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## Conceptualizing the Yucel Method as a tool for Supporting Students' Career Exploration in Schools

By

Charles Wisize

National Institute of Transport, Dar es Salaam Tanzania Email: [chazwisiize@gmail.com](mailto:chazwisiize@gmail.com)



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### Abstract

*Career counselling in secondary schools continues to evolve as the needs of young people change. Many students do not fully understand their strengths, future goals, and possible career paths, which leaves them confused and sometimes discouraged. The Yucel Method, which incorporates visualisation, structured reflection, and action-oriented planning, offers a promising yet understudied tool for supporting students career exploration. This conceptual paper examines how the method can be applied within school counselling to strengthen students participation in career decision-making. Drawing from established career development theories, particularly Supers Lifespan Life-Space theory and Holland's Career Inventory theory, the analysis explores how components of the Yucel Method align with key counselling processes such as self-exploration, goal setting, and developing future orientation. Each stage of the Yucel Method offers opportunities for visualisation, reflective questioning, narrative expression, and development of action plans to show its value for strengthening students career thinking. The paper also explores how the method can increase student motivation, self-agency, and future orientation while giving counsellors a flexible tool they can adjust to different school contexts. The analysis concludes by identifying challenges such as limited time, counsellor capacity, cultural factors, and lack of empirical studies. The paper recommends future research on effectiveness, cultural adaptation, and integration with digital guidance tools. Ultimately, this conceptual analysis shows that the Yucel Method has strong potential to enrich school career counselling by providing an engaging, student-centred, and empowering process.*

## 1. Introduction

Career exploration constitutes a central element in preparing young people for life beyond school, rendering guidance and counselling necessary in supporting this developmental process. As societies continue to change, students face complex decisions regarding future careers, education pathways, and personal development. Many students struggle with identifying their strengths, understanding labour-market demands, or setting realistic future goals. Because of this, counsellors and teachers require effective methods that support students in making informed career choices. This study conceptualizes on the Yucel Method, an approach that has started gaining attention in the field of counselling.

Mercera., et al., (2024) point out that there are not so much that has been written about Yucel Method especially in the field of education and recommends more scientific research to be conducted about its applicability and effectiveness. The researcher is among the professional counsellors who have received training on the method and has applied it in school

settings helping students to overcome different psychological, social, economic and educational challenges. Therefore, the motive to adapt the method to career counselling arises from the knowledge and skills gained during the training and practical experiences.

Finally, the paper suggests directions for future research. Overall, the introduction establishes the need for innovative and accessible guidance tools. The Yucel Method provides a promising approach that aligns with modern educational practices, supports deep reflection, and empowers students to take control of their career choices. A conceptual understanding of the method is necessary to guide its adoption and improvement in schools.

### 1.1 Conceptual Definitions

#### 1.1.1 Career Guidance

Is generally understood as a systematic set of school-based activities designed to help learners gain insight into their personal strengths, interests and opportunities. In Tanzanian context, career guidance forms part of the broader guidance



and counselling services (CGS) provided in secondary school and is intended to contribute not only to students academic development but also to their capacity for long term career planning (Mcharo & Mahenge, 2021). Effective guidance enables learners to interpret information about the labour market, align it with their individual attributes, and make informed decisions that promote future employment (Sood & Makusaro, 2016). This paper points out that when the counsellor is helping students to understand and utilize information such as time management, subject combinations, available careers, program entry requirements, job opportunities and career alternatives; that counsellor is in the process of providing career guidance.

### 1.1.2 Career Counselling

Although closely related to career guidance, it is typically more individualized and specialized process. It involves trained counsellors who provide personalized assistance to learners as they clarify their career interests, assess their competences and navigate the challenges associated with career decision-making. Maree (2019) argued that, career counselling must be delivered by professionals who understand the cultural, social, and economic realities of their communities, and Manaseh (2020) concluded that in many Tanzanian schools, teacher -counsellors are burdened with heavy workloads and often lack dedicated time which affect counselling support they can offer calling an agency on policy reforms to strengthen the capacity for the provision of the services.

