



Using Qualitative Assessment in Career Counselling

MARY MCMAHON* & WENDY PATTON

*School of Learning and Development, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove Campus, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove, QLD 4059, Australia (*author for correspondence, E-mail: m.mcmahon@qut.edu.au)*

Received: May 2000; accepted in revised form: February 2001

Abstract. Advancements in conceptualisations about career and career development and irreversible changes in the world of work have necessitated that career counsellors reflect on their practice in order that it keeps pace and maintains relevancy. Fundamental to these reflections is consideration of the place and nature of career assessment in career counselling. Traditionally, emphasis has been given to quantitative assessment. More recently, the profile of qualitative assessment has been raised, and its place in career counselling has been strengthened relative to but not to the exclusion of quantitative assessment. However, there is little to guide the use of qualitative assessment. This paper presents a theoretical overview of qualitative assessment in career counselling and proposes guidelines for using qualitative assessment.

Résumé. Le recours à l'évaluation qualitative dans le conseil de carrière. Les avancées dans la conceptualisation de la notion de carrière, des développements de carrière et des changements irréversibles que connaît le monde du travail ont rendu nécessaire une réflexion des conseillers d'orientation sur leur pratique afin que celle-ci reste dynamique et pertinente. Ce qui est fondamental dans cette discussion est la prise en considération de la place et de la nature de l'évaluation de carrière dans le conseil de carrière. Traditionnellement, l'accent a été mis sur l'évaluation quantitative. Plus récemment, on a vu apparaître un profil d'évaluation qualitative, et sa place dans le conseil de carrière s'est renforcée par rapport à, mais non pas à l'exclusion de, l'évaluation quantitative. Cependant, il existe peu de choses sur les règles à observer pour mener une évaluation qualitative. Cet article propose un tour d'horizon théorique de l'évaluation qualitative dans le conseil de carrière et un ensemble de recommandations pour l'application de l'évaluation qualitative.

Zusammenfassung. Die Verwendung qualitativer Evaluation in der Berufsberatung. Veränderungen der Konzepte der "Berufslaufbahn" und der "Laufbahnentwicklung" sowie unwiderrufliche Veränderungen in der Arbeitswelt machten es erforderlich, dass Berufsberater ihre Methoden überdenken, um sicherzustellen, dass sie mit der Entwicklung Schritt halten und dass ihr Angebot weiterhin als hilfreich empfunden werden kann. Von grundlegender Bedeutung bei diesen Überlegungen sind Art und Umfang der Evaluation in der Berufsberatung. Traditionell wurde der quantitativen Evaluation der Vorzug gegeben. In der letzten Zeit wurden auch Möglichkeiten der qualitativen Evaluation entwickelt und deren Bedeutung in der Berufsberatung erweitert, jedoch nicht so weitgehend, dass quantitative Auswertungen entfallen wären. Es gibt jedoch noch wenig Hilfestellungen für den Einsatz quantitativer Evaluationen. Dieser Artikel bietet einen Überblick über Möglichkeiten der qualitativen Evaluation in der Berufsberatung und schlägt Richtlinien für deren Einsatz vor.

Resumen. El uso de la evaluación cualitativa en la orientación para la Carrera. La evolución de las conceptualizaciones sobre carrera y desarrollo de la carrera, y los cambios irreversibles en el mundo del trabajo han hecho necesario que los orientadores profesionales reflexionen sobre su práctica para mantenerla al día y significativa. En estas reflexiones es fundamental la consideración del lugar que ocupa, y la naturaleza del diagnóstico/evaluación de la carrera, en la orientación para la carrera. Tradicionalmente, se ha puesto el mayor énfasis en la evaluación cuantitativa. Más recientemente, se ha planteado el perfil de la evaluación cualitativa, y su lugar en la orientación para la carrera se ha reforzado, en relación a, pero sin excluir la evaluación cuantitativa. Sin embargo, existe poca orientación con respecto al uso de la evaluación cualitativa. Este artículo presenta una visión teórica del diagnóstico o evaluación cualitativa en la orientación para la carrera y propone unas directrices para usar la evaluación cualitativa.

