring that my team is aware of and aligned with these practices. I would recommend this book to career practitioners, HR professionals, counsellors, and others in the field of career progression and planning.

About the Authors

Dr. Nancy Arthur is a Professor and Associate Dean of Research at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. She has authored several influential books, including *Counseling International Students: Case Incidents in Counseling for International Transitions* and *Counselling in Cultural Contexts: Identities and Social Justice*. She has also co-edited *Career Theories and Models at Work: Ideas for Practice*.

Dr. Arthur serves as Vice-President of the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance and is a Board Member of the Canadian Career Development Foundation. She is also a member of the Editorial Board for the Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy and a Research Fellow at the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick. Her extensive research and teaching focus on culture-infused career

counseling, social justice advocacy, and career development for international students and workers

Dr. Roberta Borgen, CCC, CCDP, GCDFi, is the President of Life Strategies Ltd. With nearly four decades of experience in career management, she is an award-winning specialist in counseling, coaching, consulting, training, and curriculum design. Recently retired as Associate Dean of the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences at Yorkville University, Dr. Borgen has earned numerous accolades, including the BC Career Development Association's Mentor of the Year Award and the Canadian Career Development Foundation's Stu Conger Award. She has authored several books, including *Career Strategies for a Lifetime of Success* and *Career Recovery: Creating Hopeful Careers in Difficult Times*. Dr. Borgen is known for her professionalism, enthusiasm, and innovative solutions and has supported diverse individuals and organizations globally.

Dr. Mary McMahon specializes in teaching career development theory, career guidance and counseling, and supervision. Her expertise lies in supporting the career development of children and adolescents through effective career programs. Dr. McMahon also explores constructivist approaches in career counseling, emphasizing qualitative career assessment methods. In her supervision practice, she focuses on enhancing the skills of guidance officers and school counselors, with a recent emphasis on utilizing technology to support rural and remote settings.

Additionally, Dr. McMahon has authored several books, including *Career Development and Systems Theory: Connecting Theory and Practice* (co-authored with Wendy Patton and Mark Watson) and *Career Counselling: Constructivist Approaches* (co-authored with Wendy Patton).