### 1.1.3 Challenges Facing Students in Making Career choices

Yohannes et al., (2023) noted that many young people experience uncertainty about their interests, long term goals, and limited self-awareness that contribute to indecision and confusion. In Africa and other regions including Tanzania, the shortage of qualified counsellors has resulted in students receiving limited access to professional guidance (Alloph & Msonge, 2023). In other cases, as highlighted by Mcharo and Mahenge (2021), students rely heavily on peers, family members, or misinformation from informal sources leading to choices that do not always match their skills or aspirations. The kind of information students get on their careers, and the sources together with family expectations and societal pressures have made career choice process difficult leading to regret and despair.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this conceptual paper is to conceptualize the Yucel Method as a career counselling tool by examining its meaning, structure, reflective components, and potential applicability in supporting secondary school students career exploration and informed decision -making.

### 1.3 Significance of the study

The study contributes to the limited scholarly work on the Yucel Method by clarifying its relevance for career guidance in secondary schools. It highlights how the method's reflective and visual techniques can help students recognise their strengths, refine aspirations, and make more informed

career choices. The study also offers practical value for counsellors and teachers by introducing a simple, student-centred tool that can strengthen career decision-making processes. Furthermore, it provides a basis for future research on the method's applicability and effectiveness, supporting the development of innovative and evidence-informed counselling practices.

## 2. Understanding the Yucel Method

### 2.1 Conceptualization

According to the Yucel official website (<https://www.yucelmethode.nl/>) the methods was developed roughly in 2010 in Netherlands and since then thousands of professionals in the country have been trained on how to use it. The method is a structured, visual-tactile approach designed to support clients in reflecting on their strengths, burdens, and aspirations. The method has been applied in healthcare, mental health services, education, primary healthcare and the social domain. The method is particularly used at the start of a support process, in what is called the Yucel Intake, where clients construct a constellation using coloured "T" shaped blocks representing strengths and rectangular blocks representing burdens along with a bar symbolising themselves or a significant theme. This process enables clients to externalise and organise their experiences, while practitioners can explore what is supportive or challenging. The approach fosters insight, coherence, and active engagement in personal recovery or development, making it a strength-based and client-centred tool. Highlighting from Mercera et al., (2024), Yucel method is fundamentally participatory and strongly places the clients own story, experiences, strengths and burden at the centre whereas traditional career guidance models often rely heavily on standardized assessments, questionnaires or verbal interviews, the approach that may fail to capture students subjective experiences, values and motivations. By using Yucel method students can visually and tangibly map out their interests, abilities and obstacles.

**Table1:**

Potential Effectiveness of Yucel Method Compared to Existing Models

Aspect	Existing Career Counselling Models	Yucel Method Adaptation
Approach	Mostly standardised tests, interviews, or verbal guidance	Visual-tactile, participatory, client-centred
Focus	Skills, interests, aptitudes	Strengths, burdens, environmental context, aspirations
Engagement	Verbal or written	Active, reflective, hands-on; suitable for diverse learning

Aspect	Existing Career Counselling Models	Yucel Method Adaptation styles
Insight	Often limited to measurable traits	Reveals complex interactions of personal, social, and contextual factors
Student agency	Moderate	High student actively constructs and interprets their own representation

Source: Researchers Constructs (2025)

Research further notes that (Mercera., et al,2024) working with the Yucel Method enables people to actively participate in the recovery process and actively explore their strengths, burdens and desires as well as those of their (family) network. With coloured blocks, visual representations of ones current and desired life situations are built. The supporting professionals, in this case career counsellors, discusses the emerging insights with the person building the constellation. Working in this way makes problems and solutions for career choices more clear, concrete and visible. As pointed earlier, no scientific research has been conducted on Yucel Method yet has demonstrated promising effectiveness in the counselling field particularly in guidance and counselling (Mercera., et al,2024)

## 2.2 Structures Used in Yucel Method

Figure 1. The T shaped



The blocks T shaped coloured represents strengths or resources such as family, teachers, friends, skills, knowledge, opportunities and counsellors. Its everything that is available or the student has or can be obtained to assist the student. In career counselling they could be availability of school counsellor, students skills, teachers, friends, classmates, parents, financial stability, school career programs, career information available, career exhibitions and fairs, virtual mentorship and the like.