Introduction

Since the genesis of vocational guidance, career assessment has played an integral part in work with clients. For example, Parsons (1909), the founder of modern career guidance, advocated personal analysis to facilitate self-understanding. To this end, he developed a comprehensive “personal record and self-analysis questionnaire” (p. 27) for use with his clients. So visionary was Parsons’ work that his assessment and interview process continues to underpin the trait and factor approach, the dominant approach used in career counselling for most of the 20th century. Indeed, career counsellors have been slow to move from this traditional process (Brown & Brooks, 1996).

As different conceptualisations of career development and the counselling process emerged, awareness of the limitations of the trait and factor approach with its emphasis on quantitative vocational assessment has heightened. In addition, the complexity of the world of work, reflected in the diversity of issues being presented to career counsellors, has raised concerns about the adequacy of the traditional approach. Long criticised for oversimplification of career counselling, the capacity of the trait and factor approach to cope with the needs of clients in a complex world has been consistently questioned (Brown & Brooks, 1996; Savickas, 1996; Super, 1992; Vondracek et al., 1986).

It is in the context of the changing world of careers work that this paper discusses the use of qualitative assessment. However, it is important to note at the outset that this paper is in no way presenting a case for or against either qualitative or quantitative assessment, nor is it advocating the use of one form of assessment over the other. Rather, it recognises current debate in the literature about the place and relevance of career assessment in the career counselling process. Indeed, it is that debate, along with awareness that most literature concerning career assessment is devoted to quantitative

assessment, that has provided an impetus for this paper as traditionally little attention has been given to qualitative assessment. Thus this paper addresses a perceived imbalance in the extant literature by focusing its attention on qualitative assessment. First it presents an overview of the traditional trait and factor approach to career counselling and the place of career assessment in that approach. Second it outlines changes in the world of careers work which challenge career practices. Third it presents a theoretical overview of qualitative assessment including advantages and disadvantages, the nature of the counselling relationship, and suggestions for using qualitative assessment. Finally it briefly describes some common approaches to qualitative assessment.

The traditional approach

Parsons (1909) relied on self-assessment by clients due to a lack of appropriate assessment instruments. However, during the early 1900s, there was growth in the differential psychology movement, with its emphasis on individual differences and the use of psychometric assessment. The psychology of individual differences provided counselling psychology with a technology for client assessment based on the psychological test (Dawis, 1992). The influence of the movement toward individual differences “shifted the emphasis in vocational guidance to the assessment of individuals’ abilities, interests, and personality traits in relation to occupational requirements and occupational adjustment” (Dawis, 1992, p. 10), a process that gained considerable momentum with the advent of the two world wars and the post-war need to place returned soldiers into civilian employment. Now, as then, assessment is used in career counselling “to help clients gather and interpret information relevant to career decision making” (Forrest & Brooks, 1993, p. 233).

The technology provided by the psychology of individual differences such as inventories and psychological tests paved the way for the development of the oldest and most widely adopted of the career development theories (Sharf, 1992), the trait and factor theory. “The terms trait and factor refer to the assessment of characteristics of the person and the job” (Sharf, 1992, p. 17). Traits are individual characteristics that can be measured through testing, and factors are characteristics required for successful job performance. The term “trait and factor” implies a matching between individuals and jobs, and career selection occurs as a result of understanding the relationship between knowledge about self and knowledge about occupations (Chartrand, 1991). Thus trait and factor counselling focuses on problem-solving with an emphasis on

diagnosis and assessment (Rounds & Tracey, 1990), which has earned it the unflattering description of the “test them and tell them” approach.

The changing world of careers work

While the psychology of individual differences and the trait and factor approach has served, and continues to serve us well, challenges have been posed to its theoretical underpinnings and its practice as a result of the changing world of careers work. However, this is not a new phenomenon. Historically challenges to the trait and factor approach can be traced back as far as the 1950s. Some of the challenges which are necessitating a rethinking of practice will now be discussed.

