

Combining quantitative and qualitative career counselling strategies and techniques to facilitate 'best practice'

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Introduction

The exclusive use of traditional methods and techniques of career facilitation needs serious reconsideration. This approach leaves little room for consideration of issues such as subjectivity, personal growth, discovery and improving the sense of self during career construction.

Need for a new approach

- ✓ Rapidly changing career situation demands a contemporary approach requiring career counsellors to take cognisance of the shift and to adapt their discipline to accommodate these changes.
- ✓ A more up-to-date approach is needed to enable career counsellors and their clients to respond adequately to new developments in careers, career choice and career execution.

Quan+qual (*simultaneous/ concurrent*) approach: Theoretical/ conceptual framework: Framework for data analysis

- ✓ Differential approach
- ✓ Developmental approach
- ✓ Storied/ narrative approach (psychodynamic underpinnings)
(Savickas, 2011)

A combined approach: quantitative+qualitative

Qualitative and quantitative approaches and techniques can be combined and the resultant data analyzed to advance the career counselling process.

Aim of combined approach (1)

- To promote ‘best practice’ in career counselling theory and practice and showcase the importance of reflecting and reflexivity as integral aspects of 21st century career counselling.

Aim of career counselling: Combined approach (2)

- Storyed approach to Career Counselling aims to facilitate personal growth and help people design their entire lives instead of merely ‘choosing a career’.

Aim of career counselling: Combined approach (3)

- To bring together career counselling history, best practices as well as contemporary models and methods (Maree, 2013).

Ultimate aim (4)

- Ultimately, my aim is to demonstrate how Mark Savickas' (2011) counselling for career construction approach can be used by clients to connect life themes in order to construct life portraits under the guidance of counsellors.

Main working assumption

- Career counselling today should enable career counsellors to implement an approach is implemented that is of value to every person irrespective of colour, creed, financial situation or geographic location.

Data analysis: Quan+qual approach

- When a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is used, either the quantitative or the qualitative data are analyzed first. An inductive data analysis approach is followed in order to identify a number of life themes.

Data analysis: Quan+qual approach

- They are continually asked to 'reflect upon [their] reflections' and to tell the counsellor which themes they can identify from their responses. Minimal interpretation should be provided.

Data analysis: Quan+qual approach

- In practice, there is always a significant overlap between the two sets of data.
- Clients are frequently requested to reflect on the crosswalk/crossover between the two ‘sets of results’ or different versions of clients’ career and life stories (triangulation takes place), and they eventually (co-)construct a list of fields of study they can analyze to arrive at an informed choice.

Using Triangulation and Crystallization to Facilitate Quality Assurance

Main difference between the two modes of assessment

- In the case of the quantitative part of a study, the test results yield a number of *fields of study*; in the case of the qualitative part of a study, clients' reflections on their own reflections (also) uncover *major life themes* (as suggested in career construction theory) (Hartung, 2010; Savickas, 2005; see Table 3).

Promoting self-advising

- Clients should continually be encouraged to advise themselves (finding meaning in their own responses to career-counselling questions) and to identify their main life themes first (their destiny) and then decide on possible ‘jobs’ or careers (i.e., pathways towards that destiny). Their stories can be re-authored, if necessary, to sustain and buttress their efforts to design and live successful lives.

Quantitative or qualitative? Is one approach ‘better’ than the other?

- Not helpful to weigh up one approach against another or to adopt an either/or approach (i.e., using one approach to the exclusion of the other).

One approach or the other?

- Rather, we should endeavour to use the best elements in both approaches to career counselling.

Conclusion

- I respect some practitioners' endorsement of a quantitative approach to career counselling and their rejection of a qualitative or combined approach.
- In terms of their logical positivist conceptual framework, they are right.
- Moving beyond an approach that has served them well over time, that they feel comfortable with and that has brought them success (success defined from their perspective) does not appeal or make sense to them.

Conclusion

- Our primary allegiance in career counselling should never be to any particular theoretical approach.

Conclusion?

- Rather, our aim should be to find the best ways to be useful to our clients.

Conclusion

- A rigid and blind adherence to a theory or approach or paradigm [in isolation/ to the exclusion of others] can reduce one's effectiveness as a clinician ... When a better [theory] comes along, one must have the willingness and capacity to adopt it. Ultimate allegiance should be, not to a theory, but to the very best ways of describing clients and intervening on their behalf (Phares, 1992, p. 64).

Conclusion

- Ultimately, the aim of career counselling is to turn the experience of administering and receiving career counselling into what it was for Epston, namely “the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve [offering] the possibility of a new beginning” (O'Hanlon, 1994, p. 3). It should be our aim to turn pain into happiness, failure into victory and despair into hope. The approach developed by Savickas and advocated here provides a powerful strategy to achieve it.

Call for research

This paper represents a call for such research into new ways to deal with the career counselling needs of people in the 21st century (Di Fabio, 2012; Hartung, 2011; Savickas, 2011; Subich, 2011).

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