When the client is identifying the support systems, the counsellors will be there to guide and help add more systems that the client was not able to identify. The client renames the T shaped with the system identified and arranges them.

Figure 2. The Beam

(a) Resilient



(b) Broken resilient



The beam or long bar in Yucel Method depending on the person, it presents the person, a key theme or a significant aspect in their life. The beam may present resilience such as in (a) above or Broken resilience such as in (b) above. If the client is choosing resilient beam, it means the issues experienced are tolerable however, and can live with the burdens arising, and if the Broken resilient is chosen, the counsellor needs to note that the client is passing through threatening and grieving situation and hence immediate intervention be put into place. In career counselling session, apart from presenting the client, it can stand as my current self, my future self, major life decision, or my dream career.

Figure 3: The blocks or short blocks



The short, coloured blocks represent problems or burdens that hinders or are hindering the client from not fulling his or her dreams. Because they are burdens or problems, the client chooses and arranges them according to his or her interpretation of the situation, therefore, the client may choose certain block either big or small, red, black or yellow to present what he or she feels. For example in one of the sessions a client chose a black block and said that it was lack of finances that led her to school dropout and therefore presented that if someone paid for her, she would continue with her studies. The representations give chance for both the counsellor and client to conceptualize, discuss and understand the problem, and suggestion for measures. Suggested measures are remedy to the problem, and they are added to the support systems. The central assumption behind Yucel Method is that, the more supports the more effective and immediate solution is obtained.

Figure 4: Yucel Method tools blocks



Source: Adopted from Yucel Official Website (2025)

## 3. Theoretical Foundations and Relevance to the Yucel Method

For a conceptual paper, connecting a method to theory is essential. The Yucel Method aligns with several major theories in career development, including Supers Lifespan, Life-Space Theory and Holland's Theory of Vocational Interests.

### 3.1 Supers Lifespan, Life-Space Theory

Supers Lifespan, Life-Space theory conceptualises career development as a dynamic process shaped by evolving self-concepts, life roles, and contextual experiences (Super, 1990). The theory assumes that individuals progress through distinct developmental stages in which career decisions reflect the crystallisation and realisation of self-concept (Super, 1994). In the exploration stage most relevant to secondary school students self-knowledge and role integration are central tasks.

The Yucel Method aligns closely with this perspective by providing a structured visual approach that enables students to articulate strengths, challenges, and salient life experiences. Using blocks and a beam to represent personal resources, burdens, and life trajectories, students externalise aspects of their self-concept and gain clarity regarding their position within the exploration stage. Thus, the method offers a practical tool for enhancing self-awareness and developmental reflection as envisaged by Super.

### 3.2 Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment

Holland (1997) argues that people choose careers that match their personalities. His theory is based on six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). A core assumption is that congruence between personality and environment enhances satisfaction, persistence, and performance.

The Yucel Method supports this theory by helping students to express interests through visual and narrative activities. As students construct their symbolic representations, patterns emerge that correspond with RIASEC traits such as an affinity for helping, creating, analysing, or organising. In this way, the method supports counsellors in identifying personality environment fit by making implicit tendencies more observable.

## 4. Application of the Yucel Method in Schools

The method can be applied in secondary schools in several ways. It can be used during counselling sessions, career days, life-skills classes, or group workshops. The following subsections explain detailed strategies for using the method with students.

### 4.1 Individual counselling sessions

One-on-one sessions allow personalised attention. The counsellor guides the student step-by-step. Visualisation helps the student relax and imagine freely. Reflective questions help uncover specific interests, abilities, and fears. Narrative expression builds confidence, and action planning produces a personalised career plan. Individual sessions are effective for shy students or those with unique challenges.