The permeation of Rogerian psychotherapy into the counselling field (Chartrand, 1991)

In the early 1900s, vocational guidance was essentially practitioner controlled and directed as was the profession of counselling. Vocational guidance practitioners assumed the role of an expert who took responsibility for analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counselling and follow-up (Williamson, 1939). However, the work of Rogers (1951, 1959) “caused a furore when he challenged the basic assumption that ‘the counselor knows best’ ” (Corey, 1991, p. 205). Essentially, Rogers’ theory emphasised the creation of a permissive and noninterventionist environment and a belief in people’s capacity for understanding themselves and resolving their own problems. As a result the pre-eminence of the trait and factor approach faded (Chartrand, 1991). Prior to this, the quality of the counselling relationship was not considered important in vocational guidance. Since that time, the influence of feminism (Forrest & Brooks, 1993) and the constructivist worldview (Peavy, 1998; Savickas, 1993) have continued to heighten awareness of the importance of the quality of the counselling relationship.

Theory development and its links to practice

Theory advances also challenged the appropriateness of the trait and factor approach. For example, developmental theory (Super, 1953, 1980, 1990), learning theory (Krumboltz et al., 1976), developmental-contextual theory (Vondracek et al., 1986), and more recently, the Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999) lend themselves less easily to the assessment processes of trait and factor counselling. Essentially, as thinking about career development advanced, there has been greater acknowledgment of contextual

influences on clients' career concerns, and more questions asked about the trait and factor approach's capacity to deal with them – "How do counsellors apply theories that are partial and simple to clients who are complex and whole?" (Savickas, 1996, p. 193).

Broadening of the concept of career and career development

Careers work began in the days when the terms career and vocation were used synonymously, and career development was not a significant concept. However, as a result of the work of the developmental theorists in the 1950s (e.g., Super, 1953), career development became a much more significant concept. The idea that career was a process of stages through which individuals passed and during which time their career thoughts developed and changed required rethinking of career practice. Indeed, Savickas (1994) claims that Super broadened career counselling away from a preoccupation with occupations to the concept of career. In addition, Super broadened the concept of career even further by introducing the notion of life roles. The concept of career has continued to broaden to acknowledge all aspects of an individual's life. Collin and Watts (1996) extended thinking about career even further to include the concept of career being a subjective construction of the individual rather than something that is objective. For example, instead of career being described objectively in terms of a sequence of jobs, individuals interpret their lives subjectively and ascribe meaning to the various facets of career which change and unfold.

The emergence of career counselling as a profession

It is only comparatively recently that the term career guidance and counselling gave counselling and guidance equal attention (Herr, 1997). Prior to that for much of its history, career counselling was rarely differentiated from vocational or career guidance. Thus the process of career counselling was dominated by the traditional practices of vocational guidance which essentially was concerned with helping people choose, prepare for, and enter occupations (McDaniels & Gysbers, 1992) usually in a process controlled by a practitioner who was viewed as an expert. Career counselling emerged as a profession in its own right during the 1960s and 1970s (Herr, 1997) and established its own identity as being different from that of vocational guidance by placing greater emphasis on the counsellor client relationship and less emphasis on the counsellor as expert. In addition, it acknowledges a broad range of career issues in addition to decision making, recognises the subjective and emotional components of career, and employs a broader range of approaches, strategies and techniques in the counselling process. Thus,

career counselling has been able to forge closer links with counselling theory and practice.

The emergence of a different world view

For most of its history, careers work has been based on a philosophy known as logical positivism (Brown & Brooks, 1990; Savickas, 1992). The emphasis under this philosophy is on objective reality where a client's traits, such as ability or personality, can be measured and quantified. Under this philosophy, little emphasis is placed on the meaning clients ascribe to particular traits nor to subjective elements associated with career concerns. The emerging world-view, known as constructivism, is regarded by Savickas (1992) as providing a second perspective on career assessment. A significant difference between logical positivism and constructivism is that "... human functioning cannot be reduced to laws or principles, and cause and effect cannot be inferred" (Brown & Brooks, 1990, p. 11). Thus the objectivity of a logical positivist approach which can often be supported by test results is replaced by subjectivity. Individuals are encouraged to define themselves and their environment, and to refer to the subjective sources of their knowledge. Savickas (1992) claims that by adopting this perspective, the career assessment process is enriched as the career counsellor seeks to comprehend the meaning of traits in terms of a client's life pattern. Further, Savickas claims that by introducing the subjective component to career counselling, the artificial distinction between career and personal counselling is reduced, and that more emphasis can be placed on the counselling relationship.