### 4.2 Group counselling and workshops

Many schools have limited counsellors, so group sessions are practical. Students can visualise future careers together, draw future selves, and share stories in small groups. Group sharing builds peer support and exposes students to diverse dreams. Research shows that group guidance promotes social learning

and increases motivation (Hiebert & Borgen, 2010). Counsellors can also observe common themes among students and design school-wide programmes based on those themes.

### 4.3 Classroom integration

Teachers can use the method in subjects like life-skills, civics, or language classes. Students can write essays about their future, create posters, or participate in guided reflection tasks. Integrating the method into the classroom increases exposure and ensures all students benefit, not only those who visit counsellors.

### 4.4 Supporting students with special needs

The method is flexible enough to support students with diverse abilities. Those with learning difficulties can draw instead of writing. Gifted students can create more detailed projects. Visualisation and narrative approaches are known to be effective for students who struggle with traditional academic tasks (Armstrong, 2009).

### 4.5 Cultural adaptation

Schools may adjust the method based on cultural values. For example, in collectivist communities, future visions may include family expectations. Counsellors can respect cultural influences while still encouraging personal agency. Adaptation makes the method more meaningful to students from diverse backgrounds. Through these applications, the Yucel Method becomes accessible and practical for everyday school use.

## 5. Benefits for Students and Counsellors

The Yucel Method provides a structured, student-centred approach to career exploration in schools. Combining visualisation, narrative reflection, goal setting, and creative expression, it helps students understand themselves better, make informed career decisions, and plan practical steps toward their future. It also supports school counsellors with a clear framework and practical tools for effective career guidance sessions. The benefits cover both personal and educational development.

### 5.1 Benefits for Students

#### Increases Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a core element of career development, as it allows students to recognise strengths, interests, and values (Savickas, 2013). Many adolescents have limited experience reflecting on personal abilities or preferences. The Yucel Method guides students through structured reflection exercises, helping them ask meaningful questions such as What are my talents? or What makes me happy? Through reflections that arises from arranging Yucel structures, students externalise internal thoughts. Yucel Method helps the learner to explain what him or her in an easy way is inside and in a simple language. In that sense the Method is suitable even for those clients with limited language explanations hence suitable for a diverse number of learners. Visualisation enhances self-understanding and supports personal insight (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Recognising patterns allows students to align future career decisions with intrinsic interests, improving job satisfaction and motivation in adulthood (Super, 1990). Self-awareness also nurtures



emotional intelligence, critical for interpersonal skills, adaptability, and resilience in future workplaces (Goleman, 1995).

#### **Strengthens Motivation**

Motivation plays a significant role in achieving career and educational goals. The Yucel Method enhances motivation through visualising themselves achieving desired careers or personal milestones. Goal-setting theory explains that clear, visualised goals increase effort, focus, and persistence (Locke & Latham, 2002). When students imagine steps required to reach a goal, such as completing a course or acquiring a new skill, they become more committed to following through. Visualisation creates a mental picture of future success, clarifying goals and reducing fear of uncertainty. Students gain a sense of control over their future, increasing intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1997). Motivation strengthens when students share visualisations and narratives with counsellors or peers, receiving validation and encouragement. Studies show seeing efforts linked to tangible outcomes increases persistence, even when facing obstacles (Snyder, 2002).

#### **Builds Confidence**

Confidence is crucial for career exploration, as students must believe in their ability to succeed in chosen paths. The Yucel Method encourages students to reflect on past successes, create narratives about strengths, and role-play future scenarios. These activities enable students to recognise achievements and develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy influences the likelihood of engaging in challenging tasks and pursuing ambitious goals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). For example, a student unsure about pursuing science may realise they have strong analytical skills through guided reflection and creative exercises. This recognition motivates exploring science careers confidently. Counsellors provide supportive feedback during exercises, further reinforcing confidence. Enhanced confidence reduces career-related anxiety, improves academic performance, and encourages students to seek opportunities such as internships, competitions, or skill-building experiences (Savickas, 2013).