Debate about the fusion of personal and career counselling

As closer links have been forged between counselling and career counselling, and understanding about career and career development have broadened, debate about the fusion of career and personal counselling has ensued (e.g., Subich, 1993). This debate challenges the problem-solving traditions of career counselling with its emphasis on career assessment. As evidenced by the Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999), it is too simplistic to adopt the approach that individuals can separate career issues from personal issues. As Savickas (1993) states, "career is personal" (p. 212). While counselling practice is moving towards what has been described as the "fourth wave" (O'Hanlon, 1993, p. 3), that is the constructivist approaches including narrative therapy, career counselling, still dominated by the trait and factor approach, is still very much based in the problem solving mode or "second wave". Rethinking the place and nature of career assessment in the career counselling process is necessitated by this debate.

The changing nature of the world of work

Careers work first began in a job for life world, where the dominant issue dealt with by career practitioners was occupational choice, generally at school leaving age. However, the world is now a very different place. The security many workers have experienced and relied on is gone, and the traditional concept of a 'job for life' is dying (Watts, 1996). In its place is an environment of uncertainty and constant change reflected in an employment market where corporate downsizing and layoffs are common place, and long term career ladder positions are in short supply (Borow, 1996). Thus the employment market is increasingly characterised by a growth in the number of self-employed, part time, and contingent (short-term contract or casual) workers and teleworkers, and a trend toward larger numbers of people who are becoming unemployed or underemployed. Workers now find themselves in a 'foreign' world of work, facing a complex array of issues for which many are ill-prepared. Thus occupational choice is only one of a myriad of concerns that individuals bring to career counsellors. In addition, it is likely that individuals may revisit career decision making and access career services several times during their lifetime. Thus the potential client market of career counsellors has broadened at a time when the complexity of issues with which they are dealing has also broadened.

Attending to the needs of a diverse population

Career theory and practice has long been criticised for not adequately addressing the needs of groups other than white, western, able-bodied, middle-class males (Patton & McMahon, 1999). Career assessment has not been immune to such criticism. Growing attention is now being paid to the career development of women and racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Leong, 1996), and sociological perspectives are paying attention to socioeconomic issues. A growing body of work is also focusing on the career development of lesbians and gay men (e.g., Patton, 1997). Where career counselling traditionally focused on occupational choice of predominantly young people at school leaving age, career counsellors are now faced with a diverse range of clients of all ages and at all stages of their careers, each bringing a unique system of influences (Patton & McMahon, 1999). As the barriers between personal and career counselling are broken down, influences such as gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation which were traditionally the domain of personal counselling must now also be taken into account in the career counselling process.

Careers work in groups

In this changing society it is essential that career guidance and counselling is available to all individuals throughout their life-span (Collin & Watts, 1996; Herr, 1992), and at a reasonable cost. Much of the available career guidance and counselling traditionally has been provided to young people in secondary schools; such restricted service provision is no longer adequate. The changing nature of the client population necessitates career development services being provided in a variety of settings including work settings, community agencies, and universities, as well as schools. Further, innovative ways of providing counselling to large numbers of people at reasonable cost are needed. To this end, increased use of group counselling has been proposed (Patton & McMahon, 1999).

Qualitative assessment – An overview

Thus the world of careers work is now a very different place from where it began, and career counselling has been challenged to respond. In particular, the nature and place of career assessment in the career counselling process needs to be rethought. Challenges are posed for both quantitative and qualitative career assessment. However, nowhere is it advocated that there is no longer a place for traditional quantitative assessment. Rather, its incorporation into the process of career counselling needs to be re-examined. For example, Forrest and Brooks (1993) suggest that counsellors establish collaborative relationships with clients and involve them in the selection of assessment devices and encourage them to explore meaning from the results.

The challenge for qualitative assessment is that its profile has been raised, and the door has been opened for its more widespread use in career counselling. Its place in career counselling has strengthened relative to but not to the exclusion of quantitative assessment. However, qualitative assessment has traditionally received less attention in the literature, and therefore offers little to inform career counsellors about its potential, use, or techniques. For example, in a recent review of research in career counselling and development where almost four pages were devoted to career assessment, only one paragraph referred to qualitative assessment (Young & Chen, 1999). These authors concluded in their review that “psychometrics and standardised assessment tools are still popular in career guidance and counseling, but qualitative assessment strategies received some attention in the career counselling literature in 1998” (p. 121).

Qualitative assessment, described as “informal forms of assessment” (Okocha, 1998, p. 151), offers counsellors “methods of helping clients to

know and understand themselves better – methods that are flexible, open-ended, holistic, and nonstatistical” (Goldman, 1992, p. 616). Isaacson and Brown (1993) suggest that qualitative assessment is bounded by less rigid parameters than quantitative assessment in that it may not be guided by a standardised set of directions and there is little, if any scoring, and where scoring is featured, it is generally subjective. Thus standardised tests may seem more “scientific” than qualitative assessment devices because they may give an “impression of objectivity, precision of measurement, and dependability of interpretative statements” (Goldman, 1992, p. 620).

Savickas (1992) claims that qualitative assessment places emphasis on the counselling relationship rather than the delivery of the service. For example, the client becomes much more involved in the counselling process as the assessment is grounded in their lived experience on which they are the expert, and from which they have a story to tell. Thus the position of client in the relationship is elevated from that of “passive responder” (Goldman, 1990, p. 205) to that of active participant. By contrast, the position of career counsellor is changed from that of expert to one of interested, curious, and tentative inquirer, respectful listener, and tentative observer, qualities that closely resemble those proposed in the 1950s by Rogers (1951, 1959). Thus communication that is constructive, planful, and clarifying is seen as being essential in the career counselling process (Peavy, 1998). From a constructivist perspective, terms such as diagnosis and assessment fit less well in the counselling process (Peavy, 1998). Further, Peavy (1998) proposes that the aim of assessment from a constructivist stance is to “open up avenues of movement, promote empowerment, support transitions, and assist the client gain eligibility for more participation” in their preferred future (p. 180).

Qualitative assessment not only defines the counselling relationship differently, but it also acknowledges the subjectivity of careers that has traditionally been overlooked in career counselling. As career counsellors make increasing use of qualitative assessment with the post modern shift from objectivity to subjectivity or from scores to stories (Savickas, 1993), the counselling relationship will be defined differently and the gap between personal and career counselling reduced. In essence, qualitative assessment is intended to encourage individuals to tell their own career stories, and uncover their subjective careers and life themes. Peavy (1998) claims that career counsellors “have the privilege of hearing many stories and scripts and then joining the storytellers in the task of reauthoring them toward more preferred futures” (p. 30). Thus counsellors who listen for life themes and stories act more as “biographers who interpret lives in progress rather than as actuaries who count interests and abilities” (Savickas, 1992, p. 338).

However, qualitative assessment is not a process to be entered into lightly. It has been suggested that qualitative assessment tends to be more time consuming and labour intensive than quantitative assessment (Goldman, 1992). For example, the counsellor has an extensive role to play in setting the scene for and supervising the qualitative assessment activity (Goldman, 1992). In addition, deriving meaning, insight and learning from the activity necessitates that the activity is processed or debriefed. Thus, qualitative assessment requires that the counsellor is actively involved in the process from beginning to end (Goldman, 1990).

In general, there is little to guide career counsellors in the conduct of qualitative career assessment. Unlike standardised test instruments, most qualitative assessment activities do not come with an instruction manual. Therefore, career counsellors using qualitative assessment are generally left to their own devices as there is still little to guide them in its practical application.

The following suggestions may be useful to career counsellors who wish to incorporate greater use of qualitative assessment into their work with clients:

- Individualise the process for the client
Respect the uniqueness of each client. Just because a counsellor has used a particular process before does not mean it will be meaningful for every client if used in exactly the same way. For example, even with an activity such as a timeline, clients will include different information, represent the information differently, or progress at different rates. Therefore the counsellor's role will vary slightly with each client and different debriefing questions may be needed. Clients may need varying levels of assistance or guidance in qualitative assessment.
- Map the qualitative assessment onto the story previously told by the client
In the stories told by clients and the information presented, there will frequently be a starting point onto which the assessment can be mapped. For example, they may have mentioned several life roles which may indicate the appropriateness of life space mapping. Alternatively, they may have presented a chronology of jobs and/or life events which may indicate the appropriateness of drawing a lifeline. If the assessment device seems to have come out of nowhere, the client may be less likely to participate or may derive less meaning from it.
- Make the qualitative assessment fit for the client not the client fit the assessment
Counsellors may tend to get into a particular way of working. For example, some counsellors use the same assessment devices with all

clients. Remembering the uniqueness of clients serves as a reminder that qualitative assessment activities should be tailored to suit the client. A 'one size fits all approach' will not work.