#### **Enhances Decision-Making Skills**

Career decisions can be complex, requiring consideration of multiple options, evaluation of advantages and disadvantages, and predicting outcomes. The Yucel Method improves decision-making through structured steps: self-assessment, exploration of options, visualisation, and action planning. Students learn to evaluate alternatives, set realistic goals, and choose paths aligned with values and abilities (Gati et al., 2010). For example, comparing career options through visual or narrative mapping simplifies complex information, making decision-making manageable. Research shows structured guidance in career decision-making reduces indecision and enhances satisfaction with chosen paths (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Over time, students develop independent decision-making skills useful in financial planning, educational choices, and personal development (Gati & Levin, 2014).

#### **Encourages Future Orientation**

The method promotes thinking about the long-term future, helping students connect present actions with future goals. Future orientation involves hope, planning, and goal-directed behaviour (Snyder, 2002). Students engaged in the Yucel Method anticipate challenges, explore solutions, and set step-by-step plans toward goals. For example, creating a five-year plan outlining education, skills, and experiences needed for a desired career. Future orientation encourages resilience, as students understand setbacks are temporary and can be addressed with strategy and persistence. It fosters proactive behaviour, such as seeking mentorship, volunteering, or joining relevant clubs. Studies show adolescents with strong future orientation are more likely to stay motivated, achieve academic success, and avoid risky behaviours (Nurmi, 1991).

#### **Supports Personal Expression**

The Yucel Method values personal expression, allowing students to communicate emotions, fears, and aspirations. Expressive activities allow articulation of thoughts students may struggle to voice verbally. Emotional expression supports psychological wellbeing, reduces anxiety, and improves interpersonal communication skills. Integrating personal expression into career exploration helps students understand career interests while developing social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-reflection, and adaptability. These skills are essential for success in education, career, and life (Goleman, 1995).

#### **5.2 Benefits for Counsellors**

##### **Provides a Structured Framework**

The Yucel Method offers counsellors a clear roadmap for career guidance sessions. Structured frameworks reduce uncertainty, guide interactions, and ensure essential steps such as self-assessment, reflection, exploration, and planning are addressed systematically (Creamer, 2012). This is particularly valuable for novice counsellors or those working in schools with limited career guidance experience.

##### **Works in Low-Resource Settings**

The Yucel Method requires minimal resources such as paper, pencils, and charts. It is practical for schools in low-resource settings where access to expensive assessments or technology may be limited. Counsellors can deliver quality career guidance without specialised equipment (Savickas, 2013).

##### **Adaptable Across Cultures**

The method can adapt to different cultural and educational contexts. Counsellors can modify activities to respect cultural values and norms while promoting self-awareness, motivation, and decision-making. Cultural adaptability ensures relevance and effectiveness in diverse school settings (Savickas, 2013). The Yucel Method supports holistic development, enhances student-counsellor relationships, and equips students with critical life skills. It integrates reflection, visualisation, and goal setting to empower students and provide practical, adaptable guidance for counsellors.

## **6. Challenges and Considerations**

Although the Yucel Method is effective in supporting career exploration, schools and counsellors must address several

challenges to implement it successfully. Recognising and planning for these challenges ensures that the method has the intended impact on students career development.

### 6.1 Limited Research Evidence

One major challenge is that the Yucel Method is relatively new, and there are limited studies proving its effectiveness. Most schools prefer methods with strong evidence because administrators and policymakers want to ensure interventions produce measurable results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Without sufficient research, some schools may hesitate to adopt the method, especially when comparing it with more established approaches such as Hollands vocational theory or Supers career development model. Limited research also makes it harder for counsellors to justify using the method to parents, school boards, or funding bodies. Evidence is particularly important when adapting methods to different cultural contexts, as approaches that work in one school may not work in another (Savickas, 2013). Despite this, pilot studies in small schools show promising results in increasing self-awareness, motivation, and decision-making skills among students. Future research should focus on larger sample sizes, diverse school settings, and both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Evaluating long-term impact such as students success in education and employment will strengthen the evidence base and encourage broader adoption (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Counsellors and researchers can collaborate to conduct action research, documenting both challenges and successes to provide practical guidance for other schools.