- Broach the subject of using a qualitative assessment device tentatively, respectfully, and informatively
 Clients may be unfamiliar with the career counselling process. In addition, because of the history of career counselling with its emphasis on quantitative assessment, clients may be unprepared to engage in a process that at first may seem a little strange. Therefore it is critical that the counsellor has carefully considered the appropriateness of the process to be used, and can suggest its use to the client in a tentative, informative, and respectful way. By explaining what it is, how it will be conducted, and why it may be useful, the counsellor is reducing the power differential in the relationship, and the client is better able to make an informed choice about whether or not they wish to participate.
- Acknowledge that it is the client's prerogative to engage in the activity
 Qualitative assessment is less counsellor directed than traditional quantitative assessment, and the counselling relationship is significantly more equal. Therefore, it is the client's right to choose to engage in or not engage in any qualitative assessment process. Similarly, they may choose to discontinue an activity if they don't find it beneficial.
- Work with and support the client through the process of the assessment using counselling skills
 No matter what qualitative assessment activity is being used, it is unlikely that the client will be able to move through it without guidance from the counsellor. Indeed, to do so may be unproductive. The activity is a process for creating a meaningful dialogue between counsellor and client and within the client themselves. Out of meaningful dialogue insight and learning take place. Thus effective use of counselling skills such as reflections, open questions and paraphrases is important.
- Debrief/process the activity
 Just as in experiential learning activities, debriefing is essential. A range of questions about the client's overall experience of the process, specific learnings, generalisations, and applications are all appropriate and will enhance the learning process. It is by guiding clients through an activity and debriefing it well afterwards that qualitative assessment enables clients to "explore, examine, appraise, experience, define, and redefine themselves, their life experiences, and their directions in life both inside and outside" (Granvold, 1996, p. 351). Through this process clients may gain new insight, awareness of their strengths, possible directions, and feel more empowered to achieve their goals.

- Invite feedback on qualitative assessment processes
Inviting feedback on the qualitative assessment process enables the counsellor to continue his/her own learning and also to indicate that he/she values the opinion of the client, thus again 'levelling the playing field' of the counselling relationship. For example, a counsellor may ask whether the client would recommend the activity for other clients, what the counsellor could have done to make the activity more helpful, or what the most beneficial aspects of the activity were.
- Be creative
Qualitative assessment devices may need to be altered from client to client to suit their individual needs. In addition, Goldman (1992) suggests that counsellors can develop their own qualitative assessment processes. Creativity may emanate from the language clients use or the story they tell which in turn may give the counsellor clues to the design of client specific activities. For example, a client may be encouraged to draw a picture or write a poem or letter. Further, clients themselves may wish to modify activities as they proceed through them.

Clearly these guidelines suggest attention to very different content and process from that underpinning traditional trait and factor careers work. Goldman (1990) suggests that qualitative assessment has the capacity to meet the needs of different cultural and ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels, sexual identities, people with disabilities. In addition, qualitative assessment lends itself very well to group settings which opens the possibility of reasonably priced career services for clients.

Common approaches in qualitative assessment

It is not possible in the space of this paper to adequately describe an extensive range of qualitative assessment instruments. However, a brief synopsis of some common and useful qualitative assessment activities will be provided with appropriate references for readers to follow up.

- Card sorts
Card sorts (Gysbers et al., 1998; Knowdell, 1995, 1998; Stevens, 1997, 1998) are possibly the most common form of qualitative assessment available to career counsellors. Most card sorts focus on a particular topic, for example occupations, work values, or motivation. The process of the card sort may elicit life themes, values, beliefs and attitudes.
- Genograms
A genogram, family tree, or occupational tree (Gysbers et al., 1998; Okiishi, 1987; Okocha, 1998) may uncover the patterns of family influence on a client. Indeed, Savickas (1997) suggests that it is in the

family of origin that individuals begin to script their lives. For example, information may be gathered on family values in relation to gender roles or education, the nature of family support, socioeconomic and ethnic background, and family patterns of decision making and coping with transition.

- **Time/lifeline**
Constructing lifelines (Goldman, 1992) is useful for assisting clients to review their life histories. Through a well constructed timeline, the patterns and themes of the client's lifecareer may become more visible.
- **Early recollections**
As has been suggested in the use of genograms, family themes and patterns become entrenched from an early age. Savickas (1997) describes a process of early recollection whereby clients describe three stories from their childhood. In processing the activity, the goal is for clients to discern their life themes and discuss how they might extend into the future.
- **Systems Theory Framework**
The Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999) may be used as a qualitative assessment instrument. Clients can be encouraged to draw the constellation of influences in their system at various points in their life, for example school leaving age. By then drawing their current constellation of influences and comparing them, their narratives or stories of their life career may be explored.
- **Life-space map**
A life-space map (Peavy, 1998) is a drawing or diagram by which the client and counsellor work together to represent the client's ideas and feelings in a visual form. Through this activity, patterns, conflicts, and contexts become more visible, and preferred life-spaces can be identified.
- **Pattern identification exercise**
The pattern identification exercise is built on the premise that life patterns will be revealed by examining previous experiences, not necessarily work related (Amundson, 1998). Once an experience has been chosen, the counsellor guides the client through a process of recalling positives and negatives about the experience. Following this, patterns and themes are examined and application to career choices or action planning is discussed.

As evidenced by the approaches previously described, qualitative assessment has the potential to:

- cater for a broad range of learning styles, for example, visual and kinaesthetic,

- access a range of contextual data,
- increase the involvement of the client in the process,
- accommodate subjective and affective client processes as well as cognitive processes,
- paint holistic pictures of career issues, and
- value client interpretation and meaning.

Conclusion

As evidenced throughout this paper, the issue of career assessment in career counselling warrants careful consideration. In particular, changes to the world of careers work have necessitated a review of practice to ensure the relevance of the profession in the 21st century. The challenges confronting career assessment are twofold. First, the method of integrating quantitative assessment into the career counselling process in order to reflect the new worldview has been advocated. Indeed, the guidelines suggested here could be applied to the use of quantitative assessment. Second, the more widespread use of qualitative assessment has been proposed. Importantly, neither challenge promotes one form of assessment at the expense of the other. Rather, it seems that the place of assessment in career counselling is and will remain firmly entrenched. However, it also seems that the career counsellors of the future will draw from a broader range of assessment devices including those of both a quantitative and a qualitative nature.

References

- Amundson, N. E. (1998). *Active engagement Enhancing the career counselling process*. Richmond, Canada: Ergon Communications.
- Borow, H. (1996). Vocational guidance and social activism: A fifty year perspective. In R. Feller & G. Walz (Eds.), *Career transitions in turbulent times: Exploring work, learning and careers* (pp. 3–10). Greensboro, NC: Educational Resources Information Center, Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse.
- Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (1990). Introduction to career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 1–12). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (1996). Introduction to theories of career development and choice. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (3rd ed., pp. 1–30). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Chartrand, J. M. (1991). The evolution of trait and factor career counseling: A person x environment fit approach. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 69, 518–524.
- Collin, A., & Watts, A. G. (1996). The death and transfiguration of career – and of career guidance? *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 24, 385–398.