### 6.2 Time Constraints

Teachers and counsellors often have heavy workloads, making it difficult to dedicate time to new methods. Large class sizes add further difficulty, as individual attention is crucial for students to fully benefit from exercises (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Schools with tight timetables may struggle to schedule multiple sessions for career exploration, which is necessary for reflection, goal setting, and follow-up. Counsellors may prioritise activities or integrate exercises into existing subjects such as life skills or social studies. Research suggests that even short, structured sessions can be effective if carefully planned (Gati et al., 2010). Schools may also consider group sessions, peer mentoring, or blended approaches using digital tools to save time while maintaining quality guidance.

### 6.3 Skill Levels of Counsellors

Without proper skills, counsellors may struggle to guide students effectively, interpret visualisations, or facilitate meaningful discussions. Professional development and ongoing training are essential. Workshops, mentoring, and supervision help counsellors build confidence and competence. Counsellors also need cultural sensitivity and emotional intelligence to support students facing personal or academic challenges. Well-trained counsellors significantly improve student outcomes in career exploration (Law, 2013). It is of course important that counsellors receive training on how to use Yucel Method.

### 6.4 Cultural Expectations

Cultural and family expectations influence career choices. In some societies, parents strongly guide or dictate careers. Students may experience pressure to choose options they do not prefer, creating tension between personal interests and family expectations (Gati & Levin, 2014). Counsellors must navigate these situations carefully, respecting cultural norms while promoting self-awareness and informed decision-making. The Yucel Method allows discussion of values and personal goals in culturally sensitive ways. Counsellors may involve parents in workshops or meetings to build understanding and support student autonomy (Savickas, 2013).

### 6.5 Resource Limitations

Although simple materials are sufficient, some schools lack private spaces or sufficient time for counselling. Privacy is essential to allow students to share thoughts and explore emotions without fear. Low-resource schools may use rotating rooms, group sessions, or outdoor spaces. Resource limitations can also affect follow-up activities such as internships or career visits. Counsellors need to adapt exercises to local contexts. Flexibility and creativity in using resources maintain effectiveness even in low-resource settings (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Challenges such as limited research, time constraints, skill gaps, cultural expectations, and resource limitations are significant but manageable. Professional development, administrative support, and creative problem-solving ensure the method can be implemented effectively and benefit students fully.

## 7. Conclusion

The Yucel Method offers a promising, flexible, and student-centred approach for career exploration. Visualisation, narrative reflection, goal-setting, and creative expression help students understand themselves and their career interests deeply. The method aligns with career theories such as Supers Life-Span Life-Space Theory and Hollands Vocational Model (Savickas, 2013; Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). A key strength is adaptability. The method can be implemented across different cultural and educational contexts with minor adjustments, respecting local norms while promoting self-awareness, motivation, confidence, and decision-making skills. Visual and narrative techniques engage students of varying learning styles, making career exploration accessible and effective (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Challenges remain, including limited research evidence, time constraints, counsellor skill gaps, cultural expectations, and resource limitations. Addressing these challenges ensures successful implementation. Professional development, administrative support, and creative use of resources are essential. The method strengthens student-counsellor relationships. Counsellors gain a structured framework and practical tools to guide reflection and decision-making. Students gain confidence, clarity, and hope for the future. Emotional expression, goal setting, and future-oriented thinking equip students with skills extending beyond career planning, including resilience, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. Future research should explore long-term impact, cultural adaptability, and integration with digital tools. Evaluating

academic achievement, career satisfaction, and personal development outcomes will provide stronger evidence for broader adoption. In conclusion, the Yucel Method enriches career counselling in schools. It provides a holistic, creative, and structured approach that empowers students to explore themselves, plan realistically, and pursue goals confidently. With support, training, and research, it can prepare young people for successful educational and career paths.

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