- Corey, G. (1991). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Dawis, R. V. (1992). The individual differences tradition in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 39*, 7–19.
- Forrest, L., & Brooks, L. (1993). Feminism and career assessment. *Journal of Career Assessment, 3*, 233–245.
- Goldman, L. (1990). Qualitative assessment. *The Counseling Psychologist, 18*, 205–213.
- Goldman, L. (1992). Qualitative assessment: An approach for counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70*, 616–621.
- Granvold, D. K. (1996). Constructivist psychotherapy. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 77*, 345–359.
- Gysbers, N. C., Heppner, M. J., & Johnston, J. A. (1998). *Career Counseling. Process, Issues and Techniques*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Herr, E. L. (1992). Emerging trends in career counseling. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling, 15*, 255–288.
- Herr, E. L. (1997). Career counselling: A process in process. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 25*, 81–93.
- Isaacson, L. E., & Brown, D. (1993). *Career information, career counseling, and career development* (5th ed.). NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Knowdell, R. L. (1995). *Motivated skills card sort planning kit*. San Jose, CA: Career Research and Testing.
- Knowdell, R. L. (1998). *Career values card sort planning kit*. San Jose, CA: Career Research and Testing.
- Krumboltz, J. D., Mitchell, A. M., & Jones, G. B. (1976). A social learning theory of career selection. *The Counseling Psychologist, 6*, 71–81.
- Leong, F. T. L. (1996). Challenges to career counseling: Boundaries, cultures, and complexity. In M. L. Savickas & W. B. Walsh (Eds.), *Handbook of career counseling theory and practice* (pp. 333–346). Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.
- McDaniels, C., & Gysbers, N. C. (1992). *Counseling for career development: Theories, resources and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Hanlon, W. (1993). Possibility therapy: From iatrogenic injury to iatrogenic healing. In S. Gilligan & R. Price (Eds.), *Therapeutic conversations* (pp. 3–17). NY: W. W. Norton.
- Okiishi, R. W. (1987). The genogram as a tool in career counselling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 66*, 139–143.
- Okocha, A. A. G. (1998). Using qualitative appraisal strategies in career counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 35*, 151–159.
- Parsons, F. (1909). *Choosing a vocation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Patton, W. (1997). "Double jeopardy": Dealing with multiple career development issues. In W. Patton & M. McMahon (Eds.), *Career development in practice: A systems theory perspective* (pp. 83–94). Sydney, Australia: New Hobsons Press.
- Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (1999). *Career development and systems theory: A new relationship*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Peavy, R. V. (1998). *Sociodynamic counselling A constructivist perspective*. Victoria, Canada: Trafford.
- Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-centered therapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rogers, C. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships, as developed in a client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of science: Vol 3*. New York: Basic Books.

- Rounds, J. B., & Tracey, T. J. (1990). From trait-and-factor to person-environment fit counseling: Theory and process. In W. B. Walsh & S. H. Osipow (Eds.) *Career counseling contemporary topics in vocational psychology* (pp. 1–45). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Savickas, M. L. (1992). New directions in career assessment. In D. H. Montross & C. J. Shinkman (Eds.), *Career development: Theory and practice* (pp. 336–355). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Savickas, M. L. (1993). Career counseling in the postmodern era. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly*, 7, 205–215.
- Savickas, M. L. (1994). Donald Edwin Super: The career of a planful explorer. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 43, 4–24.
- Savickas, M. L. (1996). A framework for linking career theory and practice. In M. L. Savickas & W. B. Walsh (Eds.), *Handbook of career counseling theory and practice* (pp. 191–208). Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.
- Savickas, M. L. (1997). The spirit in career counselling. In D. P. Bloch & L. J. Richmond (Eds.), *Connections between spirit and work in career development* (pp. 3–26). Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.
- Sharf, R. (1992). *Applying career development theory to counseling*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Stevens, P. (1997). *Career action constraints*. Sydney, Australia: The Centre for Worklife Counselling.
- Stevens, P. (1998). *Occupational work settings*. Sydney, Australia: The Centre for Worklife Counselling.
- Subich, L. M. (1993). How personal is career counseling? (Special section). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 42, 129–131.
- Super, D. E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. *American Psychologist*, 8, 185–190.
- Super, D. E. (1980). A life span, life space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 16, 282–298.
- Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 197–261). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Super, D. E. (1992). Toward a comprehensive theory of career development. In D. H. Montross & C. J. Shinkman (Eds.), *Career development: Theory and practice* (pp. 35–64). Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- Vondracek, F. W., Lerner, R. M., & Schulenberg, J. E. (1986). *Career development: A life-span developmental approach*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.
- Watts, A. G. (1996). The changing concept of career: Implications for career counseling. In R. Feller & G. Walz (Eds.), *Career transitions in turbulent times: Exploring work, learning and careers* (pp. 229–236). Greensboro, NC: Educational Resources Information Center, Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse.
- Williamson, E. (1939). *How to counsel students: A manual of techniques for clinical counselors*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Young, R. A., & Chen, C. P. (1999). Annual review: Practice and research in career counseling and development – 1998. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 48, 98